

Understanding the Command of the Questions

It is the prefix or suffix of the question which determines direction and command of the answer.

It is for your convenience, we are trying to make explicit what is meant by these words and what you will write. Technology, Meaning and Demand of the directives/commands.

Discuss.

In Discuss, you have to write two or all the aspects of an issue. Don't criticize, simply present all the sides in an analytical manner. In conclusion you write a brief summary of all the sides. Since one has to write all the aspects, towards the end of the answer, one can write the contrary/negative view or a bit of criticism. This makes the difference between the command Discuss and Explain as in explain, one doesn't have to write anything negative.

Critically Discuss.

It is like discuss plus evaluate. In Discuss one writes two aspects or all aspects of an issue or the problem. Discuss is an elaboration in which all the aspects of a problem, issue and a phenomenon are to be presented. 'Critically discuss' is a recent command introduced by the UPSC. In 'Critically discuss', one has to present all the aspects by examining its pros and cons. One does not only present all aspects but evaluate the different aspects. It refers to examining either two or more aspects by examining various associated factors. One has to give the plus points and minus points of a phenomenon.

For example, if one has to critically discuss the Gandhian view of nonviolence. In this one has to see the plus points of nonviolence and one must give the example of India's national struggle. Then one has to severely criticize the concept of non-violence and cite all the negative aspects of nonviolence.

Explain.

It is also a common directive. You write the meaning of the problem, all aspects involved in it. You simply try to write answers to all the 'why' which may emerge in the problem. We can give an example; Why smart city programme, this has to be written in 'explain smart city'. Explain is the answer to all 'why'. It touches and explores all aspects.

Explanations require you to write the context of the question. You explain or convince by providing this context. In simple terms you write all aspects without any criticism and your opinion.

Examine.

It means scrutiny of the statement/question. You first write after two lines of introduction, a brief statement of what the idea or presentation is. Only then you examine. 'Examine' does not mean only a rejection of the idea or criticism. It also means support and praise, that is, examine doesn't mean only to criticize. The given statement may or may not invite criticism. Since the command is to examine, the question has been framed in such a way that it will necessarily have some criticisms.

Critically examine and Critically evaluate.

Both have the same meaning when they are given towards the end of the question, that the given statement/question is not correct and it should be rejected. In a nutshell, you should demolish the proposition. But that does not mean only rejection should be written. Rather first write after a few lines of introduction, a brief statement of what the idea or presentation is about the statement. Only then you critically examine.

Note: In such a command, one must take a stand in the answer which is an essential condition. Generally, aspirants avoid taking stand by simply skipping conclusive views. That is, towards the end of the answer, aspirants don't write what is the conclusive view. In such cases, the answer is considered as incomplete.

Note: When 'Critically examine or Critically evaluate' is given in the beginning of the question, in such cases, one has to write first the positive sides and then the negative sides of the question. Evaluate, It simply means write pros and cons of the given statement.

Comment.

It is the most frequently asked command in the question. Generally, this is presented at the end of the question and so it is called a suffix. In comment, you write the different aspects of a problem or issue or the topic in an analytical manner and you also give your opinion. In comment, the whole problem or issue is presented, and different aspects and different views are presented related to the issue or the problem. No criticisms are to be attempted. Criticism is the view of a scholar and comment is your view.

That is, the uniqueness of this command is that you can write answers in your own view.

Critically Comment.

‘Critically comment’ is a double evaluation in simple terms. In comment one has to give one’s view on any particular issue. In comment one has the liberty to make any comments showing for or against views. The comment should not be baseless. It requires you to do a general perusal and then you comment. This general perusal is also a type of evaluation.

‘Critically comment’ requires you to show all the aspects with an evaluation which is systematic and on concrete grounds. One has to meticulously see one by one all issues. The evaluation is on certain criteria. This evaluation must indicate the merits and demerits of the given topic or problem. Critically comment therefore, indicates to comment after evaluation in a systematic way. Comment is the view of someone in a deliberate manner but when it is critically commented then the view has to be given after systematic evaluation. For example, if one has to comment on the question of nationalism, one can simply say nationalism is sacrosanct and nobody should be allowed to say anything against it. The other non-critical comment can be that nationalism has many bases and there can be different views on it.

Critically comment has to go by an evaluation of the principle of nationalism and then one takes a position. One has to evaluate both the consequences of nationalism and also the positive effects of nationalism.

Analyse.

It is also a very frequent directive. You simply remember one analogy. As the medical students dissect insects or human organs in their laboratories so you analyse a problem threadbare. You go deeper, you want to see the inner meanings. It is an in-depth view on the given statement.

Critically Analyse.

We have already presented the meaning of analyse. One has to dissect any phenomenon trying to go deeper and present the causes of any phenomenon. This requires one to go inside any phenomenon and do the brain searching. Critically analyse does not only show the underlying causes of a phenomenon but also shows all other dimensions. It requires any one to show the underlying causes but also the plus and minus of any cause. This refers to seeing and imagining all the interrelated aspects of the causes.

This is in-depth and analyses underlying and interrelated causes. For example, one has to critically analyze the problem of black money in India. One has to write about the sources of black money, the causes of black money, why it is difficult to identify black money and how other countries like the USA have done about this.

Critically analyse is different from critically examine/comment/evaluate. It doesn’t mean to write criticism. Rather the examiner has in mind that some critical facts/information

will necessarily be written, that is the question has been framed and command has been given as critically analyse.

Describe.

It is the simplest directive. Describe is the description of a phenomenon or a simple statement of facts. In describe neither you criticise nor you analyse. You directly write about the apparent features. You write in a straight way the features.

Elaborate.

It simply means you have to expand the given statement/question suppose it is in 20 words then you have to expand to 150/250/300 words as per the marks of the questions.

Note: One must not write any criticisms in elaborate command. It is strictly prohibited.

Elucidate.

It simply means you have to expand the given statement/question suppose it is in 20 words then you have to expand to 150/250/300 words as per the marks of the questions. Plus write one/two good examples which is an essential condition. It is like:

Elaborate + appropriate examples

Note: One must not write any criticisms in elucidate command. It is strictly prohibited.

Illustrate.

It means to explain with a diagrammatic/figurative explanation. Diagrams/flow-chart is a must in such a command. Enumerate, One has to simply write in points in order about the given statement. Like enumerate the features of parliamentary democracy.

Distinguish.

It indicates a directive where you have to write the differences between two or more phenomena. You distinguish all aspects.

Compare and Contrast.

It is a directive in which you first, in very brief present the meanings of the phenomena you are to compare. Then you write the similarities as well as differences of the two. In the conclusion when you are summarizing write what are more, the similarities or the differences.

Note: In case of only comparison, write head to head comparison.

Substantiate.

It means you have to prove a particular proposition. You give only positive aspects. You present your arguments as a lawyer. You convince the examiner.
