

# What is my assignment <sup>really</sup> asking me to do?

Before you can answer an assignment question, you need to understand what it's asking you to do. An instruction word or task word basically tells you what to do in your assignment. This table gives you a list of words commonly used in assignments and explains what they mean so you know what to do in your essay or exam.

<b>Account for...</b>	Give reasons for and explain why something is or is not the way it is.
<b>Analyse</b>	Understand a topic by breaking it into smaller parts. Explore each part in depth with reasons and evidence for and against.
<b>Argue</b>	Present evidence both for and against a viewpoint in order to build a strong argument. Provide reasons to support or oppose it.
<b>Assess</b>	Think about the value, usefulness or significance of the topic considering its pros, cons, and areas up for debate and providing evidence for your decision. Form a judgment on the matter.
<b>Classify</b>	Arrange information into groups.
<b>Comment on</b>	Present your opinion on the topic and back up your opinion with relevant evidence/information.
<b>Compare</b>	Find what's alike and different between two or more concepts, topics, ideas, theories, systems, arguments or events.
<b>Contrast</b>	Point out only the differences between two or more concepts, topics, ideas, theories, systems, arguments or events.
<b>Compare and contrast</b>	Identify and discuss both the major similarities and the major differences between two or more concepts, topics, ideas, theories, systems, arguments or events.
<b>Critically analyse</b>	Give a fair, balanced account showcasing both strengths and weaknesses of the topic. Give your judgement about the value or truth of something. Discuss both positive and negative points. Support with evidence.
<b>Critically evaluate</b>	Provide a thorough and reasoned assessment of a subject, back up your assessment with credible evidence and expert opinions.
<b>Criticise</b>	It does not mean to criticise in the sense of indicating faults. Instead you make judgements about a subject after thinking about it carefully. Give feedback that shows what's wrong or weak about something, but also mentioning any good parts. It's about being fair and balanced in your response. Support your judgement with evidence.
<b>Define</b>	Clearly provide the exact meaning of something.
<b>Demonstrate/ Illustrate</b>	Show how something is done. Use examples or evidence to clarify and support your answer.
<b>Describe</b>	Say what something is like - give an observational account of something Provide a description, emphasising the most important points. Depending on the nature of the task/subject area, descriptions may need to be brief or they may need to be very detailed.
<b>Discuss</b>	Present both sides of an issue/subject with evidence and then draw conclusions.
<b>Elaborate</b>	Provide more detail with reasons, evidence and examples.
<b>Evaluate</b>	Think about the issue/subject and share your opinion, including arguments for and against it.
<b>Examine</b>	Investigate closely and break down the main points of an issue/topic in more detail and describe each point carefully.
<b>Explain</b>	Describe and analyse the issue or topic and give reasons for the issue or topic. Make it clear by providing reasons and evidence.
<b>Explore</b>	Look at an idea or topic broadly and search out related and/or particularly relevant, interesting or debatable points.
<b>Interpret</b>	Provide the meaning of, with examples.
<b>Justify / Prove</b>	Give and explain the reasons to demonstrate why an original statement/issue/topic is the truth. You will need to use reliable evidence supports an argument or idea.
<b>List</b>	Give a series of brief ideas. Depending on how formal the assignment is, lists may be numbered or bullet-pointed.
<b>Outline</b>	Provide the main points or ideas, normally without going into detail - provide just a general account.
<b>Predict</b>	Offer suggestions for future discussion or research, for instance, supported with facts, evidence or experience.
<b>Relate</b>	Show how things are connected or related to each other.
<b>Review</b>	Provide a summary and assess the important aspects of the issue/topic.
<b>State</b>	Express briefly and clearly.
<b>Summarise</b>	State, or re-state, the most important parts of something so that it is represented "in miniature". It should be concise and precise.
<b>To what extent</b>	Discuss and explain the theory that has been proposed; how much is it true?
<b>Trace</b>	Describe and explain how an issue progressed over time. Describe the development or history of a topic from some point of origin.