

Skills Exercises

AO3 Analysis and evaluation

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](#)

AO3 Analysis and evaluation

Learners are required to analyse and evaluate sociological theories, evidence, views and research methods by:

- explaining the strengths and limitations of sociological theories, views and research methods
- constructing, developing and discussing sociological arguments
- reaching conclusions and making judgements based on a reasoned consideration of evidence.

The following table contains some command words that might indicate to learners that they need to analyse and evaluate.

Command word	What it means
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: Evaluating the usefulness of research methods

Knowledge of the strengths and limitations of research methods is important for learners to be successful in the examinations.

For Topic 1 Research methods, examination questions may ask learners to explain the general strengths and limitations of research methods or samples, whilst others focus on the usefulness of the research methodology used in the source material.

Being able to discuss the strengths and limitations of research methods is an essential part of analysis and evaluation.

In source-based questions learners also need to be able to discuss why a particular aspect of research is useful or not useful given the scenario in the source.

Activity 1: Evaluating the usefulness of research methods in context

Give learners **Worksheet 1: Research methods in context**.

This activity provides learners with a quantitative source and a qualitative source and a range of questions to test their ability to evaluate methods in context. The first answer has been given as an example. 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: Research methods in context answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of evaluating methods in context and giving guidance, ensuring that any misconceptions are addressed.

Activity 2: Developing explanations of strengths and limitations

Give learners **Worksheet 2: Developing explanations of strengths and limitations**. This worksheet provides a framework which will enable learners to write successful answers.

When explaining the strengths or limitations of a method, encourage learners to first identify a feature of the method and then explain why or how that feature is of benefit or not. This means learners will avoid giving a wholly generic answer such as, *'because it is valid and reliable'* or *'it saves time and cost'* etc.

The worksheet gets progressively more challenging as in Question 3 and Question 4 learners are not given a full list of features, but must identify them for themselves. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. Working in pairs for this task will allow learners to help and support each other as the questions become more difficult.

Use **Worksheet 2: Developing explanations of strengths and limitations answers** and ask learners to peer assess another pair of learners' work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding going through their responses and identifying and correcting any misconceptions.

Activity 3: Two-sided arguments

One of the most important routes into writing a successful evaluation is being able to spot the two sides of each argument.

There is always a way to argue both sides of any evaluative question and in doing so learners can include analysis and evaluation in their responses.

Provide learners with several evaluative questions. The questions in **Worksheet 3: Two-sided arguments** can be used or any other evaluative questions from past examination papers.

Learners decide what the two sides of the argument are. 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: Two-sided arguments answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of how to argue both sides of an evaluative question. There are sometimes different perspectives; discuss as a class why different approaches are sometimes still appropriate. Address any misconceptions.

Exercise 2: Identifying analysis and evaluation

Analysis and evaluation are skills that can help learners gain higher marks. Learners who can effectively analyse and evaluate in their answers will be able to build arguments and come to conclusions.

Many learners think that analysis is about description or explanation and often spend time describing elements of an answer without getting to the all-important analysis.

Analysis is about:

- examining something in detail to show meaning
- showing the relationship between things.

Evaluation is about:

- assessing evidence
- making a judgement.

Activity 1: Analysis or not

Provide learners with a series of sentences where one sentence involves analysis and the other does not.

The sentences in **Worksheet 4: Analysis or not** is based on Topic 4 Family but can be used or replaced with other sentences from different topics. For each sentence, learners decide which is the analytical one. 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: Analysis or not answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of analysis, going through the answers. Identify and correct any misconceptions.

Activity 2: Identifying analysis in simple sentences

Show learners one or two sentences containing analysis, that are explanations of causal connections. These can be everyday examples or sociology related. For example:

- The man lost his job; therefore, he could not buy the food he needed for his family.
- People are constantly on their phone, this means that advertisers have a good opportunity to sell more goods.
- More young people are rebelling against norms and values; therefore, subcultures are increasing.

Learners identify the decisions made and the reasons given for those decisions in each statement. Introduce the idea of connecting words including, 'because', 'this means', 'so', 'therefore'.

