

Design Technology - Exam tips

1. Be aware of command words. If 'describe' or 'explain' questions are given you need to explain your answers. To help you justify your responses, aim to include words such as BECAUSE... Or SO... in every answer because this forces you to justify your point, so you get additional marks. See how well it works!
2. Explain questions such as "explain why this is the most appropriate..." do not require just a list of benefits. Instead you should identify the benefits and then expand each one, applying them to the scenario or context.
3. Full answers should be given to questions - not just key words. Make your answers match the context of the question. Where you are asked to give examples, always do so. Access to higher marks will be difficult without examples.
4. Avoid simple one word answers. Adjectives such as cheap, strong or quick are unlikely to gain marks unless these are justified. For example, "robots save money on wages" is not a strong answer. It will be better to explain that "once the initial investment has been made, robots do not need to be paid wages but will require maintenance by more highly skilled workers".
5. Always include notes and sketches where you are asked to do so in a question. Support your drawings by using annotations and labels. Include details such as processes and the use of any relevant tools or equipment.
6. Questions involving mathematics should be read carefully before attempting your answer. Misreading the question is a common way to lose marks on these question types. Show your working at every stage as marks can still be awarded even if the final answer is not correct. 15% of the marks in the paper will test mathematical skills.
7. Always give answers using the correct units, E.G. mm or kg, and to the correct number of decimal places.
8. In drawing questions, look out for key features such as holes or hidden detail and incorporate them into your responses using the appropriate line styles and techniques.
9. You are required to study at least one material area however, not all material areas provide enough scope to answer all the questions that may appear in an exam, particularly with electronic and mechanical systems. For this reason, it is recommended that you study more than one material area. This gives you more knowledge and understanding to draw from and apply a greater range of questions. We have focused on timbers and polymers which is found in units 5b & 5d.
10. Time your practice questions based on roughly one mark per minute. A four-mark question should therefore be given four minutes to complete. The real paper is 100 marks in 120 minutes. This will allow you one mark per minutes with 20 minutes to check through the things at the end. Attempt every question, even if you are unsure of the question or the answer. Have a go. You might just get a mark or two, but you'll be guaranteed zero marks if you don't attempt a question at all.

Good luck!