|  |
| --- |
| **Action Words for Essays** |
| These words are commonly used in essay questions. Learning the distinctions among them will help you answer them effectively. |
| **Analyze**: Examine and break into component parts. |
| **Clarify**: Explain with significant detail. |
| **Compare**: Describe and explain similarities. |
| **Compare** **and** **contrast**: Describe and explain similarities and differences. |
| **Contrast**: Describe and explain differences. |
| **Critique**: Judge and analyze, explaining what is wrong—and right—about a concept. |
| **Define**: Provide the meaning. |
| **Discuss**: Explain, review, and consider. |
| **Enumerate**: Provide a listing of ideas, concepts, reasons, items etc. |
| **Evaluate**: Provide pros and cons of something; provide an opinion and justify it. |
| **Explain**: Give reasons why or how; clarify, justify, and illustrate. |
| **Illustrate**: Provide examples; show instances. |
| **Interpret**: Explain the meaning of something. |
| **Justify**: Explain why a concept can be supported, typically by using examples and other types of support. |
| **Outline**: Provide an overarching framework or explanation—usually in narrative form—of a concept, idea, event, or phenomenon. |
| **Prove**: Using evidence and arguments, convince the reader of a particular point. |
| **Relate**: Show how things fit together; provide analogies. |
| **Review**: Describe or summarize, often with an evaluation. |
| **State**: Assert or explain. |
| **Summarize**: Provide a condensed, precise list or native. |
| **Trace**: Track or sketch out how events or circumstances have evolved; provide a history or timeline. |