



STUDENT HANDOUT: ESSAYS

COMMAND WORDS FOR ESSAY WRITING

Account for...

Explain how a particular event or situation/viewpoint came about. Provide facts and detailed information within the context of the text.

Analyse...

Break down an argument or information into component parts and identify ways in which these parts are related. Recognise and point out underlying assumptions. Refer to text to back up your analysis.

Assess...

Make some kind of judgement on the relative importance of a particular aspect, discussing influencing factors. Make references to text and what you know about the subject under scrutiny to back up your argument.

Compare...

Describe two or more situations and show the differences and similarities between them. Use description, be methodical in your approach.

Critique...

Deeply analyse a particular view based upon evidence available. Compare with known evidence. You may need to focus deeply onto a single area of text.

Describe...

A detailed piece usually involving a critical review of something or someone. Refer to literature available to substantiate (back up) your views on the position you take. You may be asked to describe a character, scene, position or viewpoint or the events leading up to something happening. In each case you must include detailed description.

Define...

Use appropriate examples to illustrate and expand upon your precise definition or explanation of the concept.

Discuss...

Consider the arguments methodically, for and against the issues raised in the question. Refer to the literature to illustrate a view. This must be a balanced piece of writing.

Distinguish...

Demonstrate you understand the differences between two (possibly similar and easily confused) concepts. Discuss both the similarities and differences between the items being scrutinised.



Do... or Does...

Make a judgement, based upon reference to literature and your perspective of it, on whether a set of circumstances is preferable over another. Always substantiate your view.

Evaluate...

Make a **reasoned** judgement. Refer to the literature and present evidence and reasoned argument of all the relevant issues involved. Make sure you have reviewed both sides of the argument.

Examine...

Unravel the events and views that lead up to a particular set of circumstances/opinions/positions. How reasonable or valid are these views/events? Important to show the different perspectives and arguments with reference to the basic issue being analysed.

Explain...

Interpret the meaning of a particular concept. Illustrate understanding with examples. Ask yourself: "How did the author reach this view?" "Why did he do it that way?" "what were his reasons for saying what he does?"

Outline...

Give only a brief summary or synopsis.

To what extent...

This implies there is no definitive answer to the question posed. Present both sides of the argument and exercise judgement by stressing the strength of some arguments over others and why they may appear to be more valid. Refer to text/previous research/other resources substantiate the validity of one perspective over another.

Fact or opinion?

Ask yourself: How do you know whether the information is factual or an opinion? Is the information biased in some way? Is the author using language to persuade you to believe an opinion?

What is meant by...?

Explain a particular view, word, phrase. Refer to your understanding of the text within the context.

List/name/state/provide/give examples...

Keep it simple and to the point. Provide only the information asked for without commenting upon it.