

# Geography Exam Question Guide

## How to answer your geography questions

Use this guide to practice how to answer all the different types of questions in the geography exam (Paper 1 and 2)

### 1 Mark question

These usually require you to:

- Add something to a diagram
- Write a 1 word answer
- Shade a box

Be very careful with these questions as they like to trick you. READ THE QUESTION VERY CAREFULLY.

### 2 Mark Question

These will require you to:

- Tick 2 boxes
- Write 2 reasons why something happens
- Fill in the gaps
- Describe a graph
- Describe distribution on a map

Be very careful with these questions as they like to trick you. READ THE QUESTION VERY CAREFULLY.

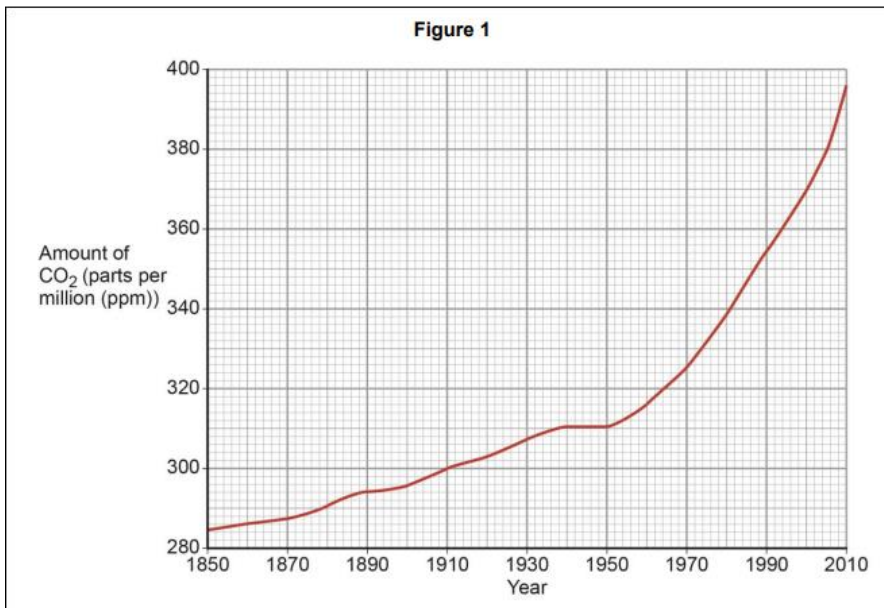
Some will ask you to describe something.

When describing a graph, follow this formula:

- Overall pattern
- Pick out examples to support your overall pattern (make sure you include data)
- Any anomalies

### Worked Example

Study **Figure 1**, a graph showing changes in the amount of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the atmosphere.



Describe the change in the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere shown in figure 1 (2 marks)

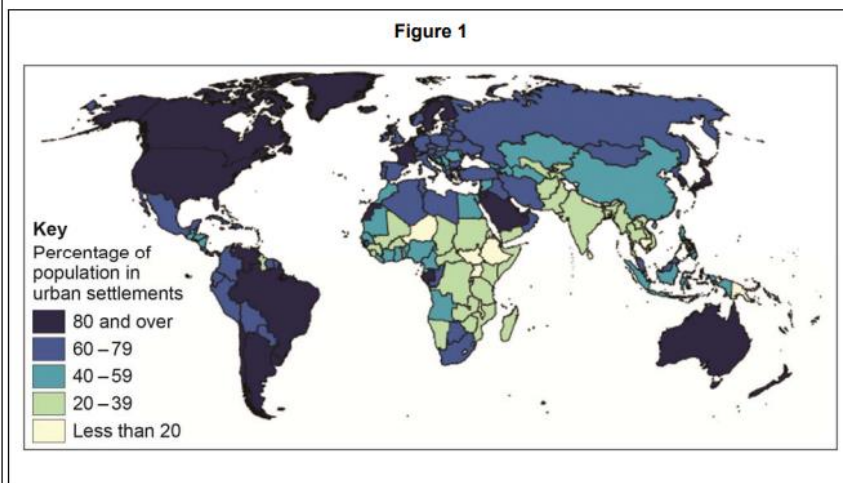
Overall the graph shows an increase in the amount of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). In 1850 there was 284 ppm however the amount increases steadily until 1950 where there was 310 ppm but after that it increases rapidly 396 ppm in 2010. From 1940 to 1950 however, there was no significant increase in the amount of CO<sub>2</sub>.

