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**Instruction verbs in essay questions**

**Student Learning**

**Read** **the question** several times. **Define the key words** (use a dictionary if necessary) and look for any words that focus or restrict the area you need to examine in your answer.

**Understanding your assignment question**

When you get your assignment question, decide:

* What the question means
* What it is asking you to do

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| Account for | Give reasons for; explain (note: give an account of; describe). |
| Analyse | Break the information into constituent parts; examine the relationship between the parts; question the information. |
| Argue | Put the case for or against a view or idea giving evidence for your claims/reasons for or against; attempt to influence the reader to accept your view. |
| Balance | Look at two or more viewpoints or pieces of information; give each equal attention; look at good and bad points; take into account many aspects and give an appropriate weighting to those aspects. |
| Be critical | Identify what is good and bad about the information and why; probe, question, identify inaccuracies or shortcomings in the information; estimate the value of the material. |
| Clarify | Identify the components of an issue/topic/problem/; make the meaning plain; remove misunderstandings. |
| Compare | Look for similarities and differences between; perhaps conclude which is preferable; implies evaluation. |
| Conclude/draw conclusions | The end point of your critical thinking; what the results of an investigation indicate; arrive at a judgement by reasoning. |
| Contrast | Bring out the differences. |
| Criticise | Give your judgement on theories or opinions or facts and back this by discussing evidence or reasoning involved. |
| Deduce | Conclude; infer. |
| Define | Give the precise meaning. Examine the different possible or often used definitions. |
| Demonstrate | Show clearly by giving proof or evidence. |
| Describe | Give a detailed, full account of the topic. |
| Determine | Find out something; calculate. |
| Develop an opinion/ a view | Decide what you think (based on an argument or evidence). |
| Discuss | Investigate or examine by argument; debate; give reason for and against; examine the implications of the topic. |
| Elucidate | Explain and make clear. |
| Estimate | Calculate; judge; predict. |
| Evaluate/weigh up | Appraise the worth of something in the light of its truth or usefulness; assess and explain. |
| Examine | Look at carefully; consider. |
| Explain | Make plain and clear; give reasons for. |
| Give evidence | Provide evidence from your own work or that of others which could be checked by a third party to prove/ justify what you say. |
| Identify | Point out and describe. |
| Identify trends | Identify patterns/changes/ movements in certain directions (e.g. over time or across topics/ subjects). |
| Illustrate | Explain, clarify, make clear by the use of concrete examples. |
| Infer | Conclude something from facts or reasoning. |
| Interpret | Expound the meaning; make clear and explicit, giving your own judgement. |
| Justify | Show adequate grounds for decisions, a particular view or conclusions and answer main objections likely to be made to them. |
| Outline | Give a short description of the main points; give the main features or general principles; emphasise the structure, leaving out minor details. |
| Prove | Show that something is true or certain; provide strong evidence (and examples) for. |
| Review | Make a survey examining the subject carefully; similar to summarise and evaluate. |
| State | Present in a brief, clear form. |
| Summarise | Give a concise account of the chief points of a matter, removing unnecessary detail. |
| Synthesise | Bring elements together to make a complex whole, draw together or integrate issues (e.g. theories or models can be created by synthesising a number of elements). |
| Trace | Follow the development of topic from its origin. |