In groups, learners consider other possible connecting words. Remind them that not all connecting words such as 'and' are relevant for developing analysis.

Extend the discussion by asking further questions such as, 'Why does this develop the statement?' or 'How will this help explain the point being made?'

Learners make notes on their discussion before sharing ideas with the class. These could be used later as part of a display about connecting words.

Worksheet 5: Identifying analysis in simple sentences is based on Topic 5 Education; however, the sentences can be replaced with others from different topics. The aim of the activity is to encourage learners to practice spotting analysis and adding development. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners can work individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 5: Identifying analysis in simple sentences answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of identifying analysis, ensuring any misconceptions are corrected.

Extension activity: learners create their own sentences showing the skill of analysis.

Activity 3: Identifying analysis and evaluation in paragraphs

Give learners **Worksheet 6: Identifying analysis and evaluation in paragraphs**.

The worksheet focuses on Topic 6 Crime, deviance and social control, but other paragraphs may be used focusing on material from other topics.

Learners identify the analytical or evaluative components of each paragraph. 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: Identifying analysis and evaluation in paragraphs answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of whether the analysis or evaluation could be extended further to develop the point. Address any misconceptions

Exercise 3: Strengths and weaknesses of sociological theories

Learners often find the application and evaluation of sociological theories challenging. However, if analysis and evaluation skills are practiced regularly learners can build confidence as they move through their syllabus topics.

In Exercise 3 learners are encouraged, firstly, to find or identify suitable evaluation points for theory in context, that is, as applied to topic areas. In the syllabus there are sections outlining the application of theory. For example, in Topic 4.2 What is the role of the family for the individual and society? functionalist, Marxist and feminist views are given in some detail.

Secondly, learners will be supported in learning to develop evaluation points in paragraphs.

Finally, ideas for how to structure an effective conclusion are provided. Used together these activities will help learners to develop their evaluation skills and evaluate more effectively.

Activity 1: Identifying strengths and weaknesses

The first stage of being able to achieve good analysis and evaluation marks is for learners to be able to identify basic strengths and weaknesses of each sociological theory.

It is likely that teachers will teach learners an overview of each theory near the beginning of the course.

Once learners have a grasp of the main elements of each theory, they need to be able to understand how each theory can be applied in the relevant syllabus topics.

Give learners **Worksheet 7: Identifying strengths and weaknesses**. When completed this worksheet will allow you to see how well learners can apply their basic knowledge of the theories to the context of Topic 2 Identity, self and society, specifically how identity is learned through socialisation. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity it is recommended that learners work in pairs to find appropriate strengths and weaknesses of the Marxist, functionalist and feminist views.

Use **Worksheet 7: Identifying strengths and weaknesses answers** and ask learners to peer assess with another pair of learners. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of theories, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

Extension activity: give learners different topics to evaluate in terms of strengths and weaknesses.

Activity 2: Developing evaluation of theories

Analysis and evaluation skills involve the ability to develop points and arguments as part of extended answers such as essays.

Give learners **Worksheet 8: Developing evaluation of theories** where learners are provided with a writing frame for each question that will enable them to structure an evaluative paragraph.

The activity is focused on Topic 5 Education, but both the questions and the writing frame can be modified by using material from other topics.

Encourage learners to incorporate any relevant studies or empirical evidence that they have come across in their studies. 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: Developing evaluation of theories answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of evaluating theories, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

Extension activity: give learners different topics to use with the writing frame.

Activity 3: Re-arrange the conclusion

Learners often struggle to write an effective conclusion in essay questions. Coming to a judgement based on the evidence is part of the skill set of required for analysis and evaluation.

Give learners **Worksheet 9: Re-arrange the conclusion**. Explain to learners that the jumbled conclusions given in response to the questions draw from different areas of the syllabus, but they should be able to work out the correct order even if they have not studied each topic. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners should work in pairs to give peer support.

Use **Worksheet 9: Re-arrange the conclusion answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding about what makes each one an effective conclusion, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

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