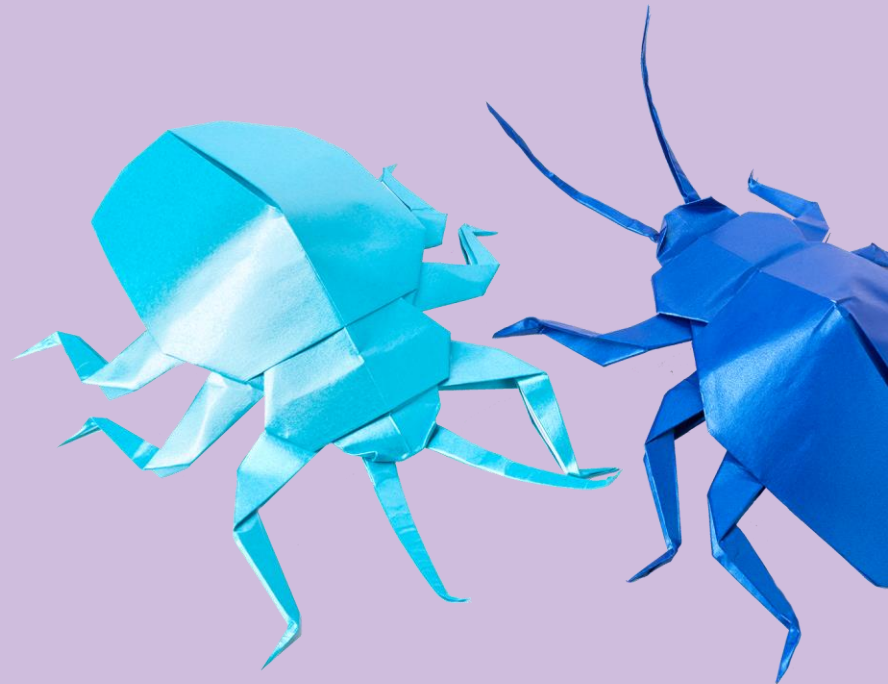


A Level Music

Understanding the Assessment Criteria – Composition



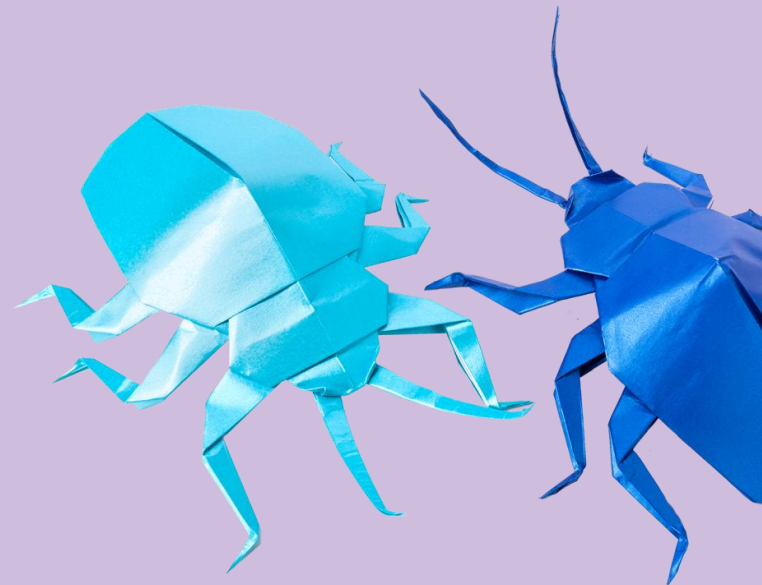
Specification

- Component 2: Composing
- AO2: To create and develop musical ideas with technical and expressive control and coherence
- 30% of GCE A Level (60 marks)
 - 40 marks free choice/set brief composition
 - 20 marks Brief assessing technique (BAT)
- Free choice /set brief composition minimum length 4 minutes
- Pearson Edexcel set briefs OR candidates state the intended purpose/style and intended audience/occasion
- Score – Recording – Authentication Sheet
- All submitted online by 15 May each year

Agenda

- Introduction
- The Specification
- The Assessment Criteria: individually
- Applying the Assessment Criteria: complete assessments

Assessment criteria



Using the composition assessment grids

We use the **same grids** for Free compositions and for Compositions to a set brief.

