

## Generic advice on how to improve your grade:

### 1. Answer the question that is set

Some students fail to answer the actual question set. Perhaps they misread the question or answer a different question that they had prepared for. **Read the question once right through and then again more slowly.** Some students underline the key words in a question. Make sure you do not just write everything you know about the topic. **Only include information if it supports your answer** to the question set. Examiners do not award marks for correct information that is not relevant to the question. If there is a choice of questions, **make sure you can answer all parts of the question** before choosing to tackle it.

### 2. Think carefully about the length of your answer

You should **use the number of marks allocated to the question as a guide to how much you need to write.** Questions that carry 2 or 3 marks require no more than 2 or 3 lines of answer. Remember, no matter how much you write you will never score more than 2 or 3 marks. Questions that carry 8, 10 or more marks require extended writing with points being explained.

### 3. Questions based on source material

Some of the questions will be based on source material. **Make sure you use the source in your answer.** You will also need to use your knowledge of the topic to help you explain what the source means, use data if required and in subjects like History, comment on whether the source can be trusted.

### 4. Explaining, analysing and making judgements

Questions that ask for extended writing will also require you to produce explanations. These questions often ask why something happened or refer in depth to examples or case studies. Make sure you give several points and that you **expand on these points; 'so what' statements.** Some questions require you to reach a judgement, e.g. whether one cause was more important than another. You must **support your judgement with evidence.**

### 5. Quality of written communication

In those questions that require extended writing, marks are awarded for the quality of your written communication. This includes **explaining** your arguments clearly, **organising** your answers carefully, and **using correct grammar, punctuation and spelling.**

**Over and above the advice above you can further enhance the quality of your exam written performance by following the steps below:**

- Speak to your class teacher. They should be able to explain his strengths and weaknesses and give advice on how to improve. It might be an issue with controlled assessment; it could be one section of the exam which is causing problems.
- Ask for examples of 'A' grade work to look at.
- Look at the comments and marks on your work. Are there corrections to learn? What problems are being picked up, and what advice has been given? This is particularly relevant for any mock exam papers or practice questions.
- Read. Read. Read. Quality newspapers, magazines and websites will provide the exam reading material. Reading the Guardian or Telegraph online for a few minutes each day will help to develop vocabulary and familiarise yourself with the style and conventions of these texts. You might actually enjoy it too.
- Discuss issues with students of a similar ability, or adults. Challenge ideas and points of view, defend and build on your own ideas. Some students struggle with writing tasks because they are unable to develop ideas beyond the obvious.