

Key Words in Essay Questions

ANALYZE	Break the information into parts showing the hierarchy and relations among the ideas expressed. Analyze the relationship between the stagnation in Central Africa and its systems of government.
COMPARE	Bring out points of similarity and points of difference. Compare the legislative branches of the state government and the national government.
CONTRAST	Bring out the points of difference. Contrast the novels of Jane Austen and William Makepeace Thackeray.
CRITICIZE	State your opinion of the correctness or merits of an item or issue; criticism may approve or disapprove. Criticize the increasing use of executive agreement in international negotiations.
DEFINE	Give the meaning of a word or concept; place it in the class to which it belongs and set it off from other items in the same class. Define the term "archetype."
DESCRIBE	Give an account of; tell about; give a word picture of. Describe the Pyramids of Giza.
DISCUSS	Talk over; consider from various points of view; present the different sides of. Discuss the use of pesticides in controlling mosquitoes.
ENUMERATE	Name over, one after another; list in concise form. Enumerate the great Dutch painters of the list seventeenth century.
EVALUATE	Give the good points and the bad ones; appraise; give an opinion regarding the value of; talk over the advantages and limitations. Evaluate the contributions of teaching machines.
EXPLAIN	Make clear; interpret; make plain; tell "how" to do; tell the meaning of. Explain how man can, at times, trigger a full-scale rainstorm.
ILLUSTRATE	Use a word picture, a diagram, a chart, or a concrete example to clarify a point. Illustrate the use of catapults in the amphibious warfare of Alexander.
INTERPRET	Make plain; give the meaning of; give your thinking about; translate. Interpret the poetic line, "The sound of a cobweb snapping is the noise of my life."
JUSTIFY	Show good reasons for; give your evidence; present facts to support your position. Justify the American entry into World War II.
PROVE	Establish the truth of something by giving factual evidence or logical reasons. Prove that in a full-employment economy, a society can get more of one product only by giving up another product.
SUMMARIZE	Sum up; give the main points briefly. Summarize the ways in which man preserves food.
TRACE	Follow the course of; follow the trail of; give a description of progress. Trace the development of television in school instruction.

NOTING THE MEANINGS OF KEY WORDS IN ESSAY QUESTIONS

DIRECTIONS: Read each of the explanations below. After each item, write the term from the preceding list the professor could use in phrasing his question.

1. In a course in naval history the professor wants the students to think over the functions and responsibilities of the United States Navy and of the United States Army, so as to bring out the points of difference.
2. The professor mentions an island in the possession of the enemy in wartime. He proposes a plan for retaking it. He wants the students to express their judgments on the merits of the plan.
3. When and where did our Navy have its beginning? What has been the general history of its development? The professor wants the students to follow the course of its progress.
4. Which term should he use if he wants a concrete example of amphibious strategy in ancient naval history?
5. In an art course the professor has discussed the experimental work of Cézanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin, and others. On a written examination he wants the students to pick out the main points of discussion and bring them together in a concise, overall statement.
6. In a physics class the professor wants the students to make clear the nature of the symmetry in the vibrations of light waves. How does it operate?
7. In an economics class the professor has lectured on high and low tariffs. On an examination he wants the students to think over the topic and consider it from various points of view. He wants them to present different sides of the issues.
8. In a speech course the professor has assigned a term paper and has told the students how to proceed in collecting the data. On a quiz he wants them to give the steps briefly one after another.
9. In a geology class, the professor has used television to show how cross-bedding is a common feature of sandstone. On a quiz he wants to be sure that the students know--with some preciseness-- the meaning of the term cross-bedding.
10. A history professor wants his students to consider the ways in which the early French, Spanish, and English settlements in this country were alike and the ways in which they were different.

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ANSWERS:

1. contrast 2. criticize (or evaluate) 3. trace 4. illustrate 5. summarize 6. explain 7. discuss 8. enumerate 9. define 10. compare
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