3 assessment grids

1. Creating and developing Musical ideas with **coherence** (13 marks)
2. Creating and developing Musical ideas with **Expressive control** (14 marks)
3. Creating and developing Musical ideas with **Technical control** (13 marks)

Levels-based

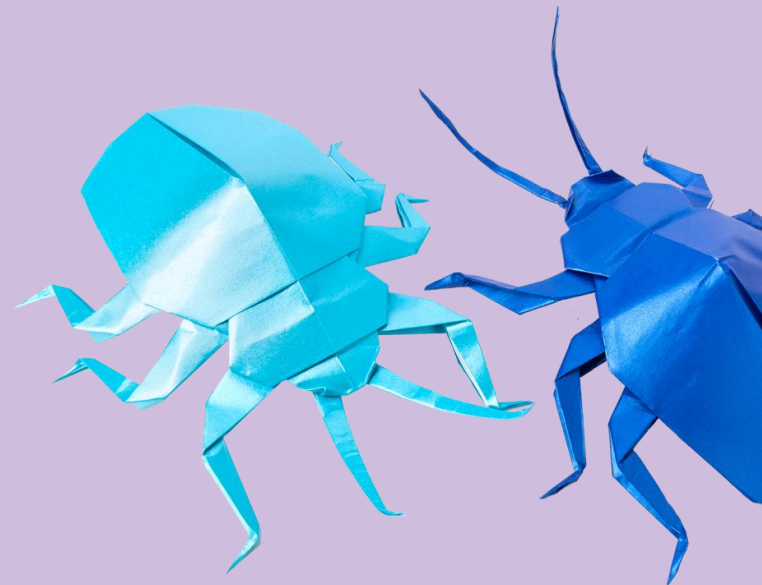
- Each level spans 2 or 3 marks
- 2 or 3 bulleted descriptors in each level
- Examiner must decide which level and then which mark within that level

Using the composition assessment grids

We apply a 'best-fit' principle to decide on the mark for each grid.

- Beginning at Level 5, work *down* until you find the level which best describes the work overall.
- Within that level:
 - If all of the bulleted statements are fulfilled *convincingly*, give the highest mark (all levels) – or consider moving *up* into the next level
 - If some of the statements apply at that level, but there is any evidence to suggest the level below, give the middle mark (Levels 2, 3, 4, 5)
 - If only *one* statement applies, or *some, but inconsistently*, give the lowest mark (all levels) – or consider moving *down* a level

Assessment Grid 1



Grid 1: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Coherence

- Quality, extension and development of musical ideas
- Management of structure: overall shape
- Balance between unity and variety
- Bar to bar coherence and fluency

Grid 1: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Coherence

Key phrases from the descriptors:

- Level 1 – ‘obtrusive misjudgements that compromise the effectiveness of the piece .. perhaps repetitive, predictable ... too great a diversity of ideas’
- Level 2 – ‘obvious misjudgements... lack of direction in parts ...lacks fluency and variety’
- Level 3 – ‘developed and extended in parts... misjudgements do not detract from overall effectiveness... satisfactory use of basic structures...fluency and contrast will be maintained for the most part ...’
- Level 4 – ‘developed and extended effectively for most of the piece...some sense of wholeness... some sense of fluency ... balance of unity and variety that is convincingly maintained’
- Level 5 – ‘developed and extended with assurance and imagination throughout... sense of wholeness... sophisticated sense of fluency ...mature balance of unity and variety throughout’

Grid 1: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Coherence



Composition 1

Title of piece: Pop song

Set brief: Intended as the debut single for a girl or boy band selected during a TV talent show. The piece contains at least one contrasting section.

