

Common Exam/Essay Terms

Instruction word	What you are expected to do
Account [give an]	Describe
Account for	Give reasons for
Analyse	Give an organised answer looking at all aspects
Apply	Put a theory into operation
Assess	Decide on value/importance
Brief account [give a]	Describe in a concise way
Comment on	Give your opinion
Compare [with]	Discuss similarities; draw conclusions on common areas
Compile	Make up (a list/plan/outline)
Consider	Describe/give your views on subject
Contrast	Discuss differences/draw own view
Criticise	Point out weak/strong points i.e. balanced answer
Define	Give the meaning of a term, concisely
Demonstrate	Show by example/evidence
Describe	Narrative on process/appearance/operation/sequence..
Devise	Make up
Discuss	Give your own thoughts and support your opinion or conclusion
Evaluate	Decide on merit of situation/argument
Exemplify	Show by giving examples
Expand	Give more information
Explain	Give reason for – say why
Explain how	Describe how something works
Identify	Pinpoint/list
Illustrate	Give examples
Indicate	Point out, but not in great detail
Justify	Support the argument for...
List	Make an organised list, e.g. events
Outline	Describe basic factors
Plan	Think how to organise something
Report	Make an account on process, event
Review	Write report – give facts and views on facts
Show	Demonstrate with supporting evidence
Specify	Give details of something
State	Give a clear account of...
Summarise	Briefly give an account
Trace	Provide brief chronology of events/process
Work out	Find a solution, e.g. as in a maths problem