

# 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?
<b>Account for</b>	Give reasons for
<b>Analyse</b>	Break an issue or problem into parts and discuss each part
<b>Argue</b>	Support or reject a position by presenting reasons and evidence (using references) for each position
<b>Assess</b>	Decide how important something is and give your reasons
<b>Comment on</b>	Explain why something is important/significant
<b>Compare</b>	Show the ways in which two things are alike or similar
<b>Contrast</b>	Highlight/identify the differences between two things
<b>Critically evaluate</b>	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

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