Grid 1: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Coherence

Composition 1

Coherence:

Not assured, imaginative or sophisticated enough for Level 5, but **Level 4** descriptors fit this piece:

Ideas are developed and extended effectively for most of the piece.

A pop song which uses an adapted song structure to extend develop its material, albeit mostly by repetition. There are clear and recognisable sections to the song, which are linked successfully to form a fluent whole. The piece goes some way beyond a conventional verse-chorus structure, with the addition of other sections (Intro/Pre-chorus/Bridge/Guitar solo) .

Musical elements and ideas all contribute to some sense of wholeness with some sense of fluency and a balance of unity and variety that is convincingly maintained .

There is variety here, provided by contrasting musical materials in the middle section (the spoken materials and the guitar solo) and enough repetition of the main chorus to provide balancing unity and some sense of wholeness, *although there is just a little too much repetition overall for the descriptor to be fully met.* The move from the guitar solo into the pre-chorus near the end is also effective, and the upward modulations of the repeated choruses near the end, although a little clichéd, also help to maintain interest and momentum.

As the second descriptor is not fully met, the middle mark for the level is appropriate.

Mark: 10

Grid 1: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Coherence



Composition 2

Set brief: Introduction and Allegro for Viola and String Orchestra.
Intended to accompany a Figure skating competition.

Grid 1: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Coherence

Composition 2

Not Levels 4 or 5, but Level 3

Musical ideas are developed in parts and any misjudgements do not detract from the overall effectiveness of the piece

There is some development and extension of ideas here, with the *Introduction* presenting an idea in the accompanying strings that is then developed in the Solo Viola. The development of material in the cadenza and the following *Allegro* section is less effective, with much rather mechanical semiquaver solo passage work that does little to promote either bar to bar coherence or a sense of direction – the piece is less effective as a result.

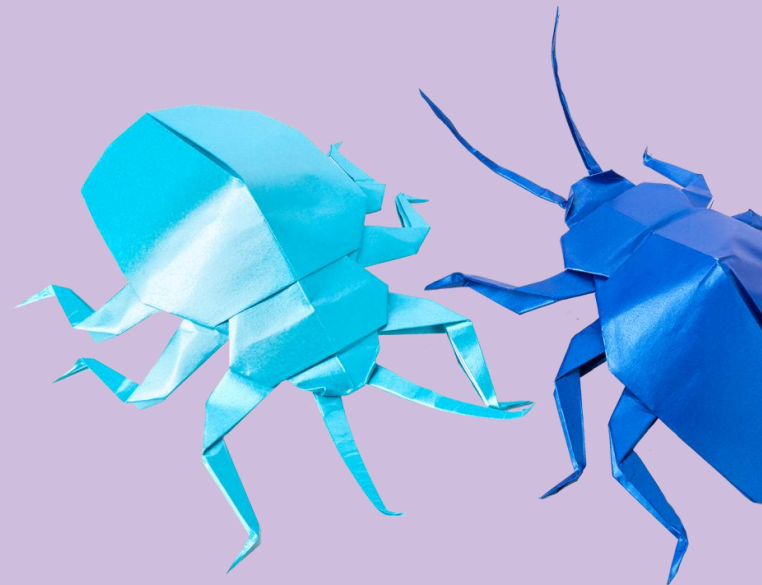
The piece demonstrates a satisfactory use of basic structures; these may be formulaic or standard forms with an attempt at some extension and development. Fluency and variety will be maintained for the most part.

The overall shape is perhaps workable, but the positioning, length and tonality of the cadenza are questionable. The *Allegro* section has some harmonic coherence, but the over-use of sustained accompaniments stifles any rhythmic momentum or real fluency. Mainly, this piece lacks a variety of musical materials and ideas.

