

Analysing the question

The following steps can be applied to all questions.

- Read the whole question twice.
- Look for instruction words.
- Look for topic words.
- Look for any other words that restrict the topic in any way.

Instruction Words

Words such as **what, how and why are, of course, commonly used in questions. Other instruction words include:**

Account for	Give reasons for something.
Analyse	Focus on the 'how' and 'why' of an issue or topic. Do not simply describe or summarise.
Compare	Find similarities and differences between two or more objects, ideas, events or theories.
Contrast	Similar to compare, but differences should be emphasised
Criticise	Assess the merit of something. Consider both good points and bad points and give the results of your analysis.
Define	Give precise meanings with key details. Examples may be useful.
Describe	Recall specific details about size, cost, texture, appearance etc.
Discuss	Present a point of view after considering both sides of an issue or question. Your opinion should be supported by arguments and evidence.
Evaluate	Consider both strengths and weaknesses and make a judgement.
Explain	Relate how something happens in the order in which it occurs, or, clarify reasons, causes and effects.
Illustrate	Use examples to demonstrate a point.
Interpret	Express in your own words. Examples may be useful.
List	Write your answer as an itemized series which may be in point form.
Outline	Provide main points and leave out minor details

Prove	Give factual evidence, examples or clear logical reasons which demonstrate the validity of a statement/idea.
Relate	Tell the story in clear sequence, or, show how things are connected or similar to each other.
Review	Examine a subject critically, analysing and commenting on the main points.
State	Present the main points in brief, clear sequence.
Summarise	Give the main points or facts in condensed form.
To what extent	Consider both sides, make a judgement and defend it. Similar to evaluate or discuss.
Trace	Relate the progress, development or history of a subject.

Not ALL questions use instruction words, so it is important to know what they mean and to be familiar with other ways of expressing them.

Topic Words

Topic words are usually easy to locate. They tell you what you have to write about.

Restricting Words

Restricting words are words or phrases that narrow the topic and make it more specific.

The following questions have been divided into:

1. Instruction words 2. Topic words 3. Restricting words.

1

2

3

What is meant by / 'economic dualism' / in the Japanese context?

1

2

3

Discuss /the impact of colonial rule on British Burma /before 1870.

Once you have analysed the question, check your understanding. Try to rewrite the question using at least some different words by completing the following sentence in no more than 25 words.

The question is asking me to ...