

Analysing titles

Essay titles are more than a topic. They contain instructions about what you need to do, what ideas you need to focus on, and how narrow or broad your discussion should be. Taking time to analyse the title before you begin can save time later and help you stay focused throughout the assignment.



What to Look For

Instruction Words

The instruction word tells you the kind of thinking expected in the assignment. Common examples include:

- Analyse
- Evaluate
- Compare
- Discuss
- Outline

Different instruction words require different approaches, so it is important to identify this part of the title first.

Key Concepts

These are the main topics, theories, issues, or ideas that the assignment is asking you to address. They are usually the central focus of your research and discussion.

Limits and Focus

Many titles include signals that narrow the assignment. These might refer to:

- A particular time period
- A specific country or region
- A particular perspective
- Certain examples or case studies

Sometimes a title asks you to complete more than one task. For example, you may be asked to analyse a topic and support your discussion with examples. Recognising all parts of the title helps you decide how to organise your work and where to place emphasis.

A Simple Method for Analysing Any Title

Step 1: Identify the Main Elements

Read the title carefully and highlight:

- The instruction word

- The key concepts
- Any limits or conditions

For example, in the title *Analyse the effects of globalisation on the Indian economy*, the main elements are:

- Analyse
- Globalisation
- Indian economy

Step 2: Consider What the Instruction Requires

Ask yourself what the instruction word expects you to do.

For example, if the title uses the word *analyse*, you will usually need to:

- Break the topic into different parts
- Examine links and relationships
- Explore causes and consequences
- Move beyond simple description

Step 3: Restate the Title

Rewrite the title in plain language. This can help you check whether you understand what is being asked.

Using the example above, you might write:

"I need to examine the ways globalisation has influenced the Indian economy and explain how different effects are connected."

Putting the title into your own words can make the task feel clearer and more manageable.

Step 4: Spend Five Minutes Brainstorming

Before starting detailed research, spend a few minutes making notes on:

- What you already know
- Relevant examples
- Useful readings
- Questions that need further research

A short brainstorming exercise can help you identify gaps in your knowledge and make it easier to plan your next steps.

Find out more tips and resources at tcd.ie/sld