Command Words Guide

Command word	Definition	Guidance
Analyse	Examine elements in detail	✓ Select relevant information ✓ Separate information into components ✓ Identify their characteristics ✓ Determine how they relate to overall structure ✓ Make links between different sources of information ✓ Use logical thinking to identify cause and effect
Apply	Use a procedure in a given situation	✓ Choose appropriate actions ✓ Demonstrate effectiveness ✓ Use technical terms
Appraise	See definition for 'Assess'	See guidance for 'Assess'
Assess	Make an informed judgement.	✓ Consider all the factors or events that apply ✓ Identify which are the most important or relevant ✓ Recognise evidence ✓ Apply systematic thinking ✓ Make a decision about the quality, value or importance
Compare	Identify similarities and differences.	✓ Identify and explain the similarities between two or more concepts, theories or approaches ✓ Identify and explain the differences between those concepts, theories or approaches ✓ Demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of the concepts or theories in your answer
Critically	Often occurs before another command word, for example 'Analyse', 'Assess' or 'Evaluate' inviting a more in-depth examination of an issue from the point of view of a critic	✓ Look for more depth ✓ Use supporting details ✓ Apply the theory ✓ Focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the points of view being expressed ✓ Challenge conventional thinking
Define	Specify meaning	✓ State the precise meaning of an idea or concept

Command word	Definition	Guidance
Describe	Give a detailed account of something	✓ Set out characteristics ✓ Use developed statements ✓ Make links between them ✓ Do not need to include a justification or explanation
Describe the process	Give the steps of the process	
Describe the effect	Write about what has changed/happened because of the event	
Discuss	Present key points	✓ Identify different ideas or strengths and weaknesses of an idea ✓ Explore them by making links ✓ Take into account different opinions (where appropriate)
Evaluate	Judge from available evidence	✓ Review information in the question ✓ Consider several options, ideas or arguments ✓ Take into account different factors (when it may or may not apply) ✓ Use available knowledge / experience / evidence ✓ Make a supported, evidence-based judgement
Examine	Investigate closely	✓ Consider carefully the indicated topic ✓ Establish the key facts and important issues ✓ Provide a detailed account ✓ Include cause and effect in the points that you make ✓ Provide examples and evidence to support your points
Explain	Set out the causes of something and/or the factors which influence it.	✓ State the point clearly ✓ Develop it to address the question ✓ Include some element of reasoning/justification ✓ Use examples to support the understanding
Explain why/reasons for/consequences of	Give the cause of/rationale for something	
Explain how	Give the steps, clarify what are the relationships between those steps	
Identify	Name or otherwise characterise	✓ Provide brief facts or examples ✓ Include only key information ✓ Do not need to write in a lot of detail

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Illustrate	Make clear by using examples	✓ State the point clearly ✓ Develop it to address the question ✓ Incorporate relevant concepts and examples ✓ Ensure that your illustration relates to the specific information in the case or context provided
Justify	Give evidence to support an answer	✓ Present a reasoned case ✓ Use supporting evidence from theory and practice to explain why something should happen in a particular way. ✓ Discuss and discount alternative views or actions ✓ Analyse positives and negatives for each of the options available ✓ To justify a recommendation, the positives have to outweigh the negatives.
Recommend	Offer a possible action or plan	✓ Apply your knowledge to a situation ✓ Provide recommendations ✓ Explain why the recommendation should be considered
Review	Describe main features and assess them	✓ Survey information, methods, outcomes, conclusions ✓ Decide what is effective or not
Outline	Provide a brief account of relevant information	✓ Give main features or general principles, ignoring minor details ✓ Provide a description setting out the main characteristics / points
Propose	Offer a possible plan or action	✓ Apply your knowledge to a situation ✓ Provide a plan/action based on given criteria