



Concept Words Used in Essay Questions

You will be more effective as a student if you know what kind of response is required by different types of questions. Sometimes, assignment instructions can be understood by breaking them down into **concepts**. Consider the following example taken from the UM Etools module on Doing A+ Research. (http://www.umanitoba.ca/learning_technologies/etools/index.php?action=page&id=65)

Example Assignment Description

Write a 2000 word essay on **residence life** and its **effect** on **student success** in **first year university**. You should use a variety of information resources, including a minimum of one book, one journal article, and one reputable website.

In this example, the highlighted words represent key concepts that should be addressed in the essay. When reading an assignment, underline or highlight key words to help focus on what your instructor is asking. Making a chart to understand and organize the assignment’s key concepts can be helpful to ensure that you meet all the requirements.

Instructors may ask you to write about multiple concepts as they relate to each other. Listing or outlining separate parts of an assignment can help you divide a daunting assignment into manageable parts. Making a chart can also be helpful to understand and organize the assignment’s multiple parts. Often, using the order in which the concepts are listed can help you structure and organize your response.

Sample Chart based on Example Assignment Description

Concept Word	Questions to Develop Ideas
Residence life	What is the definition of “residence life”? What are some of the characteristics of residence life?
Student success	What is the definition of “student success”? What are some necessary elements to student success?
Relationship between Residence life and Student success	What characteristics of residence contribute to student success? What characteristics of residence are detrimental to student success?

Sometimes essay questions can be understood focusing on the **verbs**. Please see our handout Verbs Used in Essay Questions.