

How to Analyse Assignment Instructions

In order to make sure that you answer your assignment question appropriately, you need to analyse the question by breaking down the assignment instructions into three elements. Whether an assignment question is long and complex, or short and simple, it consists of:

1. The topic, which tells you what the general focus of the assignment is
2. The instructional words, which tell you what to do
3. The other significant words, which tell you which part of the topic you must limit yourself to and focus on

Analysing the question into these three elements is important for two reasons:

- It will enable you to focus accurately on the topic and present a relevant answer
- It will help you to structure your assignment

Sample essay question:

Outline factors related to learning that apply in the classroom. Discuss possible reasons for student success in exams and evaluate the role of the tutor in preparing students for exams.

Apply the following procedure to analyse your instructions:

1. Highlight the topic

Outline factors related to **learning** that apply in the classroom. Discuss possible reasons for student success in exams and evaluate the role of the tutor in preparing students for exams.

2. Box and number the instructional words, i.e. the words that tell you what to do.

¹ Outline factors related to **learning** that apply in the classroom. ² Discuss possible reasons for student success in exams and evaluate the role of the tutor in preparing students for exams.

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3. Underline any other significant words.

¹ Outline factors related to **learning** that apply in the classroom. ² Discuss possible reasons for student success in exams and evaluate the role of the tutor in preparing students for exams.

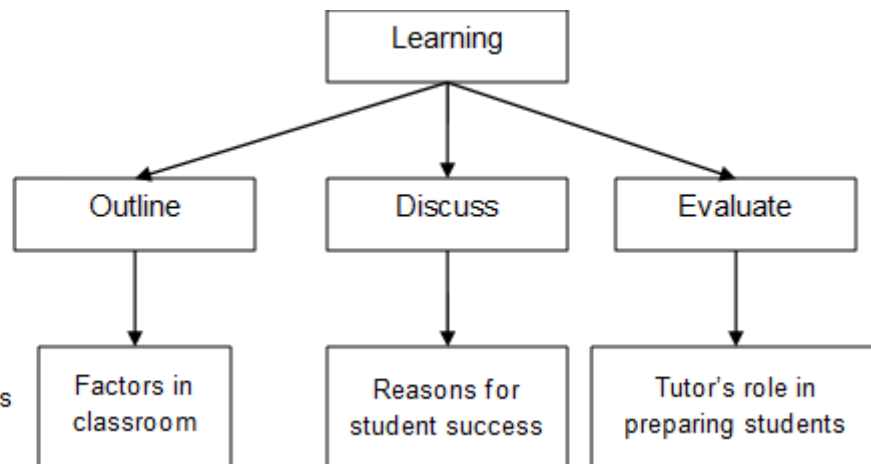
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Visually the process looks like this:

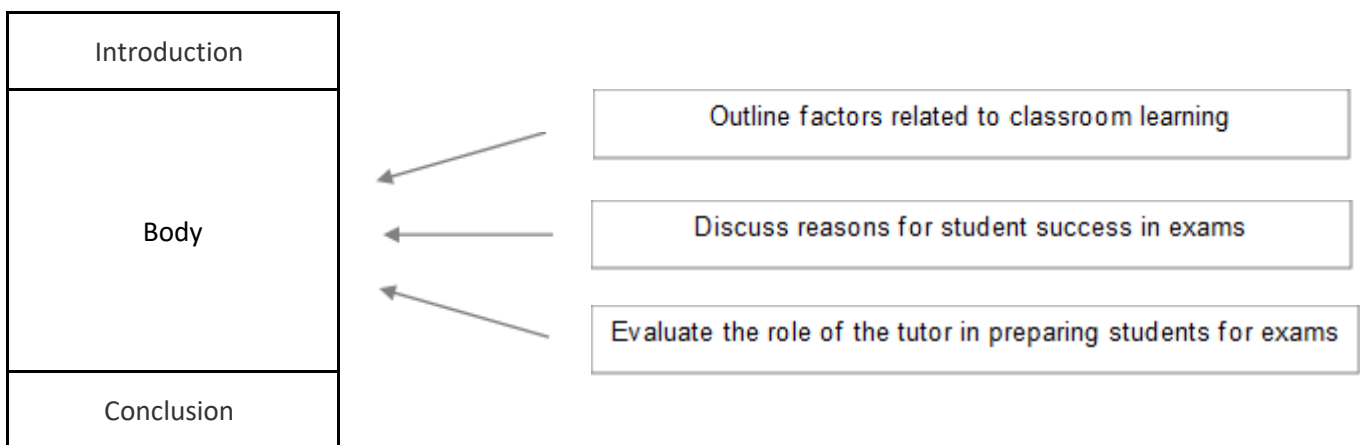
1. Identify the topic

2. Instructional words

3. Other significant words



The body of this essay will have three main sections:



Marking Guide:

Use the marking guide to work out how many words to write for each section of the body of the essay and to check that you have covered all the parts of the question and given each part the correct weighting.

Refer to these related handouts:

- [Instructional Words](#)
- [Paragraphs](#)
- [Essay Structure](#)
- [Linking Words and Phrases](#)
- [Paraphrasing](#)

These handouts and other resources are accessible online at <https://myara.ara.ac.nz/pages/academic-support/learning-resources>.