**When describing a map, follow this formula:**

- Overall distribution
- Pick out any examples to support your overall distribution (use place names and data if you can)
- Any anomalies

**Worked Example**

Study **Figure 1**, a map showing the percentage of the population living in urban settlements in different parts of the world.



Describe the differences in percentage of population living in urban settlements in Africa and South America (2 marks)

Africa has a much larger difference of people living in urban settlements than South America. Some landlocked countries in central and eastern have less than 20% of people in urban areas whereas the majority has between 20 and 39%. South American countries are much more urbanised with nearly all of the countries are either 60% – 79% urbanised or 80% and over. However some countries on the western coast of Africa are 80% and over and one country in northern part of South America is 20% - 39% urbanised.

### 3 Mark Question

These will require you to:

- Fill in the gaps in a paragraph
- Label things on a diagram
- Describe a graph (in detail) (see worked example for 2 mark)
- Describe distributions on a map with suggestions and reasoning

Be very careful with these questions as they like to trick you. **READ THE QUESTION VERY CAREFULLY.**

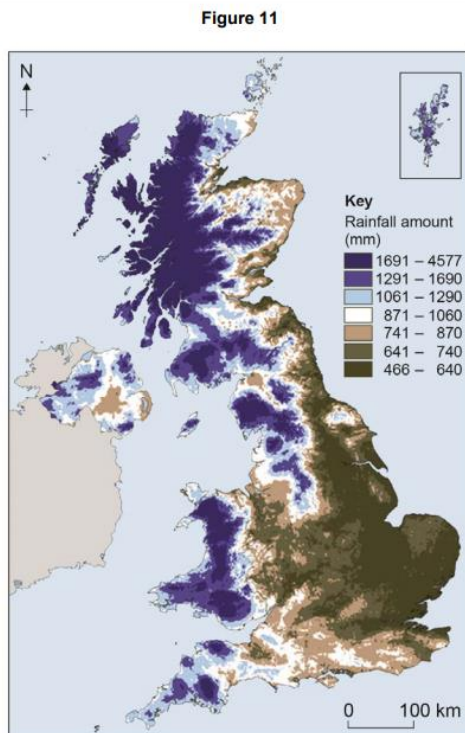
3 Mark questions are quite rare but you will almost definitely find at least 1 or 2 in the paper. They require you to describe in detail but also on occasion to provide a basic explanation or a suggestion usually based on a source figure in the paper. See the worked example below for details.

When describing continue with the formula of:

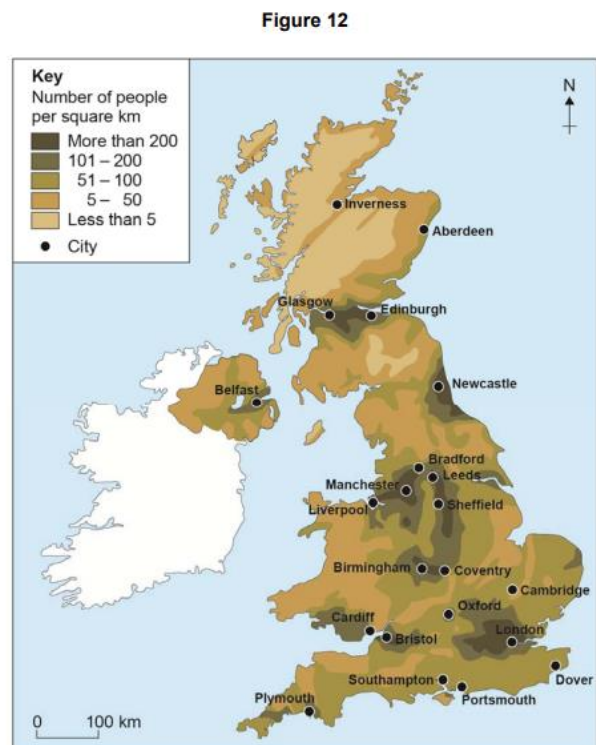
- **Overall Pattern**
- **Data and examples to support the overall pattern**
- **Any anomalies**

### Worked Example

Study **Figure 11**, a map showing average annual rainfall in the UK.



