

How CBSE Actually Awards Marks — Step Marking & Value Points

A companion download to the Cogniks blog post: "AI Essay & Answer Checkers: Can They Actually Grade Like a CBSE Examiner?" — cogniks.com

1. What Is Step Marking?

CBSE examiners follow an official marking scheme for every question — a document with model answers, step-by-step mark breakups, and "value points" that must appear in your answer to earn credit. For numerical and derivation-based questions, marks are awarded for each correct step, even if your final answer is wrong.

Example: a 3-mark Maths/Physics numerical	
Step	What it usually earns
Correct formula / concept identified	1 mark
Correct substitution of values	1 mark
Correct final answer with correct unit	1 mark

Even if the final answer is wrong, a student who shows the correct formula and correct substitution can still pick up 2 of the 3 marks.

2. What Are "Value Points"?

For theory and long-answer questions, the marking scheme lists specific value points — key ideas, keywords, or reasoning steps the answer should include. An examiner scans for these value points rather than judging the answer as a single block of text. This is exactly the kind of checklist an AI tool can help you build for yourself, if you feed it the right question and ask the right way (see the companion checklist PDF).

3. Rules Examiners Actually Follow

- Alternate correct methods are accepted, even if they differ from the model answer in the marking scheme.
- Marks are awarded for correct steps even when the final answer is incorrect (numerical/derivation questions).
- No marks are deducted for using a different but valid method to reach the same correct answer.
- Language and content are often graded separately in language-subject essays and letters — expression, format, and content each carry defined marks.
- Diagrams and labelling in Science/Geography usually carry their own separate marks, independent of the written explanation.
- Neat cutting/overwriting does not cost marks as long as the final answer is legible and unambiguous.

These are general patterns drawn from CBSE's published marking scheme guidelines. Official, subject-wise marking schemes for each exam year are released at cbse.gov.in/cbsenew/marketing-scheme.html — always check the exact scheme for your subject and year rather than relying on general patterns alone. © Cogniks — cogniks.com