

Skills Exercises

AO2 Interpretation and application

Cambridge IGCSE™
Sociology 0495

Cambridge O Level
Sociology 2251

For examination from 2025



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Introduction

Cambridge IGCSE / O Level Sociology attracts a variety of learners from many different backgrounds. For some learners Sociology is a new subject and an opportunity to explore an area of study that interests them, while developing a set of transferable skills. Other learners have previously studied Sociology and are looking to continue developing their knowledge of the subject. Either way, the study of Sociology encourages learners to think critically about contemporary social, cultural and political issues. It provides opportunities to explore sociological concepts and arguments while studying a range of stimulating topics and real-world issues.

Skills and why they are important?

Skills are the key to success. The performance of candidates in Cambridge IGCSE / O Level Sociology exams have shown a range of areas where improvement would be helpful. These areas of improvement tend to centre around the assessment objectives (AOs) of the course and we have addressed these AOs in a series of exercises and activities.

- AO1 Knowledge and understanding
- AO2 Interpretation and application
- AO3 Analysis and evaluation

Skills Exercises make use of examination questions and include activities and worksheets to help skills development and incorporate suggested teaching approaches, such as discussion, structured support and writing in sequence. They do not attempt to cover all possible aspects of the examinations, only those problem areas which have presented consistently over time.

How will these skills be developed?

Skills Exercises aim to help learners develop skills in:

- demonstrating knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts, theories, evidence, views and research methods.
- applying relevant sociological concepts, theories, evidence, views and research methods to support points or develop arguments.
- explaining how sociological concepts, theories, evidence, views and research methods apply to a particular issue or question.
- analysing and evaluating sociological theories, evidence, views and research methods. This includes how to construct, develop and discuss sociological arguments and reach conclusions and make judgements based on a reasoned consideration of evidence.

Skills Exercises provide suggestions so you can have confidence that the materials you prepare and use in the classroom are building skills and resilience in your learners. This document should be used alongside the other teaching and learning resources provided on the [School Support Hub](#)

AO2 Interpretation and application

The ability to apply interpretation and application skills is essential to be able to access interpretation and application marks and to achieve good quality analysis and evaluation. Learners should be able to:

- interpret evidence from source material and apply relevant sociological concepts, theories, evidence, views and research methods to support points or develop arguments.
- explain how sociological concepts, theories, evidence, views and research methods apply to a particular issue or question.

The following table contains some command words that might indicate to learners that they need to demonstrate interpretation and application.

Command word	Definition
Describe	state the points of a topic/give characteristics and main features
Discuss	write about issue(s) or topic(s) in depth in a structured way
Evaluate	judge or calculate the quality, importance, amount or value of something
Explain	set out purposes or reasons / make the relationships between things clear / say why and/or how and support with relevant evidence

Exercise 1: Interpreting and applying research methods

For Paper 1 there is a compulsory section on research methods. As part of the first question learners will be expected to interpret data from a source. The source may be quantitative, qualitative or a combination of both.

Learners are required to identify or select two pieces of information or data from the source.

In a quantitative source they may be required to identify where there may have been increases or decreases in the amount of something, for example over time.

Practising the skill of interpretation is a good way of building confidence with source-related questions.

Activity 1: Interpreting quantitative data sources

It is important that learners can interpret data from a quantitative data source.

The two sources and following examination-style questions in **Worksheet 1: Interpreting quantitative data sources** will help learners develop the interpretation and application skills needed to be successful. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 1: Interpreting quantitative data sources answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of interpreting data and clarifying any misconceptions.

Activity 2: Interpreting qualitative data sources

It is important that learners can interpret data from a qualitative data source.

The two sources and the following examination-style questions in **Worksheet 2: Interpreting qualitative data sources** will allow learners to become familiar with the AO2 skills needed to be successful.

Similar types of sources and questions may be used to give extra practice to learners. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 2: Interpreting qualitative data sources answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of interpreting data and clarifying any misconceptions.

Activity 3: Applying research design

In Paper 1, learners are required to create a basic research design.

In justifying their research design, it is important that learners **apply** their generic knowledge of research methods to the scenario given in the examination question.

Provide learners with a series of research scenarios. The scenarios on **Worksheet 3: Applying research design** can be used or changed with other scenarios.

Learners choose:

- a primary method
- a sample (size and sampling technique)
- secondary evidence that would be useful for investigating the scenario.

