

Essay Question Worksheet

Approach your essays as **research** tasks, not as **regurgitation** tasks!

Task. Literally: what do I need to do in this essay?

Common Task Words:

Account for	Give reasons for, explain why something occurs
Analyse	Break material into its constituent parts and determine how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose.
Argue	Take a position and, using appropriate ancient and scholarly evidence, make the case for it
Compare	Identify and describe points of similarity
Contrast	Bring out the points of difference
Evaluate	Make a strong analysis, and argue for a position based on that analysis, ensuring that you have explored the topic from multiple perspectives
Describe	Give an account that is complete and accurate, with appropriate sources, and highlighting the most important elements
Discuss	Analyse and present multiple perspectives, giving a critical account of your research

Compare and Contrast are often used together in an essay question

In addition to these you may use simpler task words like how, why, who, when, where

Worksheet task: read through the list of common task words, consider what each of task word is asking you to do and what kinds of topics might be appropriate for each. At this stage you do not need to make a decision on what task-directive vocabulary you will use in your question, but if you have a sense of the kind of task-directive you want to use, make a note of that here:

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Content and Scope

Worksheet tasks: at this point you may have an idea about what topics you are interested in exploring in your essay – even if you think you know the exact topic, I still encourage you to complete the tasks as laid out.

Task 1: write down the first three things that come into your head related to the course. This may be places, people, spheres (e.g. politics, religion, warfare), specific objects or texts

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Task 2: Write down a few notes or keywords related to each of the above topics, including what specifically about that topic interests you:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Task 3: take each of the above topics and consider how you would focus it by considering scope – sometimes scope overlaps with topics – for instance, it may include places, time periods, people, objects, or spheres. These are secondary to content. For examples, your content may be Athens, and your scope may be ‘politics in the archaic period’ alternatively, your content may be Politics, and your scope may be ‘archaic Athens’. At this point, do not worry about the potential nuance of which is placed in ‘content’ and which in ‘scope’.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Task 4: turn each of the above topics, explanations, and scope considerations into questions, without spending too much time thinking about whether or not they are effectively written essay questions

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Task 5: Choose one of the above questions. This will form the basis of the essay question you will write. Write the question out in two further ways, one less focused and one more focused than the question you have written above (for examples of focus see the relevant section of lecture 7.2.1)

1. _____