Neither of the level descriptors is fully met, but the shortcomings do not quite match those of Level 2 meaning that the lowest mark for Level 3 is appropriate.

Mark: 6

Assessment Grid 2



Grid 2 ... Expressive control

- Use the upper two bullets in each level for Free compositions
- Use the lower two bullets in each level for Compositions to a set brief
- Assesses the expressive impact of the music, in response to the brief
- Look for contrasted and well-paced moods, atmosphere and effects
- Assess the suitability of the music for its audience and occasion
- Levels 2, 3 and 4 again need to be clearly differentiated:
 - Level 2 'a few contrasted and well-paced moods....obvious misjudgements'
 - Level 3 'creative... some contrasted and well-paced moods... communicated successfully in parts'
 - Level 4 'ambitious and creative... contrasted and well-paced moods... communicated successfully for most of the piece'
- Level 5
 - 'maturity and confidence.. communicated successfully throughout'

Grid 2: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Expressive control



Composition 3

Title of piece: Practice Love

Purpose and style/genre: Pop song

Audience and occasion: To be performed at a Charity event to raise awareness of Domestic violence

Grid 2: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Expressive control

Composition 3

Lacks the real maturity and confidence for Level 5.

Level 4

An ambitious and creative response to the brief

There is definitely creativity displayed here, but the piece is not always ambitious.

The musical elements are used to create contrasted and well-paced moods, atmospheres and effects that are communicated successfully for most of the piece.

Communicates the main emotional mood successfully, for most of the piece. The subject matter and aim of the piece is suitably put across, and would be suitable for the audience and occasion. However, there is some lack of emotional contrast here, which does not fully meet the descriptor.

As the descriptors are not fully met a mark in the middle of the level is appropriate.

Mark: 10

Grid 2: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Expressive control



Composition 4

Title of piece: The Invisible

Purpose and style/genre: Film score

Audience and occasion: Music for Horror film

Grid 2: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Expressive control

Composition 4

Does not fit descriptors for Levels 5, 4 and 3.

Level 2

A response to the brief that lacks sophistication and/or detail.

The ideas here are rather basic, and do not show enough character to be effective in supporting the images of a Horror film. Contains many clichés of Horror film scores, but these are presented rather mechanically. The lack of information on any plot details in the brief does not help us here.

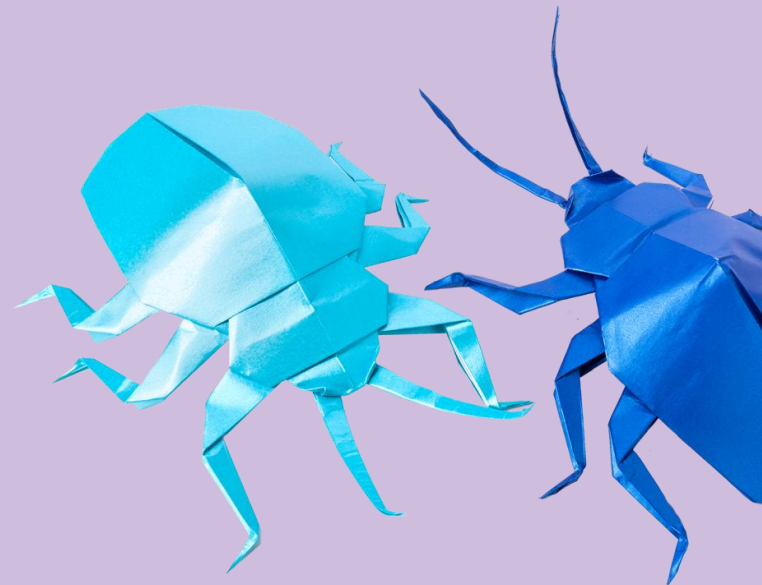
The musical elements are used to create a few contrasted and well-paced moods, atmospheres and effects but there some obvious misjudgements.

