

COMMON INSTRUCTIONAL VERBS ON ESSAY TESTS

Compare	Examine two or more objects, ideas, people, etc., and note similarities and differences.
Contrast	Compare to highlight differences. Similar to <i>differentiate</i> , <i>distinguish</i> .
Criticize	Judge and discuss merits and faults. Similar to <i>critique</i> .
Define	Explain the nature or essential qualities.
Describe	Convey appearance, nature, attributes, etc.
Discuss	Consider or examine by argument, comment, etc.; debate; explore solutions.
Enumerate	List various events, things, descriptions, ideas, etc.
Evaluate	Appraise the worth of an idea, comment, etc., and justify your conclusion.
Explain	Make the meaning of something clear, plain, intelligible, and/or understandable.
Illustrate	Use specific examples or analogies to explain.
Interpret	Give the meaning of something by paraphrase, by translation, or by an explanation based on personal opinion.
Justify	Defend a statement or conclusion. Similar to <i>support</i> .

Narrate	Recount the occurrence of something, usually by giving details of events in the order in which they occurred. Similar to <i>describe</i> , but only applicable to something that happens in time.
Outline	Do a general sketch, account, or report, indicating only the main features of a book, subject, or project.
Prove	Establish the truth or genuineness by evidence or argument. Similar to <i>show</i> , <i>explain</i> , <i>demonstrate</i> . (In math, verify validity by mathematical demonstration.)
Relate	Give an account of events and/or circumstances, usually to establish association, connections, or relationships.
Review	Survey a topic, occurrence, or idea, generally but critically. Similar to <i>describe</i> , <i>discuss</i> , <i>illustrate</i> , <i>outline</i> , <i>summarize</i> , <i>trace</i> . Some test-makers may use these words virtually interchangeably, although one can find subtle differences in each.
State	Present the facts concisely and clearly. May be used interchangeably with <i>name</i> , <i>list</i> , <i>indicate</i> , <i>identify</i> , <i>enumerate</i> , <i>cite</i> .
Summarize	State in concise form, omitting examples and details.
Trace	Follow the course or history of an occurrence, idea, etc.