

Academic Keywords used in Titles

These words, which are frequently used in the titles of essays indicate the approach or style that you are expected to adopt.

Account for	Give reasons for; explain why something happens.
Analyse	Examine in very close detail; identify important points and features
Comment on	Identify and write about the main issues, giving your reactions based upon what you have read or heard in lectures. Avoid purely personal opinions
Compare	Show how two or more things are similar. Indicate why these similarities are relevant
Contrast	Set two or more arguments in opposition so as to draw out differences. Indicate whether the differences are significant. If appropriate, give reasons why one item of argument may be preferable.
Critically evaluate	Weight arguments for or against something, assessing the strength of evidence on both sides. Use criteria to guide your assessment of which options, theories, models or items are preferable
Define	Give the exact meaning of. Where relevant show that you understand why the definition may be problematic.
Describe	Give the main characteristics or features of something, or outline the main events.
Discuss	Write about the most important aspects of (probably including criticism); give arguments for and against; consider the implications of.
Distinguish	Bring out the differences between two (possibly confusable) items.
Evaluate	Assess the worth, importance or usefulness of something, using evidence and making cases both for and against.
Examine	Put the subject "under the microscope", looking at it in detail. If appropriate, "critically evaluate" it as well.
Explain	Make clear why something happens or why something is the way it is.

Illustrate	Make something clear and explicit, giving examples or evidence.
Interpret	Give the meaning and relevance of data or other material.
Justify	Give evidence that supports an argument or idea; show why a decision was made or a conclusion reached, considering possible objections.
Narrate	Concentrate on saying what happened, telling it as a story.
Outline	Give only the main points, showing the main structure.
Relate	Show similarities and connections between two or more things.
State	Give the main features in very clear English (list in proper sentences).
Summarise	Draw out the main points only, leaving out details and examples
To what extent	Consider how far something is true or contributes to a final outcome. Consider also ways in which the proposition is not true. (The answer is usually somewhere between “completely” and “not at all”).
Trace	Follow the order of different stages in an event or process.

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