There is some sense of the atmosphere of the brief at the start, but the piece is quite unsophisticated, with few real contrasts. Notably, there is little or no use made of dynamic build-ups or contrasts within the sections here, so there is little sense of suspense or movement towards dramatic points.

Fits the descriptors fully, but not so fully as to merit Level 3

Mark: 5

Assessment Grid 3



Grid 3: Creating and Developing music ideas with... Technical control

Covers a range of features, so 'best-fit' skills are essential here for an accurate assessment. The balance of weak and strong features needs to be carefully weighed up here.

- Use of musical elements
 - Melody
 - Harmony
 - Rhythm
 - Tonality
 - Tempo, metre and rhythm
- Use of stylistic devices and conventions
- Handling of forces and textures

Grid 3: Creating and Developing music ideas with ...Technical control

Level descriptors: key phrases

Levels 2, 3, 4 and 5

- Level 2 ‘secure in some of the piece.. obvious misjudgements and/or inconsistencies... forces and textures inconsistently handled’
- Level 3 ‘generally secure...misjudgements do not detract... forces and textures may lack variety..’
- Level 4 ‘secure... minor misjudgements... stylistic conventions handled convincingly... forces and textures handled idiomatically... variety’
- Level 5 ‘assured and sophisticated handling of elements throughout.. Forces and textures are handled idiomatically.... exploited and varied with creativity and authority’

Grid 3: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with technical control



Composition 5

Title of piece: Olivia

Purpose and style/genre: A contemporary duet for Musical Theatre

Audience and occasion: A community production of 'Twelfth Night'.

Grid 3: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Technical control

Composition 5

Does not fit Levels 5 or 4.

Level 3

The control of elements and the control of stylistic devices and conventions for the chosen genre/style are generally secure and any misjudgements do not detract from the overall effectiveness of the piece.

The melodies mostly have shape, but there are some errors in the construction of the main vocal idea, which is weakened on every appearance by its final descent to the subdominant. The instrumental melodies for both Trombone and Saxophone are also rather angular. Rhythmic flow is mostly maintained but there are some quite regular awkward moments in the harmony.

The piece does show some understanding of the conventions of Music theatre, such as the use of instrumental passages to underscore spoken dialogue and the dramatic effect of the entry of the second voice near the end.

Grid 3: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Technical control

Composition 5 (continued)

Forces and textures are handled without serious misjudgement although they lack variety and/or development in places.

Vocal lines are secure, but there are occasional word setting problems and a somewhat stilted feel overall. Accompaniment textures are mostly secure but perhaps a little too unvaried and perhaps also a little cluttered at times. The instrumental writing is playable, but does not show a high level of understanding, for example in the lack of articulation for the Saxophone or Trombone, or in the rather repetitive percussion part.

Although the descriptors regarding Style, forces and textures were met at this level, the Melodic and harmonic shortcomings weakened the fit with the first descriptor: a mark in the middle of the level was awarded.

Mark: 7

Grid 3: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with technical control



Composition 6

Title of piece: Agnus Dei

Purpose and style/genre: A sacred choral piece for a modern Requiem Mass

Audience and occasion: Church performance

Grid 3: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Technical control

Composition 6

Not quite varied or consistent enough for Level 5.

Level 4

The control of elements is secure for most of the piece. Any misjudgements are minor.

This piece makes ambitious and mostly successful use of non-functional and, at times, quite dissonant harmony. Sometimes, this focus on the pure sound of chords leads to progressions that slightly lose direction. Both melody and rhythm are secure here, but neither have quite the effect of the harmony. Effective use is made of dynamics in this piece.

Stylistic devices and conventions for the chosen genre/style have been selected appropriately and handled convincingly, but with one or two minor misjudgements.

This piece shows a very good understanding of the modern Church style, with successful 'nods' to composers such as Whitacre and Tavener.

