

Instructive/Direction keywords

What sort of essay do I have to write?

In an essay topic, these words tell you what type of essay your lecturer wants you to write. Different instructive or task words have different meanings, so different instructive or task words tell you to write different types of essays.

Instructive keyword	Meaning
A question mark	An implicit discussion essay – see <i>Discuss</i>
Analyse	Break down the topic into its parts, explain the nature or relative importance of components, definitions or concepts and explain how they are interrelated and why certain outcomes occurred.
Comment	Express an opinion on the issue or topic. Such an opinion should draw upon both supporting and opposing evidence with your preference clearly stated.
Compare	Look for similarities and differences between propositions or topics.
Contrast	Identify aspects or characteristics of two or more concepts or entities; discuss how they are similar and how they are different then present your own evaluation.
Critically analyse	Break down the topic into its component parts, explain the nature or relative importance of components, definitions or concepts and explain how they are interrelated. Also discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the definitions and concepts.
Criticise	Evaluate the merit and points out the strengths and weaknesses of opinions, propositions and theories; evaluate the degree of truth observed and support with evidence.
Define	Set down the precise meaning and establish the boundaries of a topic. Show that the distinctions implied in the definition are necessary.
Describe	To give a detailed account of the different aspects of the topic.
Discuss	To consider a topic from various points of view; to reveal, consider and represent aspects of an issue in general terms.
Enumerate	Provide a listing of the representative facts or elements of a topic.
Evaluate	Pass judgement on the worth on something. Such judgement should be extensively supported by pertinent evidence.

Instructive keyword	Meaning
Examine critically	Present in depth and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the topic.
Explain	To make plain or clear; to advise the meaning; to interpret.
Illustrate	Make clear or explain using examples, comparisons, diagrams or graphs.
Interpret	To bring out the meaning of a topic or proposition, usually also giving your own judgement.
Justify	Provide adequate grounds or examples to support conclusions or decisions.
Outline	Briefly identify and present systemically the most important aspects or elements of a topic.
Relate	Show how the facts are connected or interrelated.
Review	Make a summary examining the topic critically.
State	Present a topic succinctly and clearly.
Summarise	Give a concise account, omitting details and examples.
Why	<i>See Discuss</i>