

## Prompt Keywords

When you review a prompt, look for keywords that tell you what you need to do. There may be multiple keywords in your prompt. Make sure you address each in your response.

Key word	What it means
<b>Analyze</b>	Break down the argument. Look at the evidence and any claimed causes and effects.
<b>Argue (for/against) Defend Take a stand</b>	Argue for/against a position with facts, reasons, examples. You may have to argue for one position over another, using persuasion to convince the reader your position is the best.
<b>Compare and contrast</b>	Explain the similarities and differences between two or more topics.
<b>Classify</b>	Place items into different categories and explain why they fit those categories.
<b>Comment Discuss</b>	Examine or make observations about a subject.
<b>Define</b>	Explain the meaning of a term; describe the basic nature of something.
<b>Develop</b>	Create something (such as a plan) or expand an idea.
<b>Evaluate Criticize</b>	Judge the evidence/topic, discuss its strengths and weaknesses, and decide if it is valuable/correct/the best option.
<b>Examine</b>	Observe carefully; study or analyze in detail.
<b>Explain</b>	Make an event, problem, or relationship clear and understandable.
<b>Explore</b>	Conduct a careful examination of a subject; investigate all possibilities.
<b>Identify</b>	Describe something that fits the characteristics indicated in the prompt.
<b>Interpret</b>	Explain the meaning or significance of a subject; offer an explanation.
<b>Justify</b>	Show that a position is right or reasonable with facts, reasoning, or examples.
<b>Outline</b>	Provide a general overview of the main points of a subject.
<b>Pros and cons</b>	Arguments in favor of (pros) and against (cons) a position or action.

Key word	What it means
<b>Reflect</b>	Connect the topic to your own personal experiences.
<b>Show or State</b>	Demonstrate or explain by reasoning or step-by-step procedures.
<b>Summarize</b> <b>Describe</b>	Give a brief description of an issue, event, or sequence of events.
<b>Support</b>	Provide evidence for a position. Prove something is true with facts, reasons and examples.
<b>Tell</b>	Give a detailed account of an event, sequence of events, or situation. This is usually a narrative description.
<b>Trace</b>	Describe a sequence of events; follow the development or progress of a subject. This is usually a methodical look at details.

### Resources

- Pearson Prentice Hall, “Key Words in Writing Prompts” worksheet
- George Mason University Writing Center:  
<https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/understanding-your-instructor-s-prompt>