Grid 3: Creating and Developing Musical Ideas with Technical control

Composition 6 (continued)

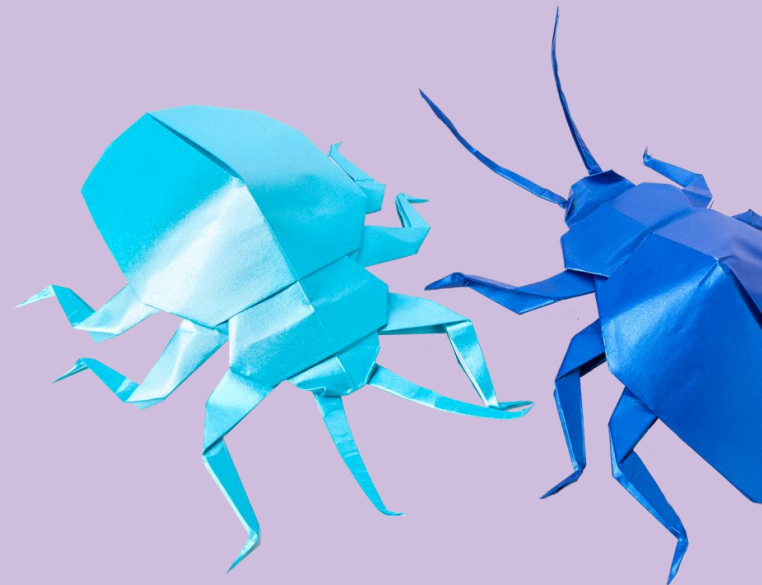
The forces and textures are handled idiomatically with some development and variety.

The vocal writing is mostly effective, but there are a couple of sections where it becomes rather lacking in textural variety. Overall, the handling of the forces is idiomatic and develops well through the piece, showing a good feeling for register, range and vocal combinations.

Although there are some caveats for the first and third descriptors here, these are quite minor, and the descriptors for Level 4 were fully met. However, it was these minor shortcomings that prevented the piece from being at Level 5 for this criteria.

Mark: 11

Applying the criteria for a complete assessment



Applying the criteria – Composition 7



Composition 7

Title of piece: Conflict in the valley

Purpose and style/genre: Piano solo. A piece of programmatic music depicting a fantasy setting and journey

Audience and occasion: To be performed at a concert

Applying the criteria – Composition 7

Grid 1: Coherence

Level 2, but with some features at Level 1, resulting in the lowest mark in Level 2. There is some development and extension of material here, but the piece does lose direction quite often and there are frequent obvious misjudgments. There is an attempt at basic structure here, but the piece often lacks bar to bar coherence and fluency. Although the opening material does return, there is too much unstructured variety.

Mark: 3

Grid 2: Expressive Control

Level 2. A response that lacks sophistication and detail. The opening section is the only one to create a clear mood, and the music that follows flits from idea to idea rather incongruously, rarely establishing a new effect before moving on. The intent shown by the composer's annotations in the score is not often realised.

Mark: 4

Applying the criteria – Composition 7

Grid 3 : Technical control

Level 2, but with some features at Level 1. Some secure moments here, such as the opening 16 bars, where melody, harmony and rhythm are combined quite successfully. However, the majority of the piece contains some obvious misjudgements in the use of elements which do affect the success of the piece. There is little consistency in the style attempted. The Piano writing is also inconsistent, with some obvious misjudgements, such as bars 23-28, showing little feel for the instrument.

Mark: 3

Total: 10/40

Grid 1 (/13)	Grid 2 (/14)	Grid 3 (/13)	Total (/40)
3	4	3	10

Applying the criteria – Composition 8



Composition 8

Title of piece: String Quartet No. 1 Mvt. 1

Purpose and style/genre: A String Quartet in Sonata Form written to reflect the features of the Classical Period.

