

## It's difficult

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Question 26 asked about ways of saying something was difficult:

**26** Jostie found the maths test really difficult. What would he say about it?

The only really common response was *hard*. This was so common that we judged that it would be in everyone's dialect, and did not code it.

The responses to this question were characterised by their variety. There were a very large number of responses which were reported just once, and many more just twice. A few of these were the "good" descriptive words (in the parlance of the classroom) available in the general language system as alternatives to *hard*, and encouraged by teachers: *challenging*, *harsh*; but most were current slang negatives: *gay*, *sad*; *scary*, *budget*. When all of these low frequency terms had been eliminated, and a few simplifications made (grouping *crust*, *crusty*, for instance), there were only thirteen terms which occurred sufficiently frequently to be worth considering. These were (with number of occurrences in brackets): *It sucks/ed* (44); *It was hard as* (19); *It was dumb* (13); *It was stink* (12); *It was (nearly) impossible* (10); *It was tricky* (8); *It was too hard* (8); swear words (8); *It was not easy* (7); *It was boring* (7); *Far out* (7); *It was the easiest* [with sarcasm] (7); *It was crap* (6).

Because there were too many terms to plot on one map, they were divided into two groups on the basis of frequency (the first five in one group, and the rest in the second).

There appear to be no patterns at all in the distribution of these terms, although *It sucks/ed* was of extremely high frequency to the general exclusion of other terms in Southland-Otago (including the lake resorts). We are left to conclude that *It was hard* is the norm throughout the country, and completely satisfies this communicative need.

No items were of sufficient interest to make statistical analysis worthwhile, and for the same reason, no maps are included.