

Verbs in Writing Assignments

Here are some verbs commonly used in History essay and paper questions. Be sure you know what you are being asked to do. Also, try to use these verbs in your own writing.

Analyze: Take apart and look at each part closely

Compare: Look for similarities & differences; stress similarities

Contrast: Look for similarities & differences; stress differences

Critique: Point out both positive & negative aspects

Define: Explain exactly what something means

Describe: Show what something looks like, including physical features

Discuss: Explore an issue from all sides; implies wide latitude

Evaluate: make a value judgment according to some criteria (which you make clear)

Explain: Clarify or interpret how something works or happens

Illustrate: Show by means of example or educated speculation

Interpret: Translate how or why; implies some subjective judgment

Justify: Argue in support of something, to find positive reasons

List: Order facts, attributes, or items in sequence

Outline: Organize according to hierarchy and/or category

Prove: Demonstrate correctness by use of logic, fact or example

Review: reexamine the main points or highlights of something

State: Assert with confidence

Summarize: Put together the main points; condense

Synthesize: Combine pieces or concepts into new pieces or concept

Trace: Present an outline, or show a sequence, of how or why something occurs or happened