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Instruction Words in Essay Questions

Here are some of the words that provide the critical instructions for answering essay questions, assisting in determining the approach asked for. A brief summary of each tells you what to do.

<p>Compare Look for similarities and differences between the things mentioned</p>	<p>Justify Provide the reasons for your conclusions or for the statement made in the question</p>
<p>Contrast Stress the dissimilarities</p>	<p>List Provide an itemised list. The items should be numbered</p>
<p>Criticise Make your judgement about the item in questions. Stress the deficiencies.</p>	<p>Outline Organise your answer into the main points and subordinate points. While it is not necessary that your answer be in outline form it helps to prepare in that way</p>
<p>Describe Mention the chief characteristics of a situation or retell the essential features of a story</p>	<p>Prove Provide factual evidence or where appropriate, a logical or mathematical proof</p>
<p>Discuss Be analytical. Give reasons for and against. Give the issue some thought and provide an opinion</p>	<p>Relate Show the connection between the things mentioned in the question</p>
<p>Explain Give reasons for what is asked of you. Provide the causes</p>	<p>Review Provide a summary, usually a critical one. A review usually also implies commenting on the important aspects of the questions</p>
<p>Illustrate Use examples. Or where appropriate, provide a diagram or figure</p>	<p>Summarise Provide a summary, usually without comment or criticism</p>
<p>Interpret Translate, solve or comment on a subject, usually giving your judgement about it</p>	<p>Trace Describe the progress of some historical event or where it is appropriate, describe the causes of some event</p>

Schlegel, N. 1995, *Research and study skills guide for senior students*, 3rd edn, Beri Publishing, Victoria.