

KEY WORDS IN ESSAY TITLES

The explanations given for these words can be a rough guide only. You must always go by the total meaning of the title or question. Read the question carefully: do not jump to conclusions about what is required on the basis of these words only.

<i>Account for</i>	requires an answer that gives the reasons for the subject of the question.
<i>Analyse</i>	requires an answer that takes apart an idea, concept or statement in order to consider all the factors it consists of. Answers of this type should be very methodical and logically organised.
<i>Compare</i>	requires an answer that sets items side by side and shows their similarities and differences. A balanced (fair, objective) answer is expected.
<i>Consider</i>	requires an answer in which the students describe and give their thoughts on the subject.
<i>Contrast</i>	requires an answer that points out only the differences between two items.
<i>Criticise</i>	requires an answer that points out mistakes or weaknesses, and that also indicates any favourable aspects of the subject of the question. It requires a balanced answer.
<i>Define</i>	requires an answer that explains the precise meaning of a concept a definition answer will include definition structure, probably expanded.
<i>Describe</i>	requires an answer that says what something is like, how it works and so on.
<i>Discuss</i>	requires an answer that explains an item or concept, and then gives details about it with supportive information, examples, points for and against, and explanations for the facts put forward. It is important to give both sides of an argument and come to a conclusion.
<i>Elucidate</i>	requires an answer that explains what something means, makes it clear (lucid).
<i>Evaluate/Assess</i>	require an answer that decides and explains how great, valuable or important something is. The judgement should be backed by a discussion of the evidence or reasoning involved.
<i>Explain</i>	requires an answer that offers a rather detailed and exact explanation of an idea or principle, or a set of reasons for a situation or attitude.
<i>Explore</i>	requires an answer that examines the subject thoroughly and considers it from a variety of viewpoints.
<i>Illustrate</i>	requires an answer that consists mainly of examples to demonstrate or prove the subject of the question. It is often added to another instruction.

<i>Justify</i>	requires an answer that gives only the reasons for a position or argument. Answer the main objections likely to be made of them. Note, however, that the proposition to be argued may be a negative one (e.g. Justify the abolition of the death penalty.)
<i>Prove/Disprove</i>	both of these require answers that demonstrate the logical arguments and/or evidence connected with a proposition prove requires the 'pro' points, and disprove requires the 'contra' points.
<i>State</i>	requires an answer that expresses the relevant points briefly and clearly without lengthy discussion or minor details.
<i>Summarise/Outline</i>	require an answer that contains a summary of all the available information about a subject, i.e. only the main points and not the details should be included. Questions of this type often require short answers.
<i>Trace</i>	is found most frequently in historical questions (but not only in History courses); it requires the statement and brief description in logical or chronological order of the stages (steps) in the development of e.g. a theory, a person's life, a process, etc.
<i>To what extent is X true?</i>	requires an answer that discusses and explains in what ways X is true and in what ways X is not true.

Some other important words used in questions.

<i>concept</i>	an important idea
<i>concise</i>	short, brief
<i>in the context of</i>	referring to, inside the subject of
<i>criteria</i>	what standards you would expect; what questions you would expect to be answered
<i>deduction</i>	the conclusion or generalisation you come to after looking carefully at all the facts
<i>factor(s)</i>	the circumstances bringing about a result
<i>function</i>	what something does its purpose or activities
<i>implications</i>	results that are not obvious, long term, suggested results
<i>limitations</i>	explain where something is not useful or not relevant
<i>with/by reference to</i>	make sure you write about the following subject

<i>in relation to</i>	only a certain part of the first topic is needed
<i>role</i>	what part something plays, how it works, especially in co-operation with others
<i>scope</i>	the area where something acts or has influence
<i>significance</i>	meaning and importance
<i>valid/validity</i>	is there evidence and are there facts to prove the statement?

<http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm> accessed 29 October 2009

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