

## What is explaining?

To explain is to make an idea, concept, situation, relationship or meaning clear by communicating more in-depth information. Explaining 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.

A process of explaining may include:

- identifying the topic, idea or concept
- determining the facts, parts, processes or events involved
- making connections between facts, parts, processes or events for the audience
- writing an explanation
- checking the explanation enhances audience understanding.

## Explain 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 explain 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).

## Explain in the Australian Curriculum Version 9.0

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

Explain 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	CD	AS CD		AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS	AS	AS CD						
Year 8	AS CD	CD	AS CD	AS	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS	AS	AS CD						
Year 9			AS	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD		AS	AS CD						
Year 10	CD		AS	AS CD	AS CD	AS CD		AS CD		AS	AS CD						

Explain in the Years 7–10 Australian Curriculum AS and CD															
	Languages P–10 sequence							Languages 7–10 sequence							
	Chinese	French	German	Indonesian	Italian	Japanese	Spanish	Chinese	French	German	Indonesian	Italian	Japanese	Spanish	
Year 7	CD	CD	CD	CD	CD	CD	CD								
Year 8	CD	CD	CD	CD	CD	CD	CD								
Year 9								CD	CD	CD	CD	CD	CD	CD	CD
Year 10								CD	CD	CD	CD	CD	CD	CD	CD

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

Year/s	Learning area/subject	AS	CD
Year 7	Science	Students <b>explain</b> how biological diversity is ordered and organised. They represent flows of matter and energy in ecosystems and predict the effects of environmental changes.	<b>explain</b> how new evidence or different perspectives can lead to changes in scientific knowledge AC9S7H01
Year 8	English	They (students) <b>explain</b> the effects of language features including intertextual references and literary devices, and visual features.	<b>explain</b> how texts are structured depending on their purpose and how language features vary, recognising that some texts are hybrids that combine different genres or elements of different genres AC9E8LA03
Year 9	Digital Technologies	Students <b>explain</b> how digital systems manage, control and secure access to data; and model cyber security threats and explore a vulnerability.	represent documents online as content (text), structure (markup) and presentation (styling) and <b>explain</b> why such representations are important AC9TDI10K02
Year 10	Humanities and Social Sciences: History	Students <b>explain</b> the historical significance of the period between 1918 and the early 21st century.	compare perspectives in sources and <b>explain</b> how these are influenced by significant events, ideas, locations, beliefs and values AC9HH10S06

## 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](http://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](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/p-10/aciq/version-9/cognitive-verbs-in-version-9.0).



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