

*** Asterisk indicates that this alone will drop the essay to this grade category. Otherwise, the grade is determined by a combination of factors.**

Criteria for Grades on Essay Exams

- A. 1) Question is clearly and methodically addressed.**
2) All subtopics of a question are covered.
3) Writing is grammatically correct.
4) Spelling is correct.
5) Evidence is presented to substantiate the positions taken on a question.
6) Evidence is factually correct.
7) Student is able to draw material from both readings and lectures when necessary.
- B. 1) Question is clearly and methodically addressed.**
***2) Virtually all subtopics of a question are covered.**
3) Writing shows only slight grammatical problems.
4) Spelling is substantially correct.
***5) Evidence is presented to substantiate most positions taken on a question.**
***6) There are relatively few factual errors, but there are some mistakes.**
7) Student is able to draw material from both readings and lectures when necessary.
- C. 1) On the whole, the question is clearly and methodically addressed, but there is some confusion in organization.**
***2) Most subtopics of a question are covered, but significant ones are omitted.**
***3) Writing shows enough grammatical problems to make meaning unclear.**
4) Misspellings become distracting to reader.
***5) Evidence is presented to substantiate most positions taken on a question, but there are gaps.**
6) Relatively few factual errors.
***7) Student is able to draw material from both readings and lectures when necessary, but omits obvious evidence.**
- D. *1) Student fails to address a substantial portion of the question, but does address some aspects, or organization is inappropriate and confusing.**
***2) Numerous and important subtopics are neglected.**
***3) Writing shows grammatical problems throughout which, despite student's mastery of the material, confuses the reader's attempts to understand the student's meaning.**
4) Misspellings distract reader.

- *5) Evidence is not provided for important sections of the answer.
- 6) There are substantial and repeated factual errors.
- *7) Student repeatedly fails to draw on evidence from either readings or lectures or both.

- F.*1) Student fails to address question.
- 2) Student does not cover subtopics essential to the question.
 - *3) Writing shows grammatical problems that substantially interfere with understanding student's meaning.
 - 4) There are obvious and chronic misspellings.
 - *5) Evidence is not provided to substantiate positions.
 - *6) There are numerous factual errors.
 - 7) Student fails to draw on obvious material from both readings and lectures.

Note: At the university level simply knowing facts and regurgitating them is no better than C work.

Table 5.1 Words to Watch for in Essay Questions

Word	What It Means	What the Instructor Is Looking For
Analyze	Break concept into key parts	Don't just list the parts; show how they work together and illustrate any patterns.
Compare	Show similarities (and sometimes differences) between two or more concepts or ideas	Define the similarities and clearly describe how the items or ideas are similar. Do these similarities lead to similar results or effects? Note that this word is often combined with "contrast." If so, make sure you do both.
Contrast	Show differences between two or more concepts or ideas	Define the differences and clearly describe how the items or ideas are different. How do these differences result in different outcomes? Note that this word is often combined with "compare." If so, make sure you do both.
Critique	Judge and analyze	Explain what is wrong—and right—about a concept. Include your own judgments, supported by evidence and quotes from experts that support your point of view.
Define	Describe the meaning of a word, phrase, or concept	Define the concept or idea as your instructor did in class—but use your own words. If your definition differs from what the instructor presented, support your difference with evidence. Keep this essay short. Examples can help illustrate a definition, but remember that examples alone are <i>not</i> a definition.
Discuss	Explain or review	Define the key questions around the issue to be discussed and then answer them. Another approach is to define pros and cons on the issue and compare and contrast them. In either case, explore all relevant data and information.
Explain	Clarify, give reasons for something	Clarity is key for these questions. Outline your thoughts carefully. Proofread, edit, proofread, and proofread again! Good explanations are often lost in too many words.
Illustrate	Offer examples	Use examples from class material or reading assignments. Compare and contrast them to other examples you might come up with from additional reading or real life.
Prove	Provide evidence and arguments that something is true	Instructors who include this prompt in an exam question have often proven the hypothesis or other concepts in their class lectures. Think about the kind of evidence the instructor used and apply similar types of processes and data.
Summarize	Give a brief, precise description of an idea or concept	Keep it short, but cover all key points. This is one essay prompt where examples should not be included unless the instructions specifically ask for them. (For example, "Summarize the steps of the learning cycle and give examples of the main strategies you should apply in each one.")

Checkpoint Exercise

Test your test knowledge.

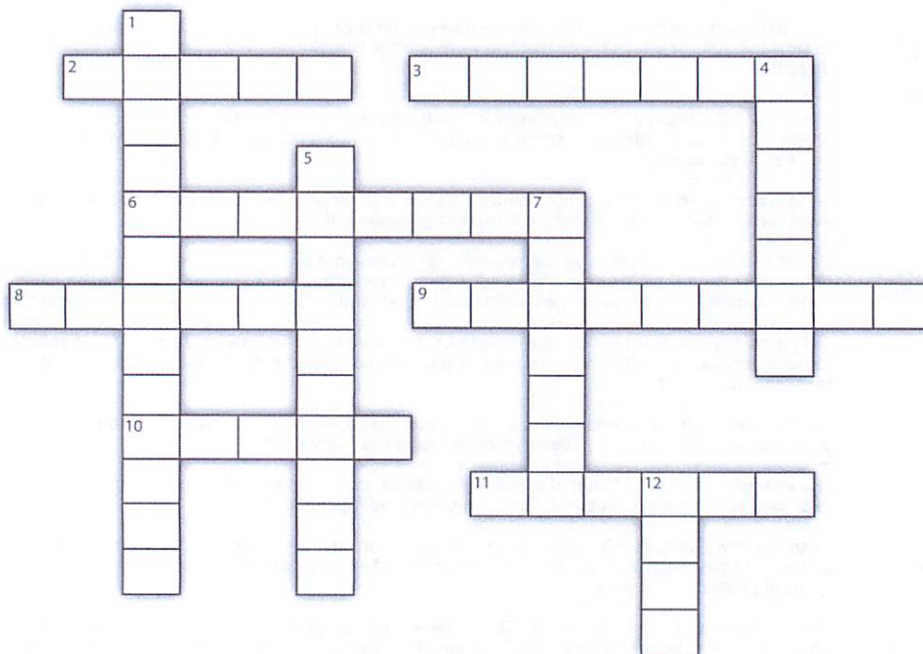


Figure 5.5 Crossword

Across

2. "Always," "never," and "every" are words that usually indicate the answer is _____.
3. A way to organize your thoughts for an essay
6. Short answer questions require a _____ answer.
8. Describe the meaning of a word
9. Give a brief, precise description of an idea or concept
10. Type of question used to evaluate thinking and reasoning
11. Since instructors need to read many essays, it is important to write _____.

Down

1. It helps to group words in matching columns by _____.
4. Clarify, give reasons for something
5. Essay questions often have more than one _____ answer.
7. Show similarities and differences
12. Most common answer in true and false questions