Use Academic Terms

How are they used in assignments, projects, and exams?

Analyze:	Separate (a thing, an idea, etc.) into its parts to explore their nature, proportion, function, interrelationship, etc. Offer evidence to support your claims about the item or issue.
Apply:	Use your knowledge in the indicated situation(s).
Argue:	Make a case based on appropriate evidence for / against some point of view.
Comment:	Explore the impact and meaning of something; give a note in explanation, criticism, or illustration of something written or said; remark or make an observation made in criticism or as an expression of opinion.
Compare:	Examine qualities, or characteristics, to discover resemblances. "Compare" is usually stated as "compare with": and you emphasize similarities; differences may be mentioned.
Consider:	Form a carefully reasoned account giving attention to all aspects.
Contrast:	Stress dissimilarities, differences, or unlikeness of things, qualities, events, or problems. Tell how two or more topics are different from associated things, qualities, or events, etc.
Criticize:	Express your judgment with respect to the correctness or merits of the factors under consideration. Give the results of your own analysis first. Then discuss the limitations and good points or contributions of the plan or work in question.
Define:	Give a concise, clear meaning with any limitations of the definition briefly cited. Keep in mind the class to which a thing belongs and whatever differentiates the particular object from all others in that class. When the Instructor has specified a definition, this is the one you should use.
Describe:	Relate in narrative form what the requested information looks like, sounds like, and feels like, including summarizing events or information.
Diagram:	Use a drawing, chart, plan, or graphic representation in your answer. Generally, you are expected to label the diagram and, in some cases, add a brief explanation or description.
Discuss:	Present and consider several positions in a debate; look at the "for" and "against" of the arguments(s) you have chosen to focus on. This can be ambiguous. Think of how the Instructor used this in class and follow that direction. In sciences you will elaborate and explore the nature, proportion, form, function, interrelationship, etc. of the item or process. Offer evidence to support your claims.
Enumerate:	Create a numbered list or outline. In such questions you should recount, one by one, in concise form, the points required.
Evaluate / Assess:	Write a careful appraisal of the problem stressing both advantages and limitations. Evaluation implies authoritative and, to a lesser degree, personal appraisal of both contributions and limitations.
Examine:	Investigate the essential elements of an issue / topic and the relationship between them.

Pro Tip: note any other words that your Instructor uses in class and clarify what they expect when they are using those terms before exam time. ☺

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Explain:	Clarify and interpret the material you present. It is best to state the "how" and/or "why," reconcile any differences in opinion or experimental results, and, where possible, state causes. Make plain the conditions which give rise to whatever you are examining.
Explore:	Consider approaches / possibilities and exercise your imagination within and perhaps beyond the subject matter.
Identify:	Pick out the key features.
Illustrate:	Explain or clarify your answer to the problem by presenting a figure, picture, diagram, or concrete examples.
Interpret:	An interpretation question is similar to one requiring explanation. You are expected to translate in your own words, exemplify, solve, or comment upon the subject and to usually give your judgment or reaction to the problem.
Justify:	Prove or show grounds for decisions. To justify your answer, provide factual evidence or logical reasons. Evidence should be presented in convincing form. Establish your answer with certainty by evaluating and citing experimental evidence or by logical reasoning.
List:	Present an itemized series or tabulation. Be concise
Outline:	Give main points, basic principles, and essential supplementary materials, omitting minor details, and present the information emphasizing structure and relationship in a systematic arrangement or classification.
Point out:	Look specifically and precisely at some aspect of a topic.
Prove:	Confirm or verify your assertion. In such discussions you should establish something with certainty by evaluating and citing experimental evidence or by logical reasoning.
Relate:	Emphasize connections and associations in descriptive form.
Review:	A review specifies a critical examination. You should analyze and comment briefly in organized sequence upon the major points of the problem.
State:	In questions which direct you to specify, give, state, or present, you are called upon to express the high points in brief, clear narrative form. Details, and usually illustrations or examples, may be omitted.
Summarize:	Give, in condensed form, the main points or facts. All details, illustrations and elaboration are to be omitted.
Synthesize:	Blend two or more things you know in order to produce something original.
Trace:	Give a description of progress, historical sequence, or development from the point of origin. Such narratives may call for probing or for deduction.

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