

ESSAY WRITING

An essay can only begin to be correct if it directly answers the question. Students must understand the meanings of the following terms:

1. **Assess:** judge the value or character of something; appraise; evaluate. "Assess the relative importance of social factors and economic factors as causes of Reaganomics."
2. **Compare:** examine for the purpose of noting similarities and differences. "Compare the leadership qualities of Bush and Clinton."
3. **Contrast:** compare in order to show unlikeness or points of difference. "Contrast the rights of males in Western and Eastern Europe."
4. **Criticize:** make judgments as to merits and faults; criticism may approve or disapprove, or both. "Criticize Turner's Frontier Thesis."
5. **Define:** give the meaning of (a word, phrase, concept); determine or fix the boundaries or extent of. "Define the term yellow journalism."
6. **Describe:** give an account of; tell about; give a word picture of. "Describe the events that led to Congress' enactment of the War Powers Act of 1973."
7. **Discuss:** talk over; write about; consider or examine by argument or from various points of view; debate; present the different sides of. "Discuss the policy of internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II."
8. **Enumerate:** mention or list separately; name one after another. "Enumerate the main points of the Declaration of Independence."
9. **Evaluate:** give the good points and the bad ones; appraise; give an opinion regarding the value of; discuss the advantages and disadvantages. "Evaluate the role played by the United States in the Russian Revolution of 1991."
10. **Explain:** make clear or plain; make known in detail; tell the meaning of; make clear the cause or reason of. "Explain how the cotton gin revolutionized southern farming."
11. **Illustrate:** make clear or intelligible as by examples. "Illustrate the ways in which Americans exploited Africa and Africans in the nineteenth century."
12. **Interpret:** explain the meaning of; make plain; present your thinking about. "Interpret the processes by which medieval civilization declined."

13. **Justify:** show good reasons for; present your evidence; offer facts to support your position. "Justify American isolationism in the 1990s."
14. **Prove:** establish the truth or genuineness of something by giving factual evidence or logical reasons. "Prove that the industrial revolution was or was not a benefit to humankind."
15. **Trace:** follow the course of; give a description of the progress of; ascertain by investigation. "Trace the course of post World War II American-Soviet relations."
16. **Analysis:** detailed examination of a complex situation in order to understand its nature or to determine its essential features.
17. **Compare and Contrast:** to examine in detail for similarities and differences.