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# A GUIDE TO **BREAKING DOWN A QUESTION**

# UNDERSTANDING THE QUESTION

As you go through your studies, you'll probably run into questions—whether in essays, exams, or assignments—that don't make complete sense at first. There are steps you can take to better understand what is required of you.

First up is deconstructing the question. This involves:

1. Determining the **instructional words**
  - the “doing words”
  - common instructional words
2. Determining the **topic words**
  - what you need to focus your research on
3. Determining the **restricting words**
  - words or phrases that narrow down what you need to focus on
  - this may include a time range, a specific location or a demographic

*Example: **Discuss** the extent to which **renewable energy policies** in **Australia** have influenced the transition to a **low-carbon economy**. In your answer, **consider** both **economic and environmental impacts**, and **support** your argument with relevant examples.*

<b>Instructional Words</b>	Discuss   Consider   Support
<b>Topic Words</b>	Renewable energy policies   Low-carbon economy
<b>Restricting Words</b>	Australia   Economic and environmental impacts

Secondly, consult your marking rubric – this is what the assessor uses to mark your work. Try and follow your rubric as closely as you can; consider it your best friend during the assignment process!



And lastly, write drafts! A lot of us feel as if we have to write perfectly on our first attempt, but that just isn't the case for many of us. Drafts allow us to see what we did well and what we can approve on, and better yet, if your examiner allows it, handing in drafts to them is a great way to improve and get a more desired mark. Don't forget to utilise your educational institution's resources – academic advisors, Studiosity, peer learners etc.



**NEED HELP?**  
REACH OUT

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