

Definitions for Key Verbs in Written-Response and Essay Questions

Successful results can be achieved by addressing the specifics of the question. Most questions contain a key verb or command term. The following list will help students to understand and respond to written-response questions effectively. Any particular examination may use terms selected from this list.

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| Assess | Estimate the value of something based on some criteria; present an informed judgment. |
| Compare | Describe how the elements or qualities of one event, issue or character are similar to those of another. Often used in conjunction with CONTRAST. |
| Contrast | Describe how the elements or qualities of one event, issue or character are different from those of another. See COMPARE. |
| Describe | Give a detailed or graphic account of an object, event, or concept. |
| Discuss | Present the various points of view in a debate or argument; engage in written discourse on a particular topic, process or concept. |
| Evaluate | Use criteria or standards to make judgments about the strengths and weaknesses of a position on a particular issue. |
| Explain | Give an account of a topic, process, or concept, providing evidence and reasons. |
| To What Extent | Advance arguments in favour of a position or point of view and respond to or take into account arguments opposed to that position or point of view. |