

O Level Biology Answering Skills

What Cambridge examiners are looking for

Features of a **POOR** answer for a question worth 3 marks or more:

Features of poor answer	What does this show?
Very brief. One liner	no content & accuracy
Did not justify/explain your answer	no content
No quoting of data/figures	no content (if you are asked to describe graph)
Did not directly answer to the question	not relevant to the question
Did not have keywords/key phase (Process, examples, location, from what to what, from where to where, for what purpose)	no depth
Wrong answer	No understanding & accuracy

Features of an **A1** answer for a question worth 3 marks or more:

Features of GOOD A1 answer	What does this show?
Answers fill up the lines provided.	There is content. But need to check if answer is accurate and correct. But having write a lot of answers is better than just brief one liner, assuming the answers are accurate enough.
Students have justified and explain answer further	There is content.
Data/figures are quoted when describing graph/table etc.	There is content.
Directly answer to the question	Answer is relevant to the question
Have keywords/key phase (Process, examples, location, from what to what, from where to where, for what purpose)	There is depth.
Correct answer	Demonstrate understanding & accuracy

EXAMPLE: Explain what happens in a muscle cell when it lacks oxygen (2)

Poor answer:	When a muscle cell lacks oxygen, the cells die and cannot function
Good A1 answer:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When a muscle cell lacks oxygen, the cells are unable to <u>respire aerobically</u>.• Hence they switch to <u>anaerobic respiration</u>.• This results in less <u>energy</u> released and production of <u>lactic acid</u>.• The lactic acid produced cause muscle <u>fatigue</u>.

- Read the question carefully. Break down the question into parts especially if it contains many smaller parts. Answer every part. Highlight/ underline key words in the question.
- Answer the question accordingly. If you're asked to describe, don't explain. If you're asked to explain, don't describe.
- Pitch your answer at the level of Cambridge exam! For example, don't write 'water evaporates off the leaf surface' instead of 'water transpires'.
- Move on to the next if you think you're stuck at a question. This is because usually other questions might be easier to gain marks. So rather than wasting time on a question which you're unsure, move on to the next question. Come back to revisit the question that you're stuck and try to write something to gain 1-2 marks rather than leave blank.
- When attempting essays, always make a plan of your essay with your dot points that correspond with the number of marks. For example, in a 8-mark essay question, try to have at least 8 points or more as some points might be 1 mark, some might be 0.5marks.
- Always check your paper after finishing. If you've finished too early and your friends are busy writing away, something might be wrong! Ensure you check every page because you might miss an entire question in the last page!

Refer to Dr Wong's Answering Strategies Workshop & Essay Writing Workshop videos & notes on how to give good A1 answers!