KEY WORDS

The following words are often found in essay test questions. A clear understanding of these key words will help you when answering essay questions.

ANALYZE
Break into separate parts and discuss, examine, or interpret each part.

COMMENT
Discuss briefly.

COMPARE
Examine two or more things. Identify similarities and differences. Emphasize similarities.

CONTRAST
Examine two or more things. Identify differences only.

CRITICIZE
Make judgements. Evaluate comparative worth. Criticism often involves analysis. Discuss both limitations and strong points.

DEFINE
Explain the exact meaning. The meaning is usually specific to the course or subject. Determine the precise limits of the term to be defined. Definitions are usually short.

DEMONSTRATE
Show or prove an opinion, evaluation or judgement.

DESCRIBE
Give a detailed account. Make a picture with words. List characteristics, qualities and parts.

DISCUSS
Consider and debate the pros and cons of an issue. Write about any conflict. Compare and contrast. This type of question requires a complete and detailed answer.

DISTINGUISH
Show main differences between two things. Contrast.

ENUMERATE
List several ideas, events, qualities, reasons, etc.
EVALUATE
Give your opinion or cite the opinion of an expert. Include evidence to support the opinion.

EXPLAIN
Give reasons for happenings or situations.

ILLUSTRATE
Give concrete examples. Explain clearly by using comparisons or examples.

INTERPRET
State the meaning in simpler terms, using your judgement.

JUSTIFY
Prove or give reasons.

LIST
Give a series of points without details.

OUTLINE
Make a short summary with headings and subheadings.

PROVE
Show to be true by giving facts and reasons.

RELATE
Show how things interconnect.

REVIEW
Show main points or events in summary form.

STATE
List main points briefly without details.

SUMMARIZE
Organize and bring together the main points only.

SUPPORT
Back up statements with facts and proof.

TRACE
Give main points from the beginning to the end of an event.