

Glossary of Instructional Words

- **account for** - give reasons for
- **give an account of** - describe
- **to take into account** - to consider, to think of
- **analyse** - divide into parts, describe each part and explain their relationship; discuss a problem
- **argue** - systematically support or reject a position by presenting reasons and evidence for acceptance or rejection
- **assess** - decide how important something is and give your reasons
- **assume** - first accept that the following is true
- **classify** - arrange into groups or classes
- **comment on** - explain why it is important
- **compare** - describe the ways in which two elements are alike, but also mention differences
- **concept** - an important idea
- **concise** - short, brief
- **in the context of** - referring to, within the subject
- **contrast** - describe the ways in which two things, qualities or problems are different
- **criteria** – a set of standards by which something is judged or assessed
- **criticise** - analyse and discuss faults and disadvantages, or merits and facts
- **deduction** - the conclusion or generalisation you come to after looking carefully at all the facts
- **define** - provide clear, concise, authoritative meanings with key details
- **describe** - give details, recount or relate in sequence to illustrate the topic
- **discuss** - give both sides of an argument (evidence) and then your own opinion. Beware: 'discuss' is often used loosely by lecturers when they actually mean 'describe'
- **distinguish between** - describe the difference/s between two things
- **elaborate** - answer fully with reasons and examples ('yes' or 'no' is not enough)
- **evaluate** - look at reasons for and against; draw your own conclusions of value or importance
- **explain** - clarify and interpret meaning to show reasons, causes and effects
- **to what extent is (x) true** - explain in what ways (x) is true, and in what ways (x) is not true
- **factor(s)** - the circumstances which bring about a result
- **function** - what something does, its purpose or activities
- **identify** - point out and describe
- **indicate** - show, explain
- **illustrate** - use examples or diagrams that prove the answer is correct and clarify meaning
- **implications** - results which are not obvious; long term, suggested results
- **justify** - provide reasons for a decision or viewpoint
- **limitations** - explain where something is not useful or not relevant
- **list** - provide an itemised series of points (often expressed in point form)
- **outline** - give an organised description in which you state main points or features but omit detail
- **prove** - confirm or verify by stating and evaluating evidence or by logical reasoning
- **with/by reference to** - ensure you write about the following subject
- **reflect** - think deeply on your experience
- **relate** - emphasise connections, relationships and associations
- **in relation to** - only a certain part is needed
- **review** - re-examine, analyse and comment briefly on the major points
- **role** - what part something plays, how it works, especially in cooperation with others
- **state** - formally set out a position
- **summarise** - give a concise account of main points of a subject, omitting details or examples
- **validity, valid** - are there facts (evidence) to prove the statement

Other helpsheets available

- University Speak
- Writing in an Academic Style