

Question Word Definitions

Analyze	Find the main ideas; show how they are related; and why they are important.	Evaluate	Give your opinion or some expert's opinion of the truth or importance of the concept. Tell the advantages and disadvantages.
Classify	Assign to a group of objects having similar characteristics; elaborate on qualities particular to that group.	Explain	Thoroughly consider by elaborating on significant aspects.
Compare	Examine two or more things. Show both similarities and differences, but concentrate on the similarities.	Illustrate	Explain or make it clear by concrete examples, comparisons, or analogies.
Contrast	Show differences; set in opposition.	Justify	Give a statement of why you think it is so. Give reasons for your statement or conclusions.
Criticize	Give your judgment or reasoned opinions of something, showing its good and bad points. Evaluate comparative worth, remembering that attack is unnecessary.	List	Produce a numbered list of words, sentences, or comments.
Define	Give the formal meaning (specific to the course or subject) by distinguishing it from related terms. This is often a matter of giving a very specific definition.	Outline	Give a general summary. It should contain a series of main ideas supported by secondary ideas. Omit minor details; show the organization of the ideas.
Describe	Write a detailed account or verbal picture in a logical sequence or story form.	Relate	Show the connections between things, telling how one causes or is like the other.
Diagram	Make a graph, chart, or drawing. Be sure to label it and add a brief explanation if one is necessary.	Review	Give a survey or summary in which you look at the important parts. Provide criticism where needed.
Discuss	Consider and debate or argue the pros and cons of an issue. Write about any conflict; compare and contrast.	Summarize	Give a brief, condensed account of the main ideas; omit minor details.
Elaborate	Give the meaning using examples and personal comments to make it clear.	Trace	Show the progress or history of the subject.
Enumerate	Name and list the main ideas one by one.		

Adapted by Stephanie L.M. Braun, Academic Skills Center Manager, from the following sources: materials prepared at Illinois State University's Center for Learning Assistance; and T.M. Sherman and T.M. Wildman, *Proven Strategies for Successful Test-Taking* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles F. Merrill, 1982).