

Skills Exercises

AO1 Knowledge and understanding

Cambridge IGCSE™  
Sociology 0495

Cambridge O Level  
Sociology 2251

For examination from 2025



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# Contents

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Introduction .....	4
AO1 Knowledge and understanding .....	5
Exercise 1: Know your concepts .....	5
Exercise 2: Know your research methods .....	7
Exercise 3: Know your sociological theories .....	10

## Introduction

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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](#)

## AO1 Knowledge and understanding

AO1 Knowledge and understanding requires learners to gain appropriate, detailed and wide-ranging sociological knowledge and understanding. This is an essential skill to be able to achieve good quality analysis and evaluation.

Learners need to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts, theories, evidence, views and research methods to meet this assessment objective.

The following table contains some command words that might indicate to learners that they need to demonstrate and apply knowledge and understanding.

Command word	Definition
<b>Define</b>	give precise meaning
<b>Describe</b>	state the points of a topic / give characteristics and main features
<b>Discuss</b>	write about issue(s) or topic(s) in depth in a structured way
<b>Explain</b>	set out purposes or reasons / make the relationships between things clear / say why and/or how and support with relevant evidence
<b>Give</b>	produce an answer from recall/memory
<b>Identify</b>	name/select/recognise

### Exercise 1: Know your concepts

Having a good knowledge of concepts is fundamental for learners to be able to access knowledge and understanding marks in a variety of questions in both examination papers.

The ability to define concepts is also important, as it enables learners to show sociological, rather than 'common-sense' knowledge.

The first examination question in each option topic tests AO1 skills only, requiring learners to accurately define a key sociological concept.

In other examination questions with an AO1 component, learners are expected to integrate concepts into their answers and to show that they understand the meanings.

### Activity 1: Key terms definitions

Learners should have access to a set of definitions for as many key terms as possible.

Most of the key terms can be found in the description of content for each topic in the syllabus, a good textbook or on the internet.

Provide pairs of learners with a different topic from the syllabus. For example, the subject content for Topic 3 Social stratification and inequality, can be split into the following topics depending on how many learners you have.

Topic	Sub-topics
<b>3. Social stratification and inequality</b>	3.1 What is social stratification? 3.2 What attempts have been made to reduce social inequalities? explain the purpose of an appropriation account 3.3 How has globalisation affected inequalities between societies?

Give learners **Worksheet 1: Key terms definitions** where some key terms from the syllabus Topic 3 Social stratification and inequality are listed. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work individually, in pairs or groups.

Learners find a definition for each key term and record it.

Use **Worksheet 1: Key terms definitions answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of the definitions, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

Make sure learners fill in any gaps so they have a complete glossary of key terms.

It is possible to build a key term glossary while teaching the syllabus.

As each topic of the syllabus is taught, give learners the correct definitions.

**Extension activity:** learners find the terms from the syllabus themselves.

### Activity 2: Concept cards

When writing their answers learners need to be able to use concepts appropriately. This includes being able to describe them and give examples.

Provide learners with a set of cards each bearing the name of a sociological concept. **Worksheet 2: Concept cards** focuses on concepts in syllabus Topic 5 Education, but these concepts can be replaced with others from different topics.

There are several ways ideas for how learners can use the cards to build and test their knowledge and understanding:

- If the cards are printed single-sided, learners can use them to work independently by writing what the concept means on the back of the card. Making the cards allows learners to be active and the process will provide a ready-made revision resource.
- Learners can then use the cards to test themselves or other learners before an assessment. One learner says the concept and the other learner attempts to explain it.
- The cards can also be used by getting individual or pairs of learners to spread them out and then pose appropriate questions. For example, 'What is the concept that describes schooling that is not run or controlled by the government but is based on fee-paying?' (Answer: 'private education').

### Activity 3: All false – please correct

Many examination questions will include a concept. It is important that learners understand the concept in the question to be able to answer it correctly.

Provide learners with ten sociological sentences. **Worksheet 3: All false – please correct** can be used or replaced with other sentences.

Each sentence contains a concept that is used incorrectly, making each sentence false. Learners decide which concept is used incorrectly and replace it with the correct concept. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work either individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 3: All false – please correct answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of concepts, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

**Extension activity:** learners define the original concepts that were used incorrectly in each sentence.

Alternatively allow learners to keep the concepts at the beginning of each sentence but modify the description.

To vary the activity, learners could generate the false statements themselves.

### Exercise 2: Know your research methods

Research methods is a compulsory topic in the Cambridge Sociology syllabus.

It is therefore important that all learners demonstrate knowledge and understanding of terms and concepts relating to the conduct of sociological research.

The ability to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of research methodologies is essential to be able to access AO1 marks and to produce good quality analysis and evaluation in higher mark questions.

### Activity 1: Methodological terms and concepts

Learners need to understand that for some methodological terms and concepts there is only one correct answer.

It is important for learners to be able to distinguish the correct concept from others that may be similar or related concepts within a topic.

Give learners different questions with four possible answers **A, B, C** and **D**. **Worksheet 4: Methodological terms and concepts** can be used or replaced with other terms and concepts.

For each question learners decide the correct answer. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work either individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 4: Methodological terms and concepts answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of methodological terms and concepts, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

**Extension activity:** discuss as a class how the incorrect terms in each question are different.

### Activity 2: Research methods connectives

When writing an answer learners need to be able to show an understanding of the links between different research methods and related concepts or characteristics.

**Worksheet 5: Research methods connectives** encourages learners to make and justify such links.

Learners draw lines to connect the research methods in bold with their correct characteristics.

It is possible that one descriptive statement may apply to **more than one** method. Go through the worksheet with learners to check they understand what is required of the task. For this activity learners may work either individually or in pairs.