Audience and occasion: For a Performance at a Chamber Concert in a local venue

Applying the criteria – Composition 8

Grid 1: Coherence

Level 5

Excellent work which fits the descriptor here fully. An imaginative and assured articulation of Sonata Form here with excellent extension and development of ideas throughout. There is a real sense of wholeness here, sophisticated fluency and a mature balance of unity and variety throughout. As all descriptors are fully met the highest mark in the level is appropriate.

Mark: 13

Grid 2: Expressive Control

Level 5

Elements are used with maturity and confidence to create contrasting moods of a high quality, but there are occasional moments where the level of interest does lapse a little, for example in the second subject material. Very well-developed sense of the audience and occasion. As the descriptors are not fully met a mark at the lower end of the level is merited.

Mark: 12

Applying the criteria – Composition 8

Grid 3: Technical control

Level 5

Assured and sophisticated use of the elements throughout, showing excellent melodic and harmonic control in particular. A strong sense of style is displayed throughout.

Textures are tightly managed and the writing for the quartet is creative and confident throughout.

As all the descriptors are fully met the highest mark in the level is appropriate.

Mark: 13

Grid 1 (/13)	Grid 2 (/14)	Grid 3 (/13)	Total (/40)
13	12	13	38

Candidates 1–6 complete mark breakdowns

Composition 1

Grid 1 (/13)	Grid 2 (/14)	Grid 3 (/13)	Total (/40)
10	8	9	27

Composition 2

Grid 1 (/13)	Grid 2 (/14)	Grid 3 (/13)	Total (/40)
6	7	6	19

Composition 3

Grid 1 (/13)	Grid 2 (/14)	Grid 3 (/13)	Total (/40)
8	10	10	28

Candidates 1–6 complete mark breakdowns

Composition 4

Grid 1 (/13)	Grid 2 (/14)	Grid 3 (/13)	Total (/40)
4	5	5	14

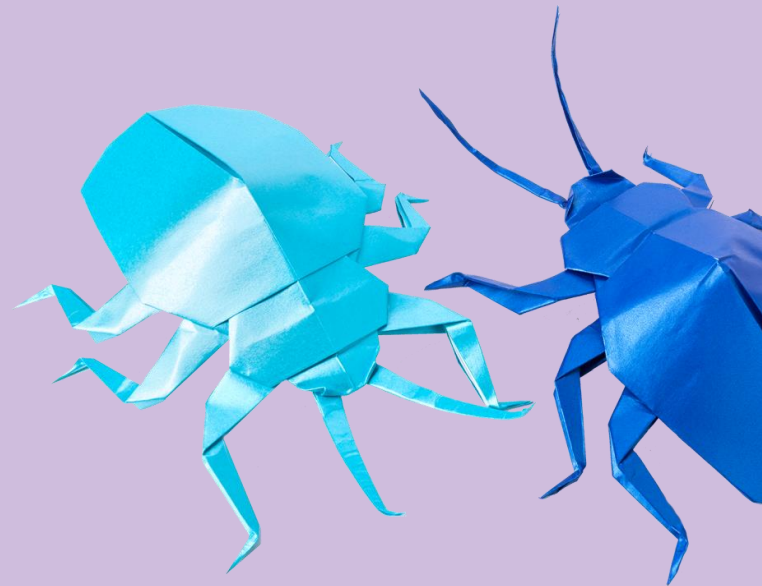
Composition 5

Grid 1 (/13)	Grid 2 (/14)	Grid 3 (/13)	Total (/40)
7	6	7	20

Composition 6

Grid 1 (/13)	Grid 2 (/14)	Grid 3 (/13)	Total (/40)
10	10	11	31

Any questions?



Further Support

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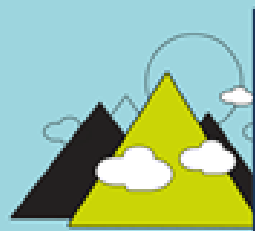
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