Study **Figure 12**, a map showing population density in the UK.



Using figures 11 and 12, suggest why there may be a need for water transfer from one part of the UK to another (3 marks)

Figure 11 shows that most of the rainfall in the UK happens to the North and the West whereas most of the densely populated areas are to the South and the East. Up in the west of Scotland for example has a rainfall of between 1691mm – 4577mm. This area however has a population of less than 5 people per square km. On the other hand London has a population of more than 200 people per square km but between 466mm and 640mm of rainfall. This means that they would be required to transport the water from the west coast of Scotland to London to make up for the water deficit. However some areas such as Manchester have both a high level of rainfall and a high population density.

#### 4 Mark Question

These will require you to:

- Explain 2 points in detail
- Explain a point in a lot of detail

4 Mark questions are a nice way to pick up marks. They tend to have a figure attached to them which you can use to help you with the answer.

When no number of points to explain is specified, follow this formula

- Point
- Connective
- Explain
- Point 2
- Connective
- Explain 2

Worked Example

Study **Figure 15**, a photograph showing the effects of river flooding in Somerset in 2014.

**Figure 15**



Explain the likely economic effects of river flooding in this area (4 marks)

The photograph shows that the road has been submerged under the water. This means that vehicles cannot travel along the road which means that residents of this area will not be able to get to work. This could have an economic impact on their personal income. If continued over a long period of time, could result in being unable to pay rent or keep up with mortgage leading to debt. It could also lead to businesses losing money as workers are not there to earn it for them.

Secondly, I can see that resident's homes have been flooded. This means that there is a high personal economic cost to the residents as their personal belongings may have been destroyed. If they are not insured this means that they must replace it themselves at a high cost. If however they are insured, this can lead to an economic loss for the insurance company in the short term but they will increase insurance costs leader once again to a higher cost to the residents.

## When only one point is specified, follow this formula

- **Point**
- **Connective**
- **Detailed explanation (with another possible connective)**

## Worked Example

Outline **one** strategy which aims to reduce the rate of climate change (mitigation) (4 marks)

One strategy that can be used to mitigate climate change is converting our energy production from burning fossil fuels to using renewables. This would mean that coal, oil and natural gas fired power stations would be decommissioned and our energy would come from energy sources such as tidal power, wind power and solar power. The benefit of getting our energy from these sources is that they don't produce carbon dioxide which is a greenhouse gas meaning it doesn't let shorter wave infrared radiation out into space warming the planet. It also means that the energy is readily available to be used on site and doesn't have to be transported around by vehicles (such as coal trucks and oil tankers) and thus further mitigates climate change by minimising greenhouse gases emitted by vehicles

## 6 Mark Question

This is where it gets a little more difficult. There are a range of command words that they use for 6 mark questions but the basic structure remains the same. You will need at least 2 PECE paragraphs. As a general rule, if you are not sure, it's better to write 3 PECE paragraphs because you can pick up marks by adding extra breadth to your answer. Remember PECE

**Point** – State a point about whatever the question is asking

**Evidence** – Provide evidence in the form of data or examples of where this has taken place

**Connective** – This means that, although, on the other hand, etc

**Explain** – Fully explain your point, what it means, how it may link to other points, whether the effects are social economic environmental, remember knock on effects.

