



Instruction Word	Suggested Approach
Analyse	Break an issue into its constituent parts. Look in depth at each part using supporting arguments and evidence for and against as well as how these interrelate.
Clarify	Literally, make something clearer and, where appropriate, simplify it. This could involve, for example, explaining in simpler terms a complex process or theory, or the relationship between two variables.
Comment upon	Pick out the main points on a subject and give your opinion, reinforcing your point of view using logic and reference to relevant evidence, including any wider reading you have done.
Compare/contrast:	Identify the similarities and differences between two or more phenomena. Say if any of the shared similarities or differences are more important than others. 'Compare' and 'contrast' will often feature together in an essay question.
Consider	Say what you think and have observed about something. Back up your comments using appropriate evidence from external sources, or your own experience. Include any views which are contrary to your own and how they relate to what you originally thought.
Critically evaluate	Give your verdict as to what extent a statement or findings within a piece of research are true, or to what extent you agree with them. Provide evidence taken from a wide range of sources which both agree with and contradict an argument. Come to a conclusion, based on what you judge to be the most important factors why.
Define	To give in precise terms the meaning of something. Bring to attention any problems posed with the definition and different interpretations that may exist.
Describe	Provide a detailed explanation of the processes behind how and why something happens.
Discuss	A written debate where you are using your skill at reasoning, backed up by carefully selected evidence to make a case for and against an argument, or point out the advantages and disadvantages of a given context. Remember to arrive at a conclusion
Examine	Look in detail and establish the key facts and important issues surrounding a topic. Offer reasons as to why the facts and issues you have identified are the most important, as well as explain the different ways they could be construed.
Explain	Clarify a topic by giving a detailed account as to how and why it occurs, or what is meant by the use of this term. Write clearly, so that complex concepts can be understood, define key terms where appropriate and substantiate with relevant research.
Illustrate	Similar to 'explain', whereby you are asked to show the workings of something, making use of examples and statistics if appropriate to add weight to your explanation.
Interpret	Demonstrate your understanding of an issue or topic. This can be the use of particular terminology by an author, or what the findings from a piece of research suggest to you. In the latter instance, comment on any significant patterns and causal relationships.
Justify	Make a case by providing a body of evidence to support your ideas and points of view. In order to present a balanced argument, consider opinions that may run contrary to your own before stating your conclusion.
Outline	Convey the main points placing emphasis on global structures and interrelationships rather than minute detail.
Review	Look thoroughly into a subject. This should be a critical assessment and not merely descriptive.
State	To specify in clear terms the key aspects pertaining to a topic without being overly descriptive. Refer to evidence and examples where appropriate.
Summarise	Give a condensed version drawing out the main facts and omit superfluous information. Brief or general examples will normally suffice for this kind of answer
To what extent	This type of question calls for a thorough assessment of the evidence in presenting your argument. Explore alternative explanations where they exist.