

Have an IDEA, then Q it

How to write a top-band *DESCRIBE* or *EXPLAIN* answer



I·D·E·A gets you the marks.

Q gets you the *top marks*.

Write the steps in this order — it is the order the marks are awarded.

Step	What you write	Sentence starters
I Identify <i>What is it?</i>	Name the concept or issue, using the correct economic term .	"This is an example of..." "The economic issue is..." "This scenario shows [cost-push inflation]..."
D Describe <i>What is it like?</i>	Give the key features : what it is, which direction, how big, who is affected.	"[X] rose / fell from __ to ___." "This is characterised by..." "The groups most affected are..."
E Explain <i>How? Why?</i>	Show the cause → effect chain . Use <i>because</i> → <i>which means</i> → <i>so</i> .	"This happens because..." "...which causes..., leading to..." "As [X] rises, [Y] falls because..."
A Apply <i>Why does it matter here?</i>	Tie it to this scenario with a figure, name or date from the source.	"In this case,..." "Using the data, [figure] shows..." "For [group], this means..."
Q Qualify <i>When might it not hold?</i>	Add a condition or assumption . This lifts you into the top band.	"However, this depends on..." "Assuming ceteris paribus,..." "The effect is bigger if demand is inelastic, because..."

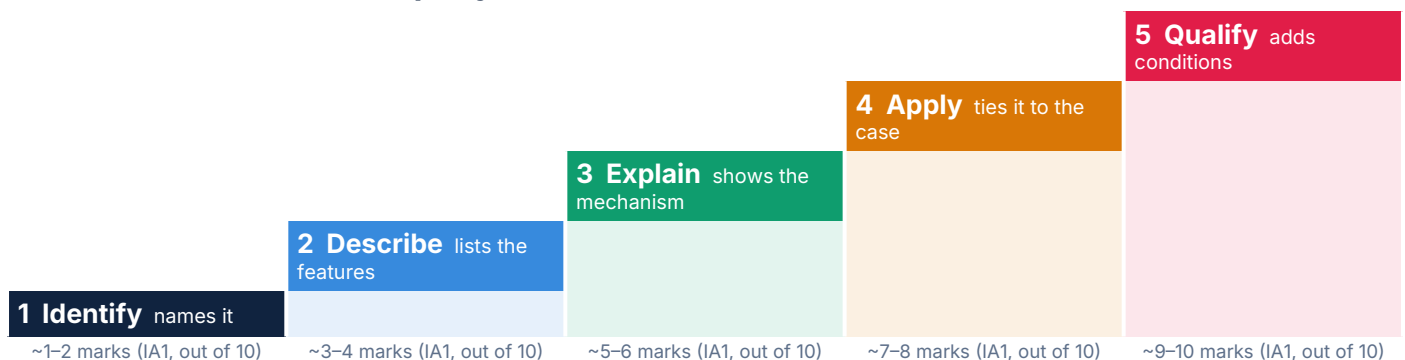
Three glue words

because → **Explain**

so → **Apply**

but → **Q**

Climb the ladder: how deep is your answer?



Pick the right kind of Explain

Why did it happen? → list the factors
What happens when...? → go step by step
What are the effects? → go group by group

Diagrams

Title it and label every axis and curve.
 Use it in your writing: "demand shifts from D_1 to D_2 , so equilibrium moves from E_1 to E_2 "

Calculations

Formula → working → answer → meaning
 $(Y_2 - Y_1) \div Y_1 \times 100 = _\%$
 Then say what the number *means*.

Worked example: IDEA + Q in action

One question, built step by step into a top-band **EXPLANATION**

THE QUESTION

Using the scenario, explain how the change in the exchange rate affects Australian beef exporters. Use a diagram to support your response.

THE SCENARIO

Over six months, the **Australian dollar fell** from US\$0.68 to US\$0.62 as the **RBA cut the cash rate** while **US interest rates stayed high**.

Australian **beef exporters** sell most of their output to the **United States**, priced in **US dollars**.

Figures are invented for practice.

KEY FIGURES

The exchange rate (US\$ per A\$1)

US\$0.68

six months ago

US\$0.62

now

Beef exports: mostly to the **US**, priced in **US\$**

MODEL ANSWER · TOP BAND

I The Australian dollar has **depreciated** against the US dollar.

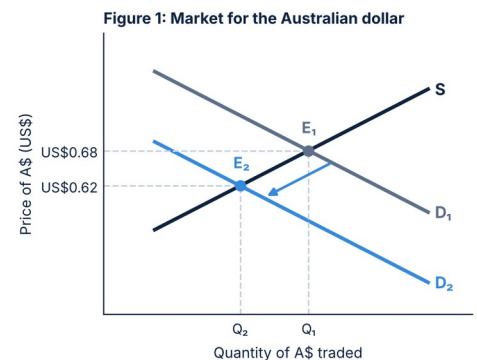
D It fell from US\$0.68 to US\$0.62, a fall of **8.8%** $[(0.62 - 0.68) \div 0.68 \times 100]$.

E **Because** lower Australian interest rates reduced foreign demand for A\$ assets, demand for the A\$ shifted left from **D₁** to **D₂** (Figure 1), **so** the exchange rate fell from **E₁** to **E₂**. This **means** each US dollar now buys more Australian dollars, so Australian beef is cheaper for US buyers.

A For **beef exporters**, a US\$1,000 sale now earns about **A\$1,613** **instead of A\$1,471**, so their revenue rises even if US prices stay the same — or they can cut prices to win market share.

Q **However**, the gain in sales **depends on** how price-elastic US demand for Australian beef is, and is smaller if exporters' fuel and feed are priced in US dollars.

Figure 1 (part of the answer)



Why it reaches the top band

- I** ✓ Correct term: *depreciated*
- D** ✓ Figures and a calculation
- E** ✓ Diagram referred to by point
- A** ✓ Tied to beef exporters, with data
- Q** ✓ A condition: *depends on...*

A 3–4 mark answer

"A depreciation is when the A\$ falls against another currency. The A\$ fell from US\$0.68 to US\$0.62. This helps exporters because exports become cheaper."

Missing: the mechanism (E), the link to beef exporters with data (A), and a condition (Q). It defines and lists, but doesn't explain.

The jump from 6 to 7 marks

A correct explanation that could be about **any** market is worth 5–6. The same explanation tied to **this** scenario — its figures, its industry, its diagram — is worth 7–8.

Ask yourself: could my answer be copied into a different question? If yes, add the **A**.