

# ESSAY QUESTIONS

Sometimes verbage in essay questions can be daunting. At times you begin to wonder if you are even answering the question correctly. This handout will guide you through commonly used words in essay questions so that you can better understand the question.

**Comment:** Explain, illustrate, or criticize the meaning or importance of a subject.

**Describe:** Give a detailed account of a subject.

**Discuss:** Examine the different point of views of a subject.

**Narrate:** Tell a story using detail.

**Review:** Summarize the subject.

**State:** Describe a subject in precise terms or reproduce a definition exactly.

**Analyze:** Break the subject up into the main idea and discuss the main points.

**Enumerate:** Create a list of information based upon the subject.

**List:** Make a numbered list of concise statements.

**Outline:** Summarize in brief the subject area, not going into much detail.

**Relate:** Show how things are related or connected with each other or how one associates with another.

**Tabulate:** Organize the main ideas into a scheme of headings such as a table of contents.

**Trace:** Write the history of your subject from where it began.

**Summarize:** Provide a brief overview of the main idea of the subject.

**Compare:** Show the similarities and differences of two or more subjects.

**Contrast:** Show the difference between two or more subjects.

**Define:** Give the meaning of a word.

**Diagram:** Describe with graphs, sketches, or drawings.

**Explain:** Give an account using detail based upon the subject.

**Identify:** State details of a person, place, thing, or idea based upon the subject given.

**Illustrate:** Clarify by giving examples, comparisons, analogies, or by giving figures or diagrams.

**Label:** Point out and name specific parts of a figure or illustration.

**Prove:** Establish that something is true by giving clear logical reasons and factual evidence.

**Choose/Select:** Make a choice between one of several interpretations, explanations, etc.

**Criticize/Critique:** Analyze and judge something, either positively or negatively. Support it with facts.

**Justify:** Prove or give reasons for decisions or conclusions

REMEMBER: IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION, YOU WON'T GIVE THE RIGHT ANSWER.