

Unpacking the assignment question

Assignment titles are made up of key words (related to the subject area) and direction words.

Use this guide to understand the meaning of direction words and terms and to help you to understand *how* a question should be answered.

Direction word(s)	What are you being asked to do?
Account for	Give reasons for
Analyse	Break an issue or problem into parts and discuss each part
Argue	Support or reject a position by presenting reasons and evidence (using references) for each position
Assess	Decide how important something is and give your reasons
Comment on	Explain why something is important/significant
Compare	Show the ways in which two things are alike or similar
Contrast	Highlight/identify the differences between two things
Critically evaluate	Give a reasoned (i.e. more than one perspective) argument about an issue (use references to support) and from it draw out particular significance or position
Define	Give the precise meaning or look at different meanings for the same thing
Describe	Provide detail about a process/issue/perspective

Direction word(s)	What are you being asked to do?
Discuss	Investigate, look at the pros and cons. Look at both sides or differing emphasis on the same issue
Evaluate/Assess/To what extent...?	Decide how valuable or important something is: decide how effective something is and give reasons why it is valuable or significant.
Identify	Recognise, acknowledge or point out and describe
Indicate	Show or explain
Illustrate	Give examples of something; use figures or diagram to help explain
Outline/Trace/Summarise	State the main features of an issue; write the main principles; state the main events
Review	Re-examine, analyse and comment briefly on the major points
State	Formally set out a position
Summarise	Select the main points emerging from a broad area
Take into account	To consider or to think of