**Command words:**

Discuss

Examine

To what extent

Explain/suggest



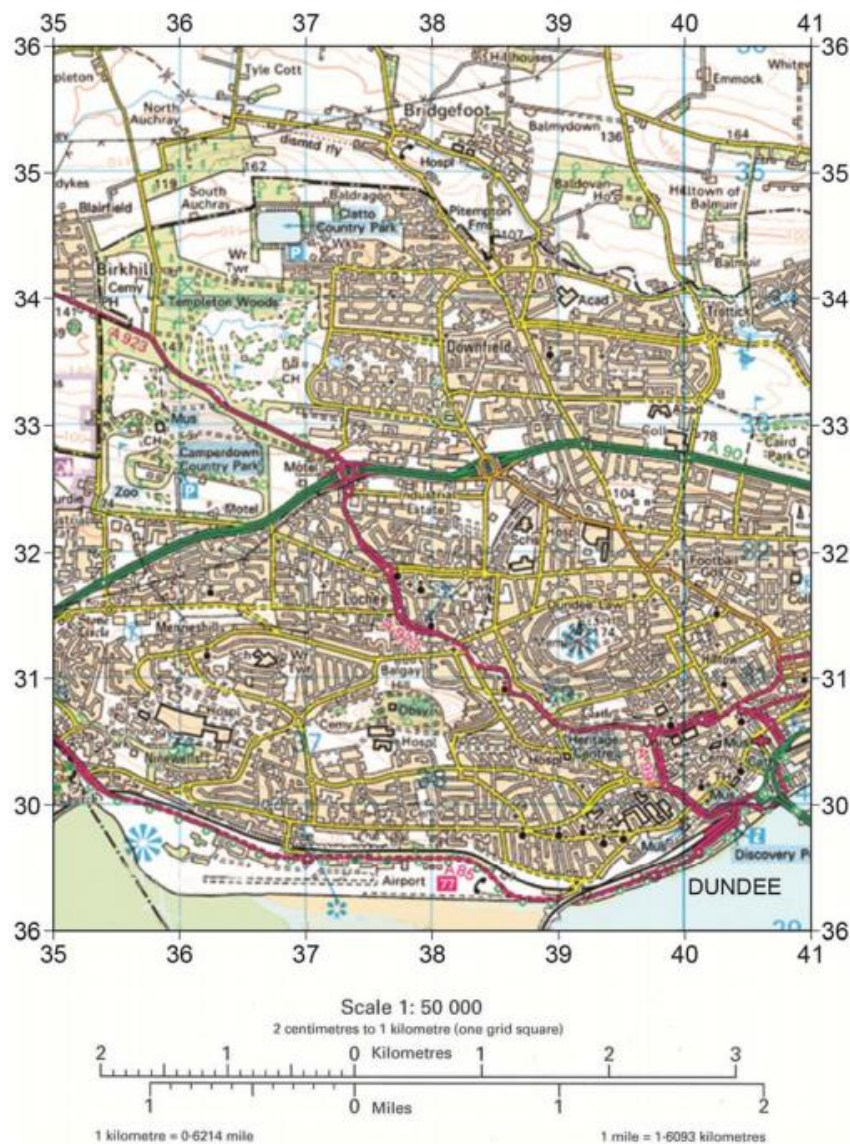
## Discuss

These will usually require to look at 2 opposing views or advantages and disadvantages of something.

- Very brief intro
- Point
- Evidence
- Connective
- Explain
  
- Point 2
- Evidence 2
- Connective 2
- Explain 2
- Conclusion

## Worked Example

Figure 3



Discuss the effects of urban sprawl on people and the environment, Use Figure 3 and a case study of a major city in the UK (6 Marks)

Urban sprawl is the process by which urban areas grow in size and expand into more rural communities. This process has a variety of effects. One positive effect is that it allows businesses to locate away from city centres. I can see this in figure 3 as it shows an industrial estate located away from the centre of Dundee near the A90. This means that workers at the estate do not need to travel into the centre of Dundee in order to get to work as a result reducing commuting time allowing them to spend more time with their families. Land on the edge of cities tends to be cheaper also meaning that residents can buy larger houses for a cheaper price than they could in the city allowing them to be able to house a larger family and also have a green, pleasant space away from the pollution of the city.

Urban sprawl is not always good however. It can have some bad environmental effects such as destruction of habitats. This has been the case in Bristol which has experienced a huge increase in population over the past few years. As a result of this areas around Bristol have been deforested and habitats destroyed leading a reduction in the number of species in that area. It has also meant that there has been an increase in pollution in areas at the edge of cities and loss of green space for recreational activities. It has also led to the destruction of farmland which has meant that food has had to be imported.

