



## Essay Test Tips

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**E**ssay tests are best used to measure critical-thinking skills. These skills may include:

- ▶ **Application**—using learned knowledge to solve new problems.
- ▶ **Analysis**—breaking down material into its component parts or underlying framework.
- ▶ **Synthesis**—putting concepts together to form a new whole, such as creating a plan.
- ▶ **Evaluation**—judging the value of something using a defined standard or criteria.



### How to Write Good Essay Questions

To write good essay questions use action words. Avoid writing broad general questions such as “Why does...?” “How does...?” Instead add specificity to your essay questions with the following examples:

- ▶ Describe the similarities and differences among...
- ▶ Specify the criteria you would use to evaluate...
- ▶ Support the author’s viewpoint with...
- ▶ Plan and describe an experiment that will...
- ▶ Analyze and diagram and the organizational structure of...

### **Don't Forget Limiting Statements**

A good essay question should also contain limiting statements such as:

- ▶ Provide four similarities and six differences...
- ▶ List six steps...
- ▶ Using no more than 15 minutes, support the author's viewpoint that...

A good essay question should also contain a statement that clearly defines the basis on which the students' answers will be graded. Some possible criteria to consider are:

- ▶ Amount of supporting data.
- ▶ Organization.
- ▶ Structure of arguments.
- ▶ Correct use of terms.
- ▶ Correct grammar and spelling.