

Glossary of command terms

Command terms with definitions

Students should be familiar with the following key terms and phrases used in examination questions, which are to be understood as described below. Although these terms will be used frequently in examination questions, other terms may be used to direct students to present an argument in a specific way.

Analyse	Break down in order to bring out the essential elements or structure.
Compare	Give an account of the similarities between two (or more) items or situations, referring to both (all) of them throughout.
Compare and contrast	Give an account of similarities and differences between two (or more) items or situations, referring to both (all) of them throughout.
Contrast	Give an account of the differences between two (or more) items or situations, referring to both (all) of them throughout.
Define	Give the precise meaning of a word, phrase, concept or physical quantity.
Demonstrate	Make clear by reasoning or evidence, illustrating with examples or practical application.
Describe	Give a detailed account.
Discuss	Offer a considered and balanced review that includes a range of arguments, factors or hypotheses. Opinions or conclusions should be presented clearly and supported by appropriate evidence.
Distinguish	Make clear the differences between two or more concepts or items.
Evaluate	Make an appraisal by weighing up the strengths and limitations.
Examine	Consider an argument or concept in a way that uncovers the assumptions and interrelationships of the issue.

Explain	Give a detailed account including reasons or causes.
Explore	Undertake a systematic process of discovery.
Formulate	Express precisely and systematically the relevant concept(s) or argument(s).
Identify	Provide an answer from a number of possibilities.
Investigate	Observe, study, or make a detailed and systematic examination, in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions.
Justify	Give valid reasons or evidence to support an answer or conclusion.
Outline	Give a brief account or summary.