Learners must justify their choices by giving reasons why this is useful for investigating the topic. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 3: Applying research design answers** and lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of primary methods, size and sampling techniques and secondary evidence, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

Exercise 2: Applying knowledge of concepts, ideas and evidence

Concepts, ideas and evidence form a major part of a learners' sociological knowledge.

Building upon this skill, learners need to be able to **apply** this knowledge in supporting points and in developing more extended sociological arguments.

Learning to apply appropriate sociological knowledge in the right social context or situation is an important skill.

Activity 1: Applying sociological knowledge

Learners need to be able to apply appropriate sociological knowledge in the right social context/situation; this is an important skill.

Provide learners with a mixture of different sociological statements which may or may not apply to the social context/situation provided in each question.

Give learners **Worksheet 4: Applying sociological knowledge** that focuses on Topic 3 Social stratification and inequality; however, the statements can be replaced with others from different topics. Learners identify the correct statements that apply to the social context/situation. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 4: Applying sociological knowledge answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding about the different statements, identifying the correct ones and giving examples of why a statement is incorrect. Address any misconceptions.

Activity 2: Applying examples

In Cambridge IGCSE / O Level Sociology an examination question can be based on a single idea or a concept.

However, different examples may be given to illustrate skills in both knowledge and understanding (AO1) and the application of knowledge (AO2).

Examples are also fundamental for learners to develop sociological points and arguments in a paragraph/extended answer.

Give learners a topic area from the syllabus. The topics in **Worksheet 5: Applying examples** is based on Topic 2 Identity: self and society. It can be used as a basis for the applying examples activity, or any other topic from the syllabus may be used. Learners create a mind-map using different examples that link to the specific topic. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

Learners then share their ideas in groups. If a group has added an example that no-one else has, ask for an explanation as to why/how it links to the topic. Use **Worksheet 5: Applying examples answers** as a guide for learners. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding on which example(s) might be most relevant when answering different examination questions. Address any misconceptions.

Activity 3: Applying evidence

Evidence in sociology incorporates sociological studies, concepts, examples and data. Learners must be able to apply relevant evidence in their arguments in extended answers.

Give learners **Worksheet 6: Applying evidence** where sociological arguments from Topic 5 Crime and Deviance are used; however, these can be replaced by arguments from other topics. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 6: Applying evidence answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding, encouraging them to share their answers and discussing how each point could be developed further, perhaps with other examples. Address any misconceptions.

Exercise 3: Applying sociological theories

In Cambridge IGCSE / O Level Sociology learners need to be able to apply key sociological theories in each option topic. The main theories are functionalism, Marxism and feminism.

Theory can be challenging and some ideas are complex in and of themselves, so it is important that learners practice applying the main ideas within each theory to each topic.

For each syllabus topic there are sections outlining specific areas where learners may be required to apply their knowledge of sociological theories.

Activity 1: Applying sociological theories

This activity focuses on Topic 4 Family and requires learners to have a general knowledge and understanding of the three theories of functionalism, Marxism and feminism.

Give learners **Worksheet 7: Applying sociological theories** to encourage learners to apply core ideas within these theories to the context of the family. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 7: Applying sociological theories answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of Topic 4 Family, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

Extension activity: the initial starter statements could be replaced in the second column with appropriate statements from the Topic 5 Education or Topic 6 Crime, deviance and social control.

Activity 2: Applying theoretical ideas

In Cambridge IGCSE / O Level Sociology several examination questions require learners to develop points and arguments in support of or against a claim.

Successful learners will integrate a knowledge of sociological theories into their answers.

In developing or understanding points learners should be encouraged to discuss examples of key ideas within the sociological theories.

Give learners **Worksheet 8: Applying theoretical ideas** where they are given core ideas from each main theory. Learners should give examples of how the idea can be applied to Topic 5 Education, specifically to schools. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 8: Applying theoretical ideas answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of how a key theoretical idea can be applied to the topic of Education, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

Extension activity: the activity can be repeated with the other topics in the syllabus.

Activity 3: Applying theory through examples

It is important that learners can give examples of key ideas from the main theories when they develop points in exam answers.

Give learners **Worksheet 9: Applying theory through examples** that focuses on Topic 6 Crime, deviance and social control; however, the key ideas here can be substituted for others from topics 2 – 5. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 9: Applying theory through examples answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of the key ideas and clarifying any misconceptions.

Extension activity: encourage learners to find real-life examples or cases for some of the key ideas.

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