

What do they mean when they say ____ in the written response?

There are a bunch of words (called “*directing words*”) that have very specific meanings when you are asked a question in the short answer questions. Students who don’t know the exact meaning usually give incomplete or wrong answers on these parts of the questions. These directing words, as defined by Alberta Education, are:

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| Algebraically | Using mathematical procedures that involve letters or symbols to represent numbers |
| Analyze | To make a mathematical, chemical, or methodical examination of parts to determine the nature, proportion, function, interrelationship, etc. of the whole |
| Compare | Examine the character or qualities of two things by providing characteristics of both that point out their <i>similarities</i> and <i>differences</i> |
| Conclude | State a logical end based on reasoning and/or evidence |
| Contrast/Distinguish | Point out the <i>differences</i> between two things that have similar or comparable natures |
| Criticize | Point out the <i>demerits</i> of an item or issue |
| Define | Provide the essential qualities or meaning of a word or concept; make distinct and clear by marking out the limits |
| Describe | Give a written account or represent the characteristics of something by a figure, model, or picture |
| Design/Plan | Construct a plan; i.e. a detailed sequence of actions for a specific purpose |
| Determine | Find a solution, to a specified degree of accuracy, to a problem by showing appropriate formulas, procedures, and calculations |
| Enumerate | Specify one by one or list in concise form and according to some order |
| Evaluate | Give the significance or worth of something by identifying the good and bad points or the advantages and disadvantages |
| Explain | Make clear what is not immediately obvious or entirely known; give the cause of or reason for; make known in detail |
| Graphically | Using a drawing that is produced electronically or by hand and that shows a relation between certain sets of numbers |
| How | Show in what manner or way, with what meaning |
| Hypothesize | Form a tentative proposition intended as a possible explanation for an observed phenomenon; i.e., a possible cause for a specific effect. The proposition should be testable logically and/or empirically |
| Identify | Recognize and select as having the characteristics of something |
| Illustrate | Make clear by giving an example. The form of the example must be specified in the question; i.e., word description, sketch, or diagram |
| Infer | Form a generalization from sample data; arrive at a conclusion by reasoning from evidence |
| Interpret | Tell the meaning of something; present information in a new form that adds meaning to the original data |
| Justify/Show How | Show reasons for or give facts that support a position |

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| Model | Find a model (in mathematics, a model of a situation is a pattern that is supposed to represent or set a standard for a real situation) that does a good job of representing a situation |
| Outline | Give, in an organized fashion, the essential parts of something. The form of the outline must be specified in the question; i.e., list, flow chart, concept map |
| Predict | Tell in advance on the basis of empirical evidence and/or logic |
| Prove | Establish the truth of validity of a statement for the general case by giving factual evidence or logical argument |
| Relate | Show logical or causal connection between things |
| Sketch | Provide a drawing that represents the key features of an object or graph |
| Solve | Give a solution for a problem; i.e., explanation in words and/or numbers |
| Summarize | Give a brief account of the main points |
| Trace | Give a step-by-step description of the development |
| Verify | Establish, by substitution for a particular case or by geometric comparison, the truth of a statement |
| Why | Show the cause, reason, or purpose |