EXAM SKILLS · EDEXCEL PSYCHOLOGY

The Command-Word Cheat Sheet

What each word wants, how much to write and a sentence that earns the marks.

Command word	What it wants	Model sentence
Identify / State / Give / Name	A point, term or fact. No elaboration.	"Opportunity sampling."
Describe	Accurate detail of what something is or what happened.	"Participants were told to give shocks rising in 15-volt steps to 450V."
Explain	A point plus why or how. Usually one mark for each.	"...which lacks ecological validity, **because** judging lines is unlike real-life conformity."
Justify	Reasons for a choice, tied to the context.	"Wilcoxon is suitable **because** it is a repeated measures design..."
Calculate	A numerical answer; follow any decimal-place or ratio instructions.	"$\chi^2 = 6.79$ (to 2 d.p.)"
Compare	Similarities and/or differences, both sides in each point.	"**Whereas** Raine used PET scans, Brendgen used twin ratings..."
Evaluate	Knowledge plus strengths and weaknesses, ending in a judgement.	"**Overall**, the model is stronger **because**..."
Assess	Like evaluate, with a clear judgement of importance or effectiveness.	"The most important limitation is..."
To what extent	Knowledge and evaluation leading to a "how far" judgement.	"**To a large extent**, because... **however**..."
Discuss	In recent Edexcel mark schemes: knowledge and understanding of the issue. Check whether evaluation is credited.	"One issue is... this means that..."

Sentence starters for the second mark

- "This is a strength/weakness **because**..."
- "**This means that**..."
- "**For example**, in [study]..."
- "**This suggests that** [person in the scenario] would..."
- "**As a result**, the findings may not..."

Scenario check: can you see details from the scenario in your answer, not just the person's name? If not, you have not applied it.

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