

Understanding assessment tasks: Task, content and limiting words

There are three types of words to look out for when first reading your assessment task. Highlight each of the following in different colours to improve your understanding of the task.

- **Task words** tell you how you need to approach your task.
- **Content words** tell you about the precise topic to focus on. They are also useful key words for library searches.
- **Limiting words** further narrow the focus of your topic. They can also be useful key words to add to your library searches.

Once you have understood your assessment task, revisit the precise wording of the task at each stage of researching for and writing the assessment.

Examples of common task words

Describe	Write a description (i.e. an explanation) of an item or concept. Provide the main characteristics or features of something.
Analyse	Scrutinise closely. Identify important points and primary features. Identify how ideas relate to each other. Divide into parts or elements and describe the function of the parts and their relationship to other parts. Perhaps identify problems or weaknesses.
Synthesise	Compare and contrast ideas from a range of sources to group together and present similar ideas or positions on a topic, as well as the differences between them.
Evaluate	Use evidence to assess the worth, importance or usefulness of something. Consider strengths and weaknesses. There will probably be cases to be made both for and against.
Discuss	Evaluate the arguments and evidence for or against something. Provide a considered opinion or evaluation. A discussion might take the form of a sustained argument, i.e. an overall opinion supported by a series of linked, supporting arguments.
Argue	Make a series of claims backed up by reason and evidence.
Justify	Argue why something is necessary, using relevant evidence.
Explain	Report the reasons or causes for a situation, or describe how something functions.
Outline	Give the main feature or general principles of a subject, omitting minor details and emphasising structure and relationships.

Task, content and limiting words in context

- **Task words** tell you how you need to approach your topic.
- **Content words** tell you about the precise topic to focus on.
- **Limiting words** further narrow the focus of your topic.

Some assessment tasks will have a very simple structure where you can easily highlight the task words, content and limiting words.

Assessment task example 1 – Built environment

Discuss some of the challenges associated with urban soils impacting on traditional landscape architecture practices in Melbourne.

Other assessment tasks may be complex in structure, but you should be able to identify task words, content and limiting words.

Assessment task example 2 – Health

Evaluate the extent to which human rights issues are being addressed in the context indigenous communities' health outcomes in regional Australia and **review** some of the current responses to the problem.

Assessment task example 3 – Criminology

In the face of the failure of law enforcement approaches to youth justice, it can be argued that only significant cultural change will reduce incarceration rates in Australia. **Critically discuss** with reference to successful approaches to youth incarceration and innovative youth justice programs.

Assessment task example 4 – Nursing

Identify some of the physiological adaptations that occur in the cardiac and respiratory systems of an adult male during strenuous exercise. **Explain the differences** occurring in these systems during strenuous exercise as compared with that of a person at rest.

Some assessment tasks can be complex and have multiple steps. Be sure that you clearly understand each component of the task before you begin.

Assessment task example 5 – Health

Review the Coroner's case for John Blanchard. **Identify** and **summarise** the key contributory factors to his death. **Identify** specific failures or lost opportunities drawing only on relevant case details and testimony. **Based on the Coroner's recommendations, present and discuss** one key proposal for legislative change.

Assessment task example 6 – Business

1. **Analyse** the wine industry in regional Victoria and **outline** key industry indicators that will play a role in assisting new businesses entering the market.
2. **Identify** a potential target market and **develop** a consumer profile for a hypothetical business.
3. **Determine** the business brand's potential competitive advantage in the Australian market and **develop** a positioning statement.
4. **Graphically depict** your differentiation strategy (ensure you also explore strategies other than price or profit) using a brand positioning map.

Want to learn more about to how to approach your next assessment task?

Get one-on-one assistance from [Deakin Study Support](#).