

Instruction words for assignments: remember that meanings below depend to some extent on the **topic** of the question and its focus

INSTRUCTION	MEANING
account for	Give reasons for; explain why something occurs
analyse	A close examination; break topic down and show understanding of parts and their relationship and importance; look at cause and effect; explain the processes involved; provide evidence
argue	Present a case for and against
assess	Decide upon importance or value of something; weigh up strengths and weaknesses
comment on	Identify and write on main issues, giving your justified (evidenced) reactions to something (without too much personal opinion)
compare	Discuss two or more aspects - similarities and differences
contrast	Discuss two or more aspects of topic, focusing on their differences – give reasons why they are different
consider	Show knowledge and understanding of topic, and weigh up arguments related to it
criticise	Think of film critics: give a judgment about something – strengths as well as weaknesses.
<i>critically</i>	'Critically' may be added to other instruction words in the question such as <i>compare/contrast/analyse/assess/consider</i> to make you judge strengths and weaknesses
define	Make clear what is meant or use a definition or definitions to explore a concept
describe	Show your thorough knowledge of topic by presenting a detailed account
discuss	Not only do you need to give a description of the topic but you also need to interpret it, evaluate it by weighing up arguments for and against it, and reach a conclusion
distinguish between	Bring out the differences between two or more aspects (see 'contrast')
INSTRUCTION	MEANING

enumerate	Give an item by item account of something
evaluate	Weigh up evidence for and against/advantages and disadvantages and attempt to form a judgment
examine	Look in detail at; consider and investigate
explain	Describe and expand upon; show reason or cause of something; demonstrate thorough understanding
illustrate	Offer examples to show how or why something occurs; show your understanding of a concept by giving examples
interpret	Make clear the meaning of something and its implications; opinion may be needed
justify	Give reasons why decisions have or should be taken or for accepting an argument
list	Literally do this – give a list of items but in sentences
narrate	Tell the story – has a time line and a perspective
outline	Give a summary description of a topic or theme, and the issues involved, by identifying the main features of something, not the details
prove	Show by logical argument
relate	Show connections and similarities between two or more aspects of a topic
review	Give a summary or survey of topic; report the main facts; sometimes may mean 'critically assess' (see above)
state	Give the main features in clear, factual language; omit details
support	Give evidence in favour of
summarise	Describe something concisely; omit details and examples
trace	Follow progress/evolution of idea through time or through the relationship of cause and effect