

ASSESSMENT TASK INSTRUCTIONS

When you discuss assessments with your students, it can be useful to go over the instruction words used in the task and be sure they understand what you are asking for and how they are meant to respond.

Analyse	Divide a complex whole into its parts or elements, laying bare parts or pieces for individual scrutiny, to discover the true nature or inner relationships.
Compare	Look for qualities or characteristics that resemble each other. Emphasize the similarities between them, but in some cases also mention differences.
Contrast	Stress the dissimilarities, differences, or unlikeness of things, qualities, events or problems.
Critique	Express your opinion about the merit or truth of the factors or views mentioned. Give the results of your analysis of these factors, discussing their limitations and good points.
Define	Give concise, clear, and authoritative meanings. Don't give details, but ensure you provide limits to the definition. Show how the thing you are defining differs from other things.
Describe	Recount, characterise, sketch or relate in sequence or story form.
Diagram	Give a drawing, chart, plan or graphic answer. Usually you should label a diagram. In some cases, add a brief explanation or description.
Discuss	Examine, analyse carefully and give reasons both for and against. Be thorough and include details.
Enumerate	Write in list or outline form, giving points concisely one by one.
Evaluate	Carefully appraise the problem, citing both advantages and limitations. Emphasise the appraisal of authorities and, to a lesser degree, your personal evaluation.
Explain	Clarify, interpret and spell out the material you present. Give reasons for differences of opinion or results and try to analyse causes.
Illustrate	Use a figure, picture, diagram or concrete example to explain or clarify a problem.
Interpret	Translate, give examples of, solve or comment on a subject, presenting your own judgment.
Justify	Prove or give reasons for decisions or conclusions, make your argument convincing.
List	As 'enumerate', write an itemised series of concise statements.
Outline	Organise a description under main points and subordinate points, omitting minor details and stressing the arrangement or classification of things.
Prove	Establish that something is true by citing factual evidence or giving clear logical reasons.
Relate	Show how things are related to or connected with one another, or how one causes, correlates with or is like another.
Review	Examine a subject critically, analysing and commenting on the important statements to be made.
State	Present the main points in brief, clear sequence, usually omitting details, illustrations or examples.
Summarise	Give the main points or facts in condensed form, like the summary of a chapter, omitting details and illustrations.
Trace	Using a narrative form, describe progress, development or historical events from some point of origin.

TIP SHEET

ASSIGNMENT PROMPTS

Identification Terms	cite, define, enumerate, give, identify, indicate, list, mention, name, state
Description Terms	describe, discuss, review, summarize, diagram, illustrate, sketch, develop, outline, trace
Relation Terms	analyse, compare, contrast, differentiate, distinguish, relate
Demonstration Terms	demonstrate, explain why, justify, prove, show, support
Evaluation Terms	assess, comment, criticize, evaluate, interpret, propose

REFERENCES:

Reproduced with additions from: Skidmore College, NY: Common Terms for Paper Topics and Essay Questions: <http://www.skidmore.edu/academics/writingbrd/qwords.HTML>

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