

Lecture 12: Instructional Words applied in Essay Topics

Students must learn how to write the essay in a clear, convincing, and persuasive manner. They will learn more about how to find evidence to support their argument, how to marshal that evidence, and how to reference it in such a way as to give assurance of their knowledge, determine their originality, and 'drive home' the importance of their ideas. Before starting any piece of written work, students should have to look carefully at the way the question is phrased, to find what they are required to do. The following is a list of key words that commonly occur in essay topics, together with an indication of their meaning

- **Account for:** Give reasons for; explain why something happens.
- **Appraise:** Estimate the worth, the value or importance of something (to price)
- **Assess:** Estimate the worth, the value or importance of something (to judge).
- **Analyse:** Break up into parts; investigate.
- **Clarify:** Present clearly making clear and unpack the complications of
- **Consider:** deliberate on; give careful thought to..
- **Comment:** Identify and write about the main issues; give your reactions based on what you have read/heard in lectures. Avoid just personal opinion.
- **Compare** Look for the similarities/differences between two things. Show the relevance or consequences of these similarities. Perhaps conclude which is preferable.
- **Contrast** Bring out the differences between two items or arguments. Show whether the differences are significant. Perhaps give reasons why one is preferable.
- **Criticise:** Give judgement on something, backed by the discussion of the evidence. Weigh arguments for and against something, assessing the strength of the evidence on both sides. Use criteria to guide your assessment of which opinions, theories, models or items are preferable.
- **Define:** Give the precise meaning of something; often to show that the distinctions are necessary.
- **Describe:** Give detailed account of something, Give the main characteristics or features of something.
- **Discuss** Investigate or examine by argument; sift and debate; give reasons for and against; examine the implications.
- **Distinguish:** Bring out the differences between two things/persons/... .

- **Evaluate** Assess and give your judgement about the merit, importance or usefulness of something. Back your judgement with evidence.
- **Examine** Look closely into something. Investigate in details
- **Explain** Make clear why something happens, or is the way it is; interpret and account for; give reasons for.
- **Explore:** Examine thoroughly; consider from a variety of viewpoints.
- **Interpret:** Show the meaning and relevance of data or other material presented.
- **Illustrate** Make something clear and explicit, giving examples of evidence.
- **Justify:** Give evidence which supports an argument or idea; show why a decision or conclusions were made; answer the main objections which might be made.
- **Outline:** Give the main points/features/general principles; show the main structure and interrelations; omit details and examples.
- **Prove:** to establish as truth by arguments
- **Review:** make a survey of something, giving it a critical analysis
- **Relate** Narrate or show similarities and connections between things
- **State** Give the main features briefly and clearly.
- **Summarise:** Give a concise account of the main points only; omit details and examples.
- **To what extent** Consider how far something is

true, or contributes to a final outcome. Consider
also ways in which it is not true.

- **Trace** Follow the development or history of an event or process