

Common Direction Words in Academic Writing Prompts

ANALYZE	Break the subject (an object, event, or concept) down into parts, and explain the various parts.
ARGUE	State a claim on an issue and support it with reasons and evidence from sources while also countering possible statements or arguments from individuals who have different positions.
COMPARE	Show how two things are similar and different; include details or examples.
CONTRAST	Show how two things are different; include details or examples.
CRITIQUE	Point out both the good and bad points of something.
DEFINE	Give an accurate meaning of a term with enough detail to show that you really understand it.
DESCRIBE	Write about the subject so the reader can easily visualize it; tell how it looks or happened, including how, who, where, why.
DISCUSS	Give a complete and detailed answer, including important characteristics and main points.
EVALUATE	Give your opinion of the value of the subject; discuss its good and bad points, strengths and weaknesses.
EXPLAIN	Give the meaning of something; give facts and details that make the idea easy to understand.
ILLUSTRATE	Give the meaning of something; give facts and details that make the idea easy to understand.
INTERPRET	Explain the meaning of a text, statement, photo, graphic aid; discuss the results or the effects of something.
JUSTIFY	Give convincing reasons and evidence from sources to support a claim, decision, action, or event.
PERSUADE	Give convincing reasons in order to get someone to do or believe something; appeal to the reader's feelings and mind.
RESPOND	State your overall reaction to the content, then support your individual opinions or claims with specific reasons and relevant examples, making sure to refer back to supporting texts.
STATE	Give the main points in brief, clear form.
SUMMARIZE	Provide an objective overview of the topic and important details from a text; use paragraph form, key topic words, and no personal opinions about the content.
SYNTHESIZE	Combine ideas from different sources in a single response.
TRACE	Describe an event or process in chronological order.