

Instruction words for essays: definitions

Account for / Explain	Give reasons for something, indicate the cause(s).
Analyse	Take apart and investigate, Usually includes some form of evaluation.
Assess/evaluate	Give your judgement about the merit of theories or opinions or about the truth/reliability of facts/data. Support your judgement by a discussion of evidence.
Comment on	Make critical or explanatory observations.
Compare	Look for similarities and differences between; perhaps say which is preferable.
Contrast	Put in opposition, so as to show the difference.
Criticise	Point out weaknesses as well as strong points.
Define	Give the precise meaning of a word, phrase or theory.
Describe	Give a detailed account of.
Discuss	Investigate or examine by argument; debate; give reasons for and against. Also examine the implications.
Elucidate	Make something clear.
Evaluate/assess	Give your judgement about the merit of theories or opinions or about the truth/reliability of facts/data. Support your judgement by a discussion of evidence.
Explore	Look at a subject or idea thoroughly and from different viewpoints.
Illustrate	Make clear by the use of concrete examples or diagrams, figures.
Justify	Present a valid argument as to why something should be accepted. Support with evidence.
Outline	Give the main features or general principles of a subject or theory.
State	Express briefly and clearly.
Summarise	Give a concise account of the main points, not including details or examples.
Review	Make a survey of, examining the subject carefully.
Trace	Show the development or history of a topic.
To what extent	Show how far or how much something is true.