

Common instruction words



Charles Sturt
University

Academic Skills
Division of Student Success

A glossary of common instruction words used in assignment questions.

Instruction	Definition
Account for:	Provide reasons for/explain why something exists/happens.
Account of:	Provide an account of: Describe an issue, process or event in detail.
Analyse:	Consider each idea/argument presented in a question/statement in detail and describe the connections between them.
Assess:	Consider the value or importance of something, taking into account both positive and negative and debatable aspects.
Comment on:	State your views based on what you have read, researched by other means or learnt in lectures and tutorials.
Compare:	Show the similarities between two or more issues; identify two or more views on the same issue and discuss the similarities and differences.
Contrast:	Discuss the differences between two or more issues.
Critically analyse:	Provide an in depth examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the ideas/arguments in the assessment question/statement supported by evidence.
Define:	Provide a precise meaning of.
Describe:	Provide an account of: Outline the features of an issue, event or process.
Discuss:	Consider from more than one point of view. Provide arguments for and against the main ideas and draw a conclusion.
Evaluate:	Decide the value of an issue, process or event.
Examine:	Describe in detail: explore the meaning and implications.
Explain:	Provide a detailed account of an issue, process or event: offer reasons why, describe cause and effect.
Illustrate:	Support a point of view with written examples, statistics, diagrams, charts.
Justify:	Give reasons in support of conclusions drawn.
Outline:	Provide a general description or summary of the main features.
Prove:	Provide irrefutable evidence and/or a logical sequence of arguments to demonstrate the truth of a claim/s.
Relate to:	Explain how an issue, event or process is connected to/impacts on/or compares and/or contrasts with another issue, event or process.
Review:	A factual account/reporting of available information, a process or event.
Summarise:	Briefly outline the main features/arguments. Don't include related details or examples.
To what extent:	Assess how much agreement for/acceptance of a proposition is credible based on available evidence for and against the proposition.
Trace:	Show the path of development of an issue or event. May require both a description and an explanation of the issue or the event.