Overall I believe that the disadvantages outweigh the advantages. Urban sprawl has many benefits as discussed before for people however it is at the expense of the environment. Plus urban sprawl is not sustainable as we cannot keep expanding our cities forever.

## Examine

Examine questions tend to be about breaking the topic down into different aspects. It is likely that any 6 mark examine question will require you to break down the topic into advantages and disadvantages of a geographical concept

Use the following formula for examine questions

- Very brief intro
- Point
- Evidence
- Connective
- Explain
  
- Point 2
- Evidence 2
- Connective 2
- Explain 2
- Conclusion



## Worked Example

Examine the advantages and disadvantages of a large scale water transfer scheme that you have studied (6 Marks)

Water transfer schemes are in place to ensure that as much of the population as possible has water security (long term access to clean water). Lesotho is a country that experiences high levels of poverty but actually has a surplus of water. South Africa on the other hand needs this water. As a result the Lesotho highland water project was created which is a series of dams on the Orange River in Lesotho, however it comes with advantages and disadvantages.

One advantage of the project is that areas with unreliable rainfall will be able to have access to clean water. Farmers in South Africa to the North of Lesotho are in an area with under 150mm annual rainfall and the project aims to help them. This means that the farmers of South Africa will now be able to grow and harvest their crops all year round. It will also mean that they will be able to provide fresh drinking water for their livestock and their families. This obviously leads to an increase in life expectancy and quality of life. This is an advantage for the people of South Africa

One disadvantage of the project is that the dams have flooded villages. The Polihali Dam has been meant that 17 villages have had to be moved and the agricultural land of 71 people has been destroyed. This means that residents of the villages have had to be displaced. The farm land was particularly fertile in that area that has now been destroyed meaning their entire way of life has also been destroyed. Ordinarily, people affected by the dam's construction would be compensated but as a result of corruption, money has not reached those who need it meaning their lives have totally been destroyed.

Despite the disadvantages, I believe that the Lesotho highland water project has been a success. Water is such an important resource to the people of South Africa. Lesotho benefits as well as the government has been paid for all the water that South Africa use. This increases the country's GDP and allows them to invest in healthcare and education which is vitally needed.

## To what extent

These questions are more of an evaluation. They want you to compare 2 or more aspects to each other and justify which one you think is the most important. These are often also used in 9 mark questions.

Use the following formula when answering to what extent questions:

- Very brief intro
- Point
- Evidence
- Connective
- Explain
  
- Point 2
- Evidence 2
- Connective 2
- Explain 2
- Conclusion

## Worked example

River flooding is a natural phenomenon. To what extent do you consider this statement to be correct? (6 marks)

Flooding is a phenomenon that can be damaging to both people and property. There is however much argument as to whether the causes of flooding are natural or whether it can be influenced by human activity.

Evidence to support the statement could be in the form of heavy precipitation. This occurred in 2012 in Banbury and was in part caused by heavy precipitation. Heavy precipitation means that more water is falling on the soil than it can take. Eventually the soil becomes saturated and no more infiltration can occur. As a result you have an increase in surface run off and flooding occurs. Steep relief can also mean that water travels fast over the surface increasing surface run off and as a result, flooding. These are natural causes

Evidence against the statement could be in the form of urbanisation. This again could in part have caused the flooding in Banbury. Urbanisation has led to tarmac and concrete being laid down over what would have been soil. Tarmac and concrete are impermeable meaning that water cannot pass through them. This has meant that no infiltration can occur and surface runoff increases straight into rivers like the river Cherwell causing them to burst their banks.

Overall I feel that the statement is not entirely correct. Flooding is a natural phenomenon that has happened before humans existed, however through their actions like urbanisation they have made the situation worse.

## Explain/Suggest

These questions are probably the easiest of the 6 markers and thankfully the most common. They simply require you to explain something. The formula for explain or suggest is exactly the same. The only difference being that with suggest, it is likely that they will give you a source and ask you to interpret the source and suggest reasons for it.