Use **Worksheet 5: Research methods connectives answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of connectives, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

**Extension activity:** to increase the level of challenge for learners, use a similar worksheet but leave several boxes empty.

Learners fill in the empty boxes with other characteristics of the research methods and connect them appropriately.

### Activity 3: Methodological definitions and examples

It is useful to prepare learners for Topic 1 Research methods by giving them access to a set of accurate definitions for key methodological terms. Most of the terms are found in the syllabus and can be found in the course text book or on the internet.

Topic 1 Research methods can be split into the following sub-topics depending on how many learners you have.

Topic	Sub-topics
<b>1. Research methods</b>	1.1 How do sociologists approach the study of society? 1.1.1 The positivist approach 1.1.2 The interpretivist approach 1.1.3 Approaches that combine different research methods and evidence 1.1.4 The analysis and evaluation of research choices 1.2 What types of data and evidence do sociologists use? 1.2.1 Sources of data 1.2.2 Secondary evidence 1.2.3 Analysis, interpretation and evaluation of data from qualitative and quantitative sources 1.3 How do sociologists investigate society? 1.3.1 The stages in research design 1.3.2 Sampling 1.3.3 Quantitative and qualitative primary research methods 1.3.4 Types of question 1.3.5 The theoretical and practical issues affecting research 1.3.6 Ethical issues affecting research

Learners list every methodological term they can find in their topic from the syllabus.

Alternatively, you can provide learners with a list.

Give learners **Worksheet 6 Methodological definitions and examples** where they are given selected concepts. 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 to find a definition and an example of the concept and record it.

Use **Worksheet 6: Methodological definitions and examples answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of the definitions and examples making sure learners fill in any gaps so they have a complete and accurate list, ensuring any misconceptions are addressed.

### Exercise 3: Know your sociological theories

The Cambridge IGCSE / O Level Sociology syllabus includes five main sociological theories that learners need to know and understand: functionalism, Marxism, feminism, postmodernism and labelling theory.

Examination questions in option topics may focus explicitly on theoretical views.

In addition, learners are expected to integrate knowledge and understanding of sociological theory into the evidence they present in their answers.

It is common for learners to find sociological theory challenging. Testing and clarifying conceptual misunderstandings will build learner confidence.

#### Activity 1: Odd one out

It is important that learners know and understand the concepts and terms associated with the sociological theories in their chosen syllabus topics.

Give learners **Worksheet 7: Odd one out**. Explain to learners that this activity can be used to test and clarify their knowledge and understanding of core concepts in sociological theories for Topic 6 Crime, deviance and social control.

Each question presents a sequence of three concepts. Two concepts derive from the same sociological theory leaving the third concept as the odd one out.

Learners identify the concept that is the odd one out and then explain why the selected concept is different from the other two concepts. 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: Odd one out answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding of the concepts and terms associated with the sociological theories in their chosen syllabus topics, ensuring that learners understand why one concept is the odd one out and clarifying any misconceptions.

**Extension activity:** concepts from the theories in other option topics may be substituted.

#### Activity 2: Fill in the gaps

Higher mark questions in the Cambridge IGCSE / O Level Sociology examinations require learners to be able to write about sociological theory in an extended way.

Learners need a holistic knowledge and understanding of each theory (AO1) and apply this knowledge to issues raised in examination questions (AO2).

It is important that learners grasp the basic framework of each sociological theory.

Give learners **Worksheet 8: Fill in the gaps**. Explain to learners that this activity will help them to clarify and contrast three theories that appear in Topic 2 Identity: self and society. 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: Fill in the gaps answers** and ask learners to peer assess each other's work. Lead a class discussion to develop learners' understanding, ensuring learners are using the correct words for each sociological theory. Address any misconceptions.

**Extension activity:** the subject matter for the exercises can be changed for other topics.

### Activity 3: Presentations on theories of the family

Learners need to understand different aspects of sociological theories and apply them to the option topics.

Divide the class into three groups. Explain to learners that each group will research and then teach the class the main points in each sociological theory of Topic 4 Family (4.2 What is the role of the family for the individual and society?).

The three theories are functionalism, Marxism and feminism.

Each theory can be broken down into different sections as follows:

Functionalist views	Marxist views	Feminist views
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the family benefits its members and society</li> <li>• Functions of the family</li> <li>• The loss of functions debate</li> <li>• How family functions have changed over time</li> <li>• 'Warm bath' theory</li> <li>• Importance of the nuclear family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the family benefits capitalism</li> <li>• Exploitation of family members</li> <li>• Reproduction of class inequalities</li> <li>• Family as a unit of consumption</li> <li>• Family and ideological control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the family benefits patriarchy</li> <li>• The domestic division of labour</li> <li>• Domestic violence and abuse</li> <li>• Joint and segregated conjugal roles</li> <li>• Dual burden / triple shift</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> <li>• Gendered socialisation</li> </ul>

Depending on the number of learners, you may need to give each learner more than one section.

Each group works collaboratively to prepare a visual presentation on their theory of the Family.

Remind learners that their aim is to teach the class something new, so they should avoid copying from the course text book or the internet. The aim is to understand the theory and to teach others about it.

Alternatively, if you have more learners, extend each group's presentation into a mini lesson. This will involve other group members conducting a starter activity and/or an activity to check how much learners have understood the content of the presentation. Each group may also wish to provide a set of notes or handout for learners to take away.

**Worksheet 9: Starter and plenary** can be used by you or the learner groups to check both the level of understanding before the presentation and at the end of the presentation.

**Extension activity:** these sections can be replaced by others in different option topics.

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