



Social Studies DOK Definitions

DOK 1 (Recall of Information)

DOK 1 asks students to recall facts, terms, concepts, trends, generalizations, and theories. May require students to recognize or identify specific information contained in maps, charts, tables, graphs, drawings, or other graphics. DOK 1 often requires students to identify, list, or define. Assessment items at this level usually ask the student to recall who, what, when, and where. Items that require students to “describe” and “explain” could be classified as DOK 1 or 2 depending on what is to be described and explained. A DOK 1 “describe” or “explain” would recall, recite, or reproduce information. Items that require students to recognize or identify specific information contained in maps, charts, tables, graphs, or drawings are generally DOK 1.

DOK 2 (Basic Reasoning)

DOK 2 includes the engagement of some mental processing beyond recalling or reproducing a response. At DOK 2, students may be required to contrast or compare people, places, events, and concepts; convert information from one form to another; classify or sort items into meaningful categories; describe or explain issues and problems in their own words; describe or explain patterns, cause and effect, significance or impact, relationships, points of view or processes. A DOK 2 “describe” or “explain” would require students to go beyond a description or explanation of recalled information to describe or explain a result, including a discussion of how or why.

DOK 3 (Application)

DOK 3 requires reasoning, using evidence, and a higher level of thinking than the previous two levels. Students would go beyond knowing *how* and *why* to justifying the *how* and *why* through application and evidence. The cognitive demands at DOK 3 are more complex and more abstract than at DOK 1 or 2. Assessment items at DOK 3 include drawing and justifying conclusions based on evidence; using concepts to explain *how* and *why*; using concepts to solve problems; analyzing similarities and differences among issues and problems; proposing and evaluating solutions to problems; recognizing and explaining misconceptions or making connections across time and place to explain a concept or big idea.

DOK 4 (Extended Reasoning)

DOK 4 demands are at least as complex as those of DOK 3 but a main factor that distinguishes the two categories is the need to perform activities over days and weeks (DOK 4) rather than in one sitting (DOK 3). The extended period of time (days to weeks or beyond) allows for planning, developing, and creating original work and requires metacognitive awareness. These components of an extended task typically increase the complexity of a DOK 4 project overall, in comparison with DOK 3 activities. The extended time period is not a distinguishing factor if the required work is only repetitive and does not require applying significant conceptual understanding and higher-order thinking. DOK 4 performance may require students to analyze and synthesize information from multiple sources; develop a logical argument; plan and develop solutions to problems; connect and relate ideas and concepts *within* the content area or *among* content areas; examine and explain alternative perspectives across a variety of sources; and/or describe and illustrate how common themes and concepts are found across time and place.

Most on-demand assessment instruments will not include assessment activities that could be classified as DOK 4. However, standards (learning expectations) may expect students to perform at a DOK 4.

General Guidelines for Assigning DOK:

- The DOK definitions can be applied to social studies standards, tasks, or activities.
- Consider the complexity of the content demands, not the difficulty for students.
- Consider the experience (prior knowledge) and grade-level expectations of a typical student.
- Do not rely on verbs (describe, explain, evaluate, etc.). Instead, consider the content complexity required for an adequate response.
- For multiple-choice assessment items, consider the item as a whole—including distractors—to judge complexity.
- An expectation or item that is confusing due to error or wording does not reflect increased content complexity—it simply means the statement needs revisions.
- The social studies DOK descriptions were developed by Ann Prewitt and Fred Czarra.