Use the formula to answer explain/suggest questions

- Very brief intro
- Point
- Evidence
- Connective
- Explain
  
- Point 2
- Evidence 2
- Connective 2
- Explain 2
- Conclusion

## Worked example

**Figure 3**

The **Central Govan Action Plan** is part of the River Clyde Waterfront Urban Regeneration Project.

The **Central Govan Action Plan** will include:

- the development of two new hospitals which will serve the whole of Glasgow
- 500 new homes and improvements to run-down housing areas
- restoration of historical buildings and the development of a riverside museum
- improved shopping and recreation facilities
- the clearing of derelict industrial areas.

Using figure 3 and your own knowledge, explain how urban regeneration projects can reduce levels of deprivation (6 marks)

Deprivation is defined as residents in a certain area not being able to have as much access as the majority of the population enjoy. Throughout cities in the UK, there are many projects that are designed to reduce this.

One way to reduce urban deprivation is to provide access to jobs and education. This is shown in figure 3 in the central Govan action plan as part of the River Clyde Waterfront Regeneration Project as they have developed a riverside museum and improved shopping and recreation facilities there. This means that residents of Govan will be able to apply for employment in the retail area and also the recreation area. The source doesn't specify but the recreational area may include a leisure centre which is likely to provide not only jobs (economic advantage) but also opportunities to exercise and play sport improving their overall health and lifestyle (social advantage). The museum will provide opportunities for education for schools and residents leading to possible qualifications and better job prospects.

Another method of reducing urban deprivation is to try and attract business to invest in the area. This has been done in the temple quarter in Bristol where they are building the Bristol Arena music venue. This means that artists will come and perform in Bristol and attract a lot of people during concerts. This provides opportunities for business owners to locate in the area and take advantage of crowds. This in turn provides employment opportunities for local residents allowing them to economically improve and overall increasing the area's GDP per capita.

There are many ways to try and reduce urban deprivation. These are just a couple of examples that have been successful.

These are all of the AQA command words for 6 mark questions. Remember as a rule you only need to do 2 PECE paragraphs if you know the subject in detail. If you feel that you are a little shaky, you can get marks for adding a third.

## 9 Mark Questions

These are the big ones where you pick up the most marks. Invariably however, they tend to be more straight forward to answer than 6 mark questions regarding the command words. 9 mark questions almost always requires you to evaluate (say how good or how bad) something is. They may get you to compare it to something else. In 9 mark questions you will pick up marks for linking the points to each other if you can (see assess worked example for this)

Similar to 6 mark questions you will have to follow the same formula:

**Point** – State a point about whatever the question is asking

**Evidence** – Provide evidence in the form of data or examples of where this has taken place

**Connective** – This means that, although, on the other hand, etc

**Explain** – Fully explain your point, what it means, how it may link to other points, whether the effects are social economic environmental, remember knock on effects.

However the main difference is that you will need 3x PECE paragraphs instead of simply 2. Again if you're unsure, get 4 PECE paragraphs

## Command Words

### Assess

### Evaluate

### Justify

### Assess

These questions will usually require you to evaluate something. They will usually specify exactly what they want to assess whether it be “the extent of something as opposed to something else” or it be “the importance of something compared to something else.”

Use the following formula to answer assess questions.

- Very brief intro
- Point
- Evidence
- Connective
- Explain
- Point 2
- Evidence 2
- Connective 2
- Explain 2
- Point 3
- Evidence 3
- Connective 3
- Explain 3
- Conclusion

## Worked example

Assess the extent to which prediction is the most important factor in reducing the effects of tropical storms (9 marks)

Methods used to reduce the impacts of tropical storms can be separated into the 3Ps. Prediction, protection and preparation. When used in conjunction with each other they can provide be effective in minimising the effects of tropical storms, however there is debate over which one would be the most important.

Prediction is where forecasters attempt to assess the various characteristics of the tropical storm before it reaches land e.g. wind speed, air pressure etc. The way they can do this is by monitoring the storm with satellites and also by flying specially adapted planes into the storms and dropping dropsondes into the hurricane which measure the wind speed and the air pressure. This is very important because it allows the authorities in that country to give a warning to the public and instruct them what to do based on the information they have received. For example advising people to evacuate to higher ground if they live near the coast. Another example would be to put storm shutters on houses or boarding up windows. These are forms of preparation which shows how methods of preparation are only possible if the storms are predicted. In November 2013, Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines killing over 6000 people. The fundamental failure here was that the storm surge which was 20ft in places was not predicted and the people were not warned meaning they couldn't prepare.

