

Glossary of Instructional Words

This glossary of instructional words explains key terms that tell you what actions to take when completing your assessment.

- **account for:** give reasons for
- **give an account of:** describe
- **take into account:** to consider, to think of
- **analyse:** divide into parts, describe each part and explain their relationship; discuss a problem
- **argue:** systematically support or reject a position by presenting reasons and evidence for acceptance or rejection
- **assess:** decide how important something is and give your reasons
- **assume:** first accept that the following is true
- **classify:** arrange into groups or classes
- **comment on:** explain why it is important
- **compare:** describe the ways in which two elements are alike, but also mention differences
- **concept:** an important idea
- **concise:** short, brief
- **contextualise:** referring to, within the subject
- **contrast:** describe the ways in which two things, qualities or problems are different
- **criteria:** a set of standards by which something is judged or assessed
- **criticise/critique:** analyse and discuss faults and disadvantages, or merits and facts
- **deduction:** the conclusion or generalisation you come to after considering all the facts
- **define:** provide clear, concise, authoritative meanings with key details
- **describe:** give details, recount or relate in sequence to illustrate the topic
- **discuss:** give both sides of an argument (evidence) and then your own opinion. *Beware: 'discuss' is often used loosely by lecturers when they actually mean 'describe'*
- **distinguish between:** describe the difference/s between two things
- **elaborate:** answer fully with reasons and examples ('yes' or 'no' is not enough)
- **evaluate:** look at reasons for and against; draw your own conclusions of value or importance
- **examine:** present in depth and investigate implications
- **explain:** clarify and interpret meaning to show reasons, causes and effects
- **to what extent is (x) true/how far:** explain in what ways (x) is true, and in what ways (x) is not true
- **factor(s):** the circumstances which bring about a result
- **function:** what something does, its purpose or activities
- **identify:** point out and describe
- **illustrate:** use examples/diagrams that prove the answer is correct and clarify meaning
- **implications:** results which are not obvious; long term, suggested results
- **indicate:** show, explain
- **interpret:** to clarify and explain, indicating connections between items
- **justify:** provide reasons for a decision or viewpoint
- **limitations:** explain where something is not useful or not relevant
- **list:** provide an itemised series of points (often expressed in point form)
- **outline:** give an organised description in which you state main points or features but omit detail
- **prove:** confirm or verify by stating and evaluating evidence or by logical reasoning
- **reconcile:** show how exclusive and/or conflicting ideas can be seen as similar or compatible
- **with/by reference to:** ensure you write about the following subject
- **reflect:** think deeply on your experience
- **relate:** emphasise connections, relationships and associations
- **in relation to:** only a certain part is needed
- **review:** re-examine, analyse and comment briefly on the major points
- **role:** what part something plays, how it works, especially in cooperation with others
- **state:** formally set out a position
- **summarise:** give concise account of topics main points, omitting details or examples
- **validity/valid:** are there facts (evidence) to prove the statement

Related helpsheets

- University Speak
- Writing in an Academic Style



Find this helpsheet online
studyskills.federation.edu.au