

Understanding and Answering Assignment Questions



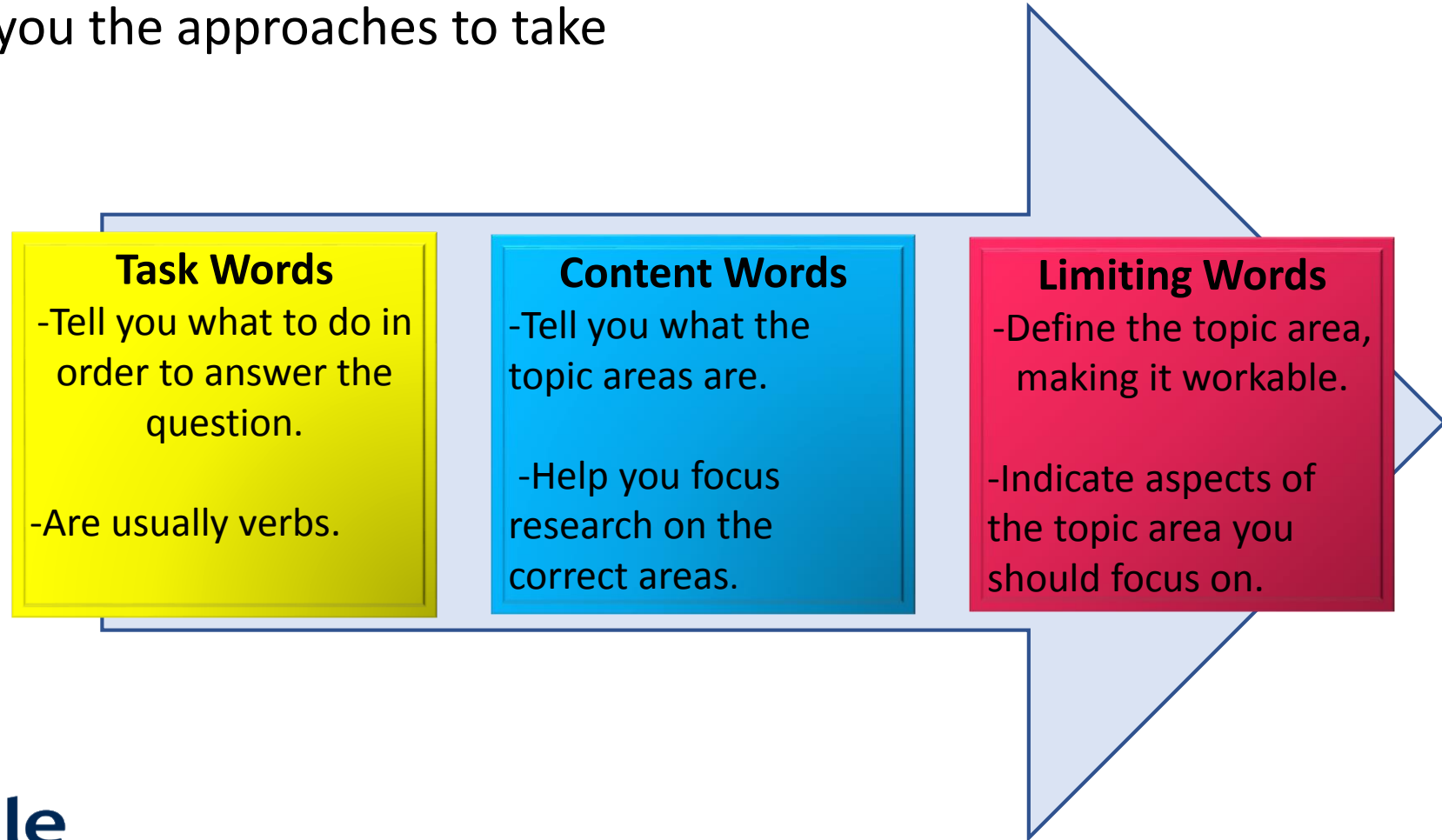
Analysing a Question using Key Words

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

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.

argue

outline

summarise

investigate

discuss

evaluate

interpret

explain

define

analyse

describe

compare & contrast

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.



Key Words – Look for and underline them.