Preparation methods are where residents in the path of a tropical storm take measures to minimise the effects to themselves. Examples of preparation methods include providing evacuation routes for people, warning systems and emergency kits. This is also very important because it means that people have the means to escape or at least minimise the impacts. Clear evacuation routes mean that residents can get out of the area, minimising the threat to life. Also emergency kits can be used to treat injured people and provide limited quantities of fresh water until aid arrives. As mentioned before preparation methods rely heavily on prediction to be successful.

Protection is the last method. This is where residents have access to specially adapted storm shelters or can retrofit their house to minimise storm impacts. There are storm shelters in the Philippines however nowhere near enough for the entire population. This is also very important as it means that residents may not have to evacuate which is obviously stressful and very costly to the government. It also doesn't rely so heavily on prediction being accurate as houses that are retrofitted will already be able to survive a storm even if there is no warning. Protection means that not only is the social impact (number of deaths) minimised but also the economic impacts. Houses that have been retrofitted are less likely to suffer catastrophic damage.

Overall I think that all 3 methods of reducing tropical storm impacts are equal in importance. Prediction is vital as it is the only way that people will be able to prepare. Having one without the other is pointless. However it often fail to address the economic impact and damage to property which only methods of protection can address.

## Evaluate

These questions tend to be a little more straight forward. They require you to give your own opinion on something however your opinion must be backed up with explanations, data and examples.

Use the following formula to answer evaluate questions

- Very brief intro
- Point
- Evidence
- Connective
- Explain
- Point 2
- Evidence 2
- Connective 2
- Explain 2
- Point 3
- Evidence 3
- Connective 3
- Explain 3
- Conclusion

## Worked Example

Evaluate the effectiveness of an urban planning strategy in helping to improve quality of life for the urban poor. Use an example of a city in a lower income country (LIC) or a newly emerging economy (NEE) (9 marks)

In Rio De Janeiro, there is a huge wealth disparity. Some workers are in very highly paid jobs in international companies that have located there whilst others are migrants that have come from rural areas to try and seek their fortune but have not managed to find highly paid work. They tend to live in the Favelas. The Favela Bairro project aims to help these people.

Part of the project has seen the installation of a cable car to the high income district of Ipanema. This cable car has been constructed in Rio's largest favela Rochina and residents of the favela are given one free return ticket per day. This means that residents of Rochina have a direct link to Ipanema that is paid for by the local government so they have easy access to work and jobs in Ipanema. It is likely that jobs will be more highly paid and in the tertiary sector as Ipanema is very popular with tourists. This means that they can improve the quality of life for themselves and their family and afford basic necessities such as healthcare, education and food.

The Favela Bairro project has also installed water supply and closed draining systems. Rochina is an example of a Favela where this has been implemented. This means that the risk of disease is greatly reduced. This is both a social and economic impact of the project. If disease is reduced it means that young people can attend school, socialise and improve their life chances, this is a social improvement. However it also means they are not in hospital receiving expensive treatment, this is an economic factor. It also means that the Favela may become more attractive to tourists meaning that the area receives investment from abroad.

Lastly, the Favela Bairro is paving and officially naming the roads. This has also been trialled in Rochina. This has meant that police response times have been a lot faster in areas as police vehicles can travel on the paved roads and they know where crimes have taken place as the roads are names. Used in combination with the new PPP (police pacifying units) it has meant that crime has reduced in the Favelas meaning tourists are more likely to visit meaning the area receives more investment.

Overall the scheme has seen improvements but it has experienced problems in it's implementation. The Bairro project does not have the budget to cover all the Favelas in Rio and new draining systems have not been maintained meaning sewage has leaked out causing disease in some areas. I believe that if properly maintained, the project could be a massive success but only if properly implemented and looked after.



