**Analyse**

Take apart an idea, concept or statement and examine and criticise its sub-parts in detail. You have to be methodical and logical.

**Assess**

Describe a topic’s positive and negative aspects and say how useful or successful it is, or consider its contribution to knowledge, events or processes (this is usually about how important something is).

**Criticise**

Point out a topic’s mistakes or weaknesses as well as its favourable aspects. Give a balanced answer (this will involve some analysis first).

**Compare**

Put items side by side to see their similarities and differences – a balanced (objective) answer is required.

**Contrast**

Emphasise the differences between two things.

Define

Give the meaning of an idea, either a dictionary definition or from an academic authority in your subject of study (technical definition).

**Describe**

Give details of processes, properties, events and so on.

**Discuss**

Describe, explain, give examples, points for and against, then analyse and evaluate the results.

**Evaluate**

Similar to discuss, but with more emphasis on a judgement in the conclusion.

**Examine**

Take apart and describe a concept in great detail.

**Explain**

Give detailed reasons for an idea, principle or result, situation, attitude and so on. You may need to give some analysis as well.

**Illustrate**

Give concrete examples – including figures or diagrams. Illustrate is usually added on to another instruction.

**Interpret**

Explain and comment on the subject and make a judgement (evaluation).

**Justify**

Give reasons to support a statement – it may be a negative statement, so be careful!

**List**

Provide an itemised series of parts, reasons or qualities, possibly in a table.

**Prove/disprove**

Provide evidence for or against and demonstrate logical argument and reasoning – you often have to do this for abstract or scientific subjects.

**Relate**

Emphasise the links, connections and associations, probably with some analysis.

**Review**

Analyse and comment briefly, in organised sequences – sentences, paragraphs or lists – on the main aspects of a subject.

**State**

Give the relevant points briefly – you don’t need to make a lengthy discussion or give minor details.

**Suggest**

Give possible reasons – analyse, interpret and evaluate. (This is also the verb most commonly used to quote another author.)

**Summarise or outline**

Just give the main points, not the details.

**Trace**

Give a brief description of the logical or chronological stages of the development of a theory, process, a person’s life and so on.