

# Common Direction Words Used in Essay Questions

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ANALYZE	Break the subject (an object or concept) down into parts, and explain the various parts.
COMMENT ON	Express your opinion about a subject.
COMPARE	Show how two things are both similar and different.
CONTRAST	Show how two things are different.
CRITICIZE/ CRITIQUE	Point out both the strengths and weaknesses, good points and bad points of something.
DEFINE	Give a clear, concise meaning of a term, including the class to which a thing belongs and what differentiates that object from all, others in class.
DESCRIBE	Write about the subject so that it can be visualized; tell how it looks or happened, including who, what, when, where, why.
DIAGRAM	Make a drawing of something, and label its parts.
DISCUSS	Give a complete and detailed answer. Give as many important main points about the subject as you can.
ENUMERATE	Write in list or outline form, giving points one by one.
EVALUATE	Give your opinion of the value of the subject; discuss its strengths and weaknesses, good and bad points.
EXPLAIN	Tell how to do something. Make the subject easy to understand by giving clear reasons, facts, and details.
ILLUSTRATE	Make the subject clear by giving examples or drawing a diagram or picture.
INTERPRET	Tell about the importance of the subject. Explain the results or the effects of something
JUSTIFY	Give good reasons for decisions, actions or conclusions.
PROVE	Show that something is true by giving facts or logical reasons.
RELATE	Show how things are alike or connected.
STATE	Give the main points in brief, clear form.
SUMMARIZE	Briefly give the main points or facts about something, like the summary of a chapter.
TRACE	Tell about something in the order/ sequence that it occurs or occurred.