## Justify

These questions are also fairly straight forward. They will either: give you a statement and require evidence in the form of facts, examples and explanations or they will let you make your own decision and ask you to justify it with facts examples and explanations.

Use the following formula to answer justify questions

- Very brief intro
- Point
- Evidence
- Connective
- Explain
- Point 2
- Evidence 2
- Connective 2
- Explain 2
- Point 3
- Evidence 3
- Connective 3
- Explain 3
- Conclusion

## Worked Example

Transnational Corporations (TNCs) only bring advantages to the host country. Do you agree with this statement      Yes      **No**

Justify your decision (9 marks)

TNCs are companies that operate in more than one country. They tend to have their headquarters in HICs whereas they locate manufacturing facilities in LICs where the wages are cheaper. This brings a number of advantages but (in my opinion also some disadvantages)

Firstly one advantage they bring is they usually pay higher wages than other local businesses in the area and provide training programmes for locals to gain valuable skills. An example of a company that has done this is Coca Cola in India. This has meant that local people often earn more than other residents in their city or town meaning they can afford necessities such as healthcare and education and thus improve their quality of life and life expectancy. Potentially more important than the improved wages are the opportunities to gain skills in training programmes. This allows them to progress up to management positions and also gives them transferable skills meaning that they have more opportunities to find work elsewhere should they decide to move.

Having said this however, it can also create some serious environmental problems. Using Coca Cola again, in order to make the beverage, it needs to extract the water from local water supplies. The factory has extracted far too much water leaving none for local people. This has meant that the local water supply has run dry meaning that residents of the village downstream have to travel much further for water supply. This takes up time that they could be in school learning and improving life chances and their earnings later on in life. It has also meant that the water they get can be contaminated or may not be as clean leading to diseases and potentially expensive healthcare, this is a social and economic effect.

Lastly, despite higher pay, some of the working conditions TNCs provide for their employees are extremely poor. An example of this was Nike when it located in Vietnam where workers were forced to make shoes in cramped conditions for more than 10 hours a day with no break. This has led to serious health problems for some of the workers who have often had to take extended leave of absence meaning they don't get paid and cannot support their families. There have also been reports of abuse from managers and this can have severe psychological repercussions as well.

In conclusion, I feel that TNCs locating in LICs can (if managed carefully) bring only advantages. Of the 2 disadvantages I have mentioned, I feel that the second one is easier to address whereas the first one is a little harder. TNCs will always have environmental impacts even by locating the building. So from this perspective, the statement cannot be true however if they are responsible they can minimise the impacts greatly to the point where they are very hard to notice.

Remember, 4 PECE paragraphs stand you a better chance of picking up marks if you're unsure.

**Final Points:**

- Remember, evidence can come in the form of data and statistics or example of where something has happened in a place.
- Use case studies wherever you can (especially in 6 and 9 mark questions). It adds so much more weight to your answer
- If the question says use figure 4, make sure you USE FIGURE 4 in your answer.
- **BUG the question:**  
Box – the command words  
Underline – the key words  
Glance – at the rest of the question

See example

**Evaluate** the effectiveness of an urban planning strategy in helping to improve quality of life for the urban poor. Use an example of a city in a lower income country (LIC) or a newly emerging economy (NEE) (9 marks)

- Look out for tricks (particularly on one and 2 mark questions). Remember the effects of climate change question. The Arctic is NOT a country.
- Revise your map skills. If analysing a map question remember you will get marks for mentioning the scale. Never say anything is near something else, always use North South East West.
- Make sure you know what contour lines are and how the landscape would look.
- Look at an atlas once in a while, it will help just to know where countries and continents are as well as oceans and seas.
- Remember to write like a geographer. Do not use basic words like people. Use residents or business owners etc. Avoid words like things and something (yes I am aware I have used these words in this guide but there was no alternative)
- Treat the examiner like an idiot. Remember I have been teaching you for at least 2 years so I know what you're capable of. You're just a number to the examiner, they don't know you so even if you think it's blindingly obvious, make sure the examiner knows you know it.
- Don't revise for more than 40 minutes at a time without a break.
- Do the work, you will be rewarded. I am here to help anytime.

**Best of luck**