



Analysing questions

Analysing questions is an important first step when tackling your assignment tasks. If you are not clear on what you are expected to do in your assignment you could waste a lot of time and receive a poor mark for your assignment because you 'didn't answer the question'.

Why is analysing the question so important?

When you analyse the question or task carefully, you can identify the specific focus for your assignment so that you:

- are clear about what direction to take with your search for information
- ensure that you answer the question.

Follow the steps below with your own assignment question.

Step 1: Check the meaning of unknown words and record them.

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Step 2: Change the question to a statement using a directive word (see common examples at the end of this worksheet). (If the task is already in the form of a statement, go straight to Step 3.)

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Step 3: Identify the directive word(s) (for example 'discuss').

Directive word(s)	What does that mean?

Step 4: Identify the information words. Use the directive word + what? to find the information words.

Directive word + what?	Information words
eg. Discuss what?	...
eg. Identify what?	...

Step 5: Check the focus or limitations of the topic and assignment.

Focus and limitations of topic	Details
What are the specific aspects of the topic which you need to concentrate on?	eg. childcare eg. in the last decade
Length of assignment	eg. 2000 words
Due date	eg. in 3 weeks

Step 6: Do a guesstimate of the parts of the assignment and allocate % of words.

How many parts are there? What percentage of the word count do you guess you will use for each?	eg. Essays and reports have 3: introduction, body and conclusion; other assignments may have fewer or more parts. (You usually use about 10% of word count for the introduction and 10% for conclusion.)
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Some commonly used directive words

Directive word	Meaning
<i>analyse</i>	examine closely; examine something in terms of its parts and how they are related to each other
<i>compare</i>	discuss two or more things in terms of their similarities and differences - a table is a good way to make notes about the differences and similarities
<i>discuss</i>	consider and offer an interpretation or evaluation of something in relation to different points of view you have come across in your reading
<i>evaluate</i>	attempt to form a judgment about something
<i>examine</i>	inspect something in detail and investigate the implications

Note: Sometimes you are asked to discuss a statement/quote. The statement or quote often presents one opinion or 'position' on a topic. You need to explain that view and discuss it in relation to the positions of other writers.