



The Secrets of Examination Technique
NEBOSH Certificate Courses



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Passing an examination is never easy – but that is surely what makes them worth the effort. The NEBOSH Certificate qualifications, in particular, have a great reputation, but how do you go about ensuring success in the written exams?

One of the most common errors made by people in exams is failing to read the question properly. This sounds like such an obvious point but any examiner will tell you that it lies at the root of many failures!

It is important to remember that NEBOSH often give you hints in their questions as to what they expect from your answer – all you have to do is learn to read the clues. NEBOSH are not trying to “catch you out” – you just have to learn to provide them with the information they have asked you for.

It is important to identify the command word or action verb within the question, as this will give you an indication of the depth of knowledge required in your answer. The following meanings of the command words have been identified by NEBOSH:

Describe

Give a detailed written account of the subject or item. Sufficient so that someone reading that description can visualise the item in their mind's eye.

Example Question

Describe the ‘statement of intent’ section of a health and safety policy document.

Example Answer

The statement of intent is usually a one page document with a title at the top of the page followed by several paragraphs of text. At the bottom of the document there will be the name and signature of the person at the top of the organisation (e.g. the Managing Director), along with the date the document was signed and a date when the document will be reviewed. Each paragraph of text on the page will summarise the key aims and objectives of the organisation with regards health and safety.

Explain

Give an understanding of why or how something happens. With more detail than an outline would require.

Example Question

Explain the moral reason why an organisation should maintain high standards of health and safety.

Example Answer

The moral reason for maintaining high standards of health and safety arises from the basic human sense of right and wrong. When workers or others are injured or made ill by work activity they will experience pain and suffering. This pain and suffering is morally unacceptable if it can be avoided.

Give

Provide without explanation. Is often used in conjunction with example (as in: ‘give an example of’).

Example Question

Outline the meaning of the word ‘hazard’ and **give** one work-related example.



Example Answer

The word hazard means 'something with the potential to cause harm'. An example of a work-related hazard would be an electrical flex trailing across the floor of a workroom that presents a risk of tripping.

Identify

Give the item its name or title, often requiring just a word or short phrase.

Example Question

Identify FOUR organisational factors that might give rise to a poor health and safety culture within an organisation.

Example Answer

- Lack of management commitment.
- Absence of good quality training.
- Lack of consultation on health and safety matters.
- Inadequate resourcing of health and safety management.

Outline

Give a brief summary of the item or its key features. A detailed explanation is not required, but the answers must be more than just a single word or phrase.

Example Question

Outline TWO categories of worker who might be more vulnerable to risk in a workplace.

Example Answer

- Lone workers – workers who work away from immediate and direct contact with their work colleagues.
- Young people – workers who because of their age lack experience in the workplace, are immature and have a poor perception of risk.

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