

Answering essay questions

1. Look at the question and highlight the key words

2. Identify which words are:

Instruction words – words which tell you how to answer.
For example: describe, compare, discuss

Subject words – words which tell you the topic of the question

Key aspect words – words which tell you the limit of the question

Other significant words – words which give you more information

3. Highlight these parts of the question.

For example:

‘Compare and contrast forms of rural settlement
in at least two European regions in the later middle ages.’

■ Instruction words ■ Subject ■ Key aspect words ■ Other significant words

4. Identify what the instruction words mean:

Instruction	What you need to do
Account for	Explain why something is as it is
Analyse	Separate the topic into parts and discuss each of them
Compare	Show how things are similar
Contrast	Show how things are different
Criticise	Give strengths and weaknesses
Define	Give clear meanings to show how something is different to similar things
Describe	Explain features of a subject; use a pattern such as the order in which something happened (dates) or where it occurred
Discuss	Analyse carefully and give reasons for and against: use detail
Evaluate	Give your opinion based on facts: emphasise what experts have said. Indicate how well or badly something works
Examine	Divide up and describe the different parts or sections

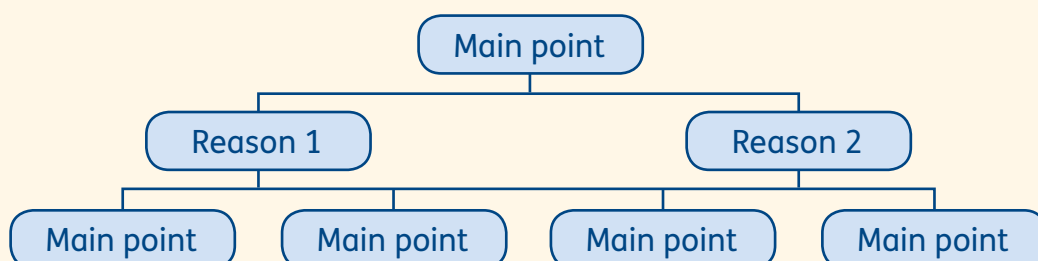
Instruction	What you need to do
Explain	Give reasons for differences of opinion or results and try to analyse causes
Illustrate	Use statistics or examples to explain an issue
Interpret	Give examples to explain the meaning, and give your own judgement
Justify	Prove that something is correct or incorrect: give reasons for your conclusions
List	Make concise points one by one
Outline	Give the main points of something
Show	Point out or demonstrate something – see the topic of the question – and show how things are linked, or follow on from each other
State	Give the main points
Suggest	Give evidence of whether something has value or not
Summarise	Give the main points, but leave out the details
Trace	Describe the progress or development of events or ideas

5. Use images which help you answer the question

- Compare what is similar about each
- Contrast what is different about each
- Analyse - look closely at all the parts and how they relate.
Separate the topic into parts and think about each part.

Tropical			Moderate to subtropical
Thick peel		Fruit Grow on trees Give juice	Thin peel
Came to Europe from India			Came from Turkey
	Oranges		Apples

6. Use a template to gather your answer together



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Dyslexia Scotland Helpline
 0344 800 8484
helpline@dyslexiascotland.org.uk