

Exam command words

Make sure you understand what the question is asking you to do.

Account for	Explain why something is the way it is.
Analyse	Explain your view of why the main points of an idea, text or process are important. Do not just describe.
Calculate	Show the method and obtain a numerical answer.
Compare	Write about the differences and similarities. Look out for 'How similar...' or 'How different...' where you would be expected to give both similar and different points
Conclude	Reach a decision or view after thinking something through.
Contrast	Show the differences between two things.
Criticise	Analyse and make a judgement then give an overall opinion. Do not just be negative; give a balanced view looking at both sides.
Define	Give a brief explanation of what something means.
Describe	Say what something or someone is like or give an account of something that has happened.
Discuss	Explain the advantages and disadvantages of something, then give your overall viewpoint.
Evaluate	Make a judgement about the quality of something, taking all of the evidence into account.
Explain	Give reasons WHY something is as like it is or HOW it works. Give reasons using words like because to make clear you focus on explaining WHY
Identify	Point out key features or reasons that are asked for.
Interpret	Explain what you understand to be the meaning, or what someone else intended the meaning to be.
Justify	Give reasons to support a viewpoint or course of action.
Summarise	Give the main points of an idea or an argument.