Directives for Short Answer/Essay Tests

Compare:
Discovering resemblances between concepts/ideas. The emphasis is on similarities but differences can also be mentioned.

Contrast:
Emphasis is on the differences.

Criticize:
Your judgment is required to answer these types of directive questions. Discuss the limitations and positives of the idea/concept in question.

Define:
Concise and clear explanation is required. Details are not required.

Describe:
Descriptive explanation in which recounting in a narrative voice is required.

Diagram:
A drawing, chart or detailed plan with a brief description is required in your answer.

Discuss:
This appears often. This requires examination, analysis and pros and cons are required. These type of questions require a detailed answer.

Enumerate:
This response requires an outline or list as a response. Each point should be recounted in a concise form.

Evaluate:
Express both the limitations and benefits of a concept/idea. The response to these questions would be authoritative.

Explain:
Interpret information in your response. You answer would include the “how or why” and state causes where possible.

Illustrate:
The presentation of a figure, diagram or concrete example is required.

Interpret:
These are similar to Explain-type questions. Your reaction to a concept/idea is required.

Justify:
These types of questions require you to prove or show your argument for the decision you take and must be backed up with convincing points.
List:
These types of questions are similar to enumeration. Present concise, itemized points or tabulation.

Outline:
These answers require a systematic arrangement of classification. You should include supplementary points along with your main points as you answer these types of questions.

Prove:
Confirmation or verification is required through citation and the evaluation of experimental and empirical evidence.

Relate:
Your answer should emphasize the connections between the concepts or ideas you are asked to write about.

Review:
This answer requires a critical examination in a sequence touching on the major points of the concept or idea you asked to write about.

State:
You should express your answer in a brief and narrative form. This would also include the directives “give”, “specify” or “present”.

Summarize:
Your answer should be a condensed response minus the details.

Trace:
This answer requires a sequence of events with a description of progress from the point of origin to the present.