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

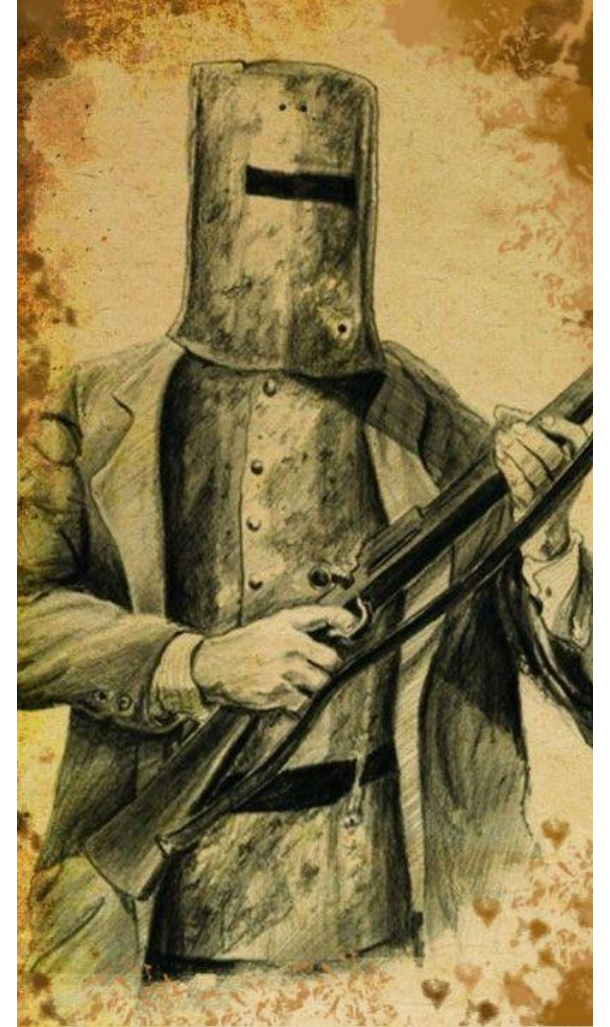
NOTABLE CHANGES, SIGNIFICANT IMPACT, AUSTRALIAN FOOD CULTURE.

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

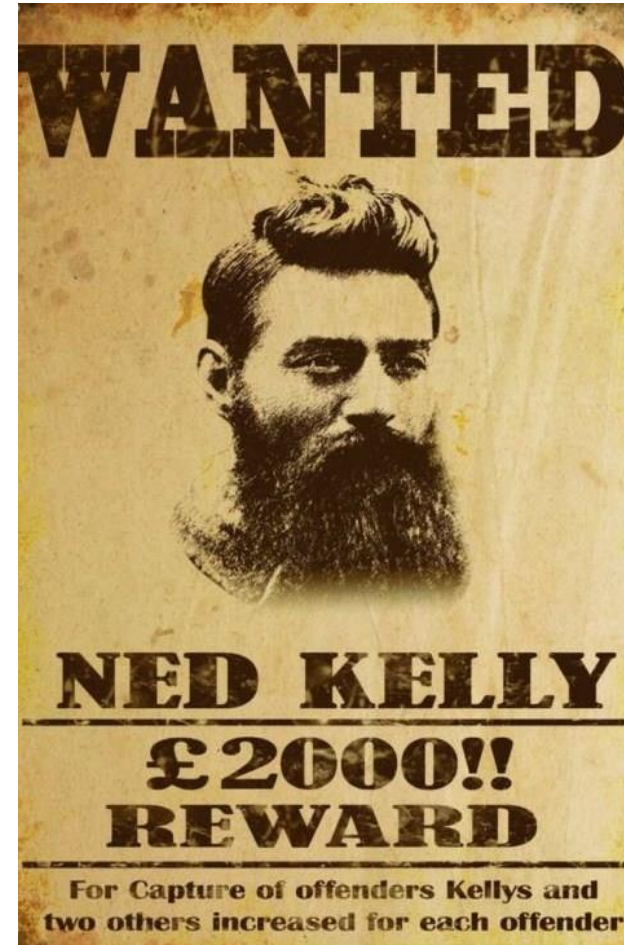
The Ned Kelly saga was more than a story about a single outlaw; rather it needs to be seen as a social phenomenon involving the participation of a large number of supporters and sympathisers. What explanations can be given for the ‘Kelly outbreak’?



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

Group Activity



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.





Brainstorming with Thesis

1.	<p>BRAINSTORMING SHEET (GENERAL) This sheet will help you organise your thinking around your essay question by, firstly, breaking down the question into its sub-elements and, secondly, by expanding on those elements, a process that will be informed by your preliminary reading. The exercise will help you develop a basic outline for your essay and also to formulate a tentative thesis statement. It is best to write your thesis after you have gone through the brainstorming process. [See the reverse of this sheet for thesis examples.]</p>	7.
2.	<p>ESSAY QUESTION</p>	6.
3.	<p>SUB ELEMENTS / KEY AREAS</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>4.</p> <p>5.</p> <p>6.</p> <p>7.</p> <p>4.</p>	5.
	<p>YOUR TENTATIVE THESIS</p>	

Brainstorming with Thesis - Question



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.

Introduction

H - Hook

I – Introduce Topic

T – Thesis

HIT





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.

