

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.

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.