

Explain

Primary cognitive verb toolkit

What is explaining?

To explain is to make an idea, concept, situation, relationship or meaning clear by communicating more in-depth information. To explain how to solve a problem might include writing down the steps needed to achieve a result or talking to someone to guide them to a solution. Explanations enable an audience to gain insight into, and make deeper connections with, questions such as who, what, when, where, why and how.

This term is described in the notes section of the standard elaborations:

Term	Description
explain	provide additional information that demonstrates understanding of reasoning and/or application

Cognitive verb use in the Australian Curriculum

The cognitive verb explain appears in various learning area achievement standards and content descriptions in the Australian Curriculum. The table below shows the use of explain across the whole Australian Curriculum.

Explain in the Australian Curriculum achievement standards (AS) and content descriptions (CD)																
Year level	English	Health and Physical Education	HASS	History	Geography	Civics and Citizenship	Economics and Business	Mathematics	Science	Design and Technologies	Digital Technologies	Dance	Drama	Media Arts	Music	Visual Arts
Prep								AS CD								
Year 1	AS		AS	AS	AS			AS	AS	AS CD	CD					
Year 2	AS		AS	AS				AS								
Year 3			AS	AS		AS		CD		AS	AS CD					
Year 4	AS CD		AS	AS				AS	AS	AS	AS CD					
Year 5	AS CD	AS	AS		AS			AS	AS	AS	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD
Year 6	AS CD	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS		AS	AS	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD

Cognitive process

The cognitive verb explain is part of the comprehension category of cognitive process.

Cognitive skills to help explain are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify • make connections • share. 	Cognitive skills that follow explain are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse • determine • justify.
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Learning area/subject examples include, but are not limited to:

Year level	Learning area	Achievement standard	Content description
Prep	Mathematics	Students explain the order and duration of events.	Use direct and indirect comparisons to decide which is longer, heavier or holds more, and explain reasoning in everyday language (ACMMG006)
Year 1	English	Students make connections to personal experience when explaining characters and main events in short texts.	
Year 2	HASS	Students describe a person, site and/or event of significance in the local community and explain why places are important to people.	
Year 3 and 4	Design and Technologies	Students explain how products, services and environments are designed to best meet needs of communities and their environments.	
Year 5 and 6	Health and Physical Education	Students explain the influence of people and places on identities.	

More information

This factsheet is part of a suite of resources to support teachers in the explicit teaching and assessment of students' thinking. The suite of resources includes cognitive verb overviews, cognitive verb year-level overviews and categories of common cognitive verbs. The cognitive verbs are categorised using Marzano and Kendall's (2007) four levels of cognitive process: retrieval, comprehension, analysis and knowledge utilisation.

The suite of resources can be found here: www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/p-10/aciq/frequently-used-resources/cognitive-verbs.

Reference: Marzano, R & Kendall, J 2007, *The New Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA