



SLU CALM Resources

Academic Writing

Glossary of 'Process' words frequently used in essay assignments

Analyse	Show the essence of something, by breaking it down into its component parts and examining each part in detail.
Argue	Present the case for and/or against a particular proposition.
Compare	Describe the similarities and differences between two things.
Criticise	Give your judgement about the merit of theories or opinions about the truth of facts, and back your judgement by a discussion of the evidence.
Define	Set down the precise meaning of a word or phrase. Show that the distinctions implied in the definition are necessary.
Describe	Give a detailed or graphic account.
Discuss	Investigate or examine by argument, sift and debate, giving reasons or and against.
Enumerate	List or specify and describe.
Evaluate	Make an appraisal of the worth of something, in the light of its apparent truth or utility; include your opinion, supported by argument.
Examine	Present in depth and investigate the implications.
Explain	Make plain, interpret, and account for in detail.
Illustrate	Explain and make clear by the use of concrete examples, or by the use of a figure or diagram.
Interpret	Bring out the meaning of, and make clear and explicit; usually also giving your own judgement.

Justify	Show adequate reasons for decisions or conclusions.
Outline	Give the main features or general principles of a subject, omitting minor details, and emphasising structure and relationship.
Relate	Narrate/show how things are connected to each other, and to what extent they are alike or affect each other.
Review	Make a survey of, examining the subject critically.
State	Specify fully and clearly.
Summarise	Give a concise account of the chief points or substance of a matter, omitting details and examples.
Trace	Identify and describe the development or history of a topic from some point or origin.

Notes:

The precise meanings may vary according to the context in which the word is used. “Who”, “What”, “Why” , “How” and words with similar meanings may also function as process words.

Resource created by: Amanda Pearce and Wendy Fleet