Understanding and Answering Assignment Questions
Analysing a Question using Key Words

Assignment questions can be broken down into parts so that you can better understand what you are being asked to do. It is important to identify key words and phrases in the topic.
What are Key Words?

Key words are the words in an assignment question that tell you the approaches to take when you answer.

**Task Words**
- Tell you what to do in order to answer the question.
- Are usually verbs.

**Content Words**
- Tell you what the topic areas are.
- Help you focus research on the correct areas.

**Limiting Words**
- Define the topic area, making it workable.
- Indicate aspects of the topic area you should focus on.
Task words

Verbs that direct you and tell you how to go about answering a question. Understanding the meaning helps you to know exactly what you have to do.
Content words

Tell you what the topic area(s) of your assignment are and take you halfway towards narrowing down your material and selecting your answer. Content words help you to focus your research and reading on the correct area.
Limiting Words
Make a broad topic workable. They focus the topic area further by indicating aspects you should narrowly concentrate on.

Task Words
Discuss

Content Words
Environmental effects
Tsunami

Q: Discuss the environmental effects of the 2004 tsunami in Asia.

Limiting Words
Environment
2004
Asia
Example Question 1 - handout

Cooking shows, such as Master Chef and My Kitchen Rules, have had a significant impact on the Australian food culture. Identify and discuss the more notable changes that the show has made to the eating, cooking and shopping habits of Australians.
Task Words

IDENTIFY

This means to establish what you regard as the key features of something, making clear the criteria you use.
Task Words

DISCUSS

This means to investigate or examine by argument. Examine key points and possible interpretations, sift and debate, giving reasons for and against. Draw a conclusion.
Content Words

TV SHOW MASTER CHEF, FOOD CULTURE, SHOPPING HABITS.

Content words help you to direct your research and reading towards the correct area(s), in this case on cooking TV shows such as Master Chef and My Kitchen Rules, food culture and shopping habits.
Limiting Words

NOTABLE CHANGES, SIGNIFICANT IMPACT, AUSTRALIAN FOOD CULTURE.

Limiting words further define the topic area and indicate aspects you should narrowly concentrate on. For example, in this question, do not just write about food on the TV shows – Discuss the SIGNIFICANT IMPACT these shows have had and the NOTABLE CHANGES that have been made to our eating, both at home and in restaurants, and to our shopping habits, since the shows began.
Example Question 2

The Ned Kelly saga was more than a story about a single outlaw; rather it needs to be seen as a social phenomenon involving the participation of a large number of supporters and sympathisers. What explanations can be given for the ‘Kelly outbreak’?
Task words

What are the Explanations?

[critically examine them]
Content words

Social phenomenon

Kelly saga

Participation of supporters and sympathisers
Limiting Words

Explanations

Social phenomenon

Kelly Outbreak
Four Square Model for Writing

1. Form Groups

2. Fold paper into 4 squares

3. Draw a box in the very center of the page

4. Number all the boxes starting with 1 in the top left box.

5. In that box write ‘My Favourite food is...’

6. In the other boxes write a different sentence about that food.
My Favourite Food is ..........
## Brainstorming with Thesis

### BRAINSTORMING SHEET (GENERAL)

This sheet is designed to help you organize your thinking about your thesis statement by listing the main ideas and subelements. It is a process that we encourage by having you brainstorm your ideas, categorize them, and then evaluate their potential. By doing this, you will find it easier to write your thesis after you have gone through the brainstorming process. Please write the reverse of this sheet for these examples:

**ESSAY QUESTION**

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**SUB ELEMENTS / KEY AREAS**

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**YOUR TENTATIVE THESIS**

### Group Activity

**Avondale College of Higher Education**
In the last 20 years, rates of divorce have risen significantly in Western Countries. Critically analyse some of the different explanations given for this phenomenon. In your discussion you should consider what implications these explanations might have for social policy.
Task Words
Critically analyse
Discuss
Task Words
Critically analyse
Discuss

Content Words
Rates of divorce
Western countries
Different explanations
Social policy
Task Words
Critically analyse
Discuss

Content Words
Rates of divorce
Western countries
Different explanations
Social policy

Limiting Words
Implications (social policy)
Introduction

The introduction should tell your reader:
• How you understand the topic (e.g. context, background, key terms)
• What your controlling argument is (thesis statement).
• What issues you will cover (and in which order)
• Highlight ideas as major or minor (for longer essays)
• What conclusion you will reach – Your thesis statement is your conclusion.
Thesis Statement
A thesis statement usually comes at the end of the introduction and for this topic, might say:

This essay argues that divorce rates have risen largely because of .......... and ........., and goes on to identify how these factors might impact social policy.
Conclusion

The conclusion is to **restate** what has been argued in the body of the essay; it is a wrap-up of the main points or arguments of your essay. However, there are other possibilities when writing a conclusion. For example, you might choose to:

- discuss why it is **difficult to arrive at a definitive answer** to the question posed
- raise **other questions** that could be considered in a subsequent essay
- suggest **other approaches** that could be adopted in investigating the question
- make a **prediction** about what will happen to the phenomenon under investigation.