Describe

Years 7–10 cognitive verb toolkit

What is describing?

To describe is to give an account of a situation, event, pattern or process. When describing, the writer or speaker must consider whether the target audience will be able to understand the description. Effective description, particularly description that includes complicated ideas, may require identifying relationships. For example, when describing specialised cell structures and organelles, it would be important to relate the functions to the structures to help the audience understand the concept. Simple descriptions, such as a description of the differences between pure substances and mixtures, may not require as much consideration.

A process of describing may include:

- gathering evidence in preparation for giving an account

- identifying the facts, events, patterns or processes

- putting in order the facts, events, patterns or processes

- giving an account of characteristics, features, steps or the sequence of the situation, event, pattern or process

- checking the description can be understood by the audience.

Describe as a cognition

Cognitive verbs are categorised using Marzano & Kendall's four elements of the cognitive system: retrieval, comprehension, analysis and knowledge utilisation (2007).

The cognitive verb describe is part of the comprehension element of cognitive process. This element involves the storage of 'the critical features of information in permanent memory' (p. 40).

Describe in the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0

The cognitive verb describe appears in various achievement standards (AS) and/or content descriptions (CD) in the Australian Curriculum. The following table shows the use of describe across the Australian Curriculum in Years 7–10.

Describe in the Years 7–10 Australian Curriculum AS and CD

	English	Health and Physical Education	Humanities and Social Sciences				Mathematics	Science	Technologies			The Arts				
			Civics and Citizenship	Economics and Business	Geography	History			Technologies	Design and Technologies	Digital Technologies	Dance	Drama	Media Arts	Music	Visual Arts
Year 7	CD	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD				AS	AS	AS	AS	AS
Year 8		AS	AS	AS	AS	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD				AS	AS	AS	AS	AS
Year 9						AS	AS CD	AS CD								
Year 10			AS			AS	AS CD	AS CD								

Note: The cognitive verb describe is not used in the Years 7–10 Australian Curriculum achievement standards (AS) and content descriptions (CD) for the Languages P–10 Sequence or the Languages 7–10 Sequence.

Learning area/subject examples include, but are not limited to:

Year/s	Learning area/subject	AS	CD
Year 7	The Arts: Dance	They (students) **describe** respectful approaches to creating, performing and/or responding to dance.	
Year 8	Humanities and Social Sciences: History	Students **describe** the historical significance of the periods between the ancient and modern past.	identify and **describe** the accuracy and usefulness of primary and secondary sources as evidence AC9HH8S04
Year 9	Mathematics	Students **describe** the effects of variation of parameters on functions and relations, using digital tools, and make connections between their graphical and algebraic representations.	design and conduct repeated chance experiments and simulations, using digital tools to compare probabilities of simple events to related compound events, and **describe** results AC9M9P03
Year 10	Science	They (students) sequence key events in the origin and evolution of the universe and **describe** the supporting evidence for the big bang theory.	**describe** how the big bang theory models the origin and evolution of the universe and analyse the supporting evidence for the theory AC9S10U03

References

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

More information

This information sheet is part of a suite of resources to support teachers in the explicit teaching and assessment of students' thinking. The suite of resources includes categories of common cognitive verbs, cognitive verb overviews and a cognitive verb toolkit with information sheets, posters and graphic organisers.

If you would like more information, please visit the QCAA website www.qcaa.qld.edu.au and search for 'cognitive verbs'. Alternatively, the suite of resources can be found here: www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/p-10/aciq/version-9/cognitive-verbs-in-version-9.0.