



## Wise Words in Essay Exams

**Action verbs in exam questions** give you important clues about how to approach the response.

Action Verb	What it suggests
Define, explain, illustrate, summarize	<b>Information words</b> ask you to demonstrate what you know about the subject, such as who, what, when, where, how, & why. You may also be asked to provide an example.
Compare, contrast, apply, cause, relate	<b>Relation words</b> ask you to demonstrate how things are connected or describe the connections between things.
Argue, prove, justify, evaluate, support, synthesize, agree/disagree	<b>Interpretation words</b> ask you to defend ideas of your own about the subject. Do not see these words as requesting personal opinion (unless the question specifically says so).  Instead, they indicate you should take a perspective (or stance) supported concrete evidence. You may need examples, definitions, or concepts from class or research in order to interpret the subject or topic.
Analyze, trace, breakdown	<b>Analytical words</b> ask you to break down an issue or concept into smaller parts.

**Transition words or phrases in your response** help your professor follow your ideas. Use transition words as signposts in your essay exam, even if they seem heavy-handed.

Transition	What it suggests
For instance, for example, such as, e.g.	A specific <b>example</b>
First, second, next	Moving on to a <b>new</b> point
Essentially, basically, to clarify, in short	<b>Rephrasing</b> of a complicated point in simpler terms
Therefore, as a result	A <b>consequence</b> or extension
But, however, on the other hand, in contrast	A <b>qualification</b> or limitation
Likewise, similarly, additionally, moreover, further	A <b>similar</b> point
In sum, finally, in conclusion	Move to the <b>last part</b> of the response, a rephrasing of the thesis and main points