

Keywords: What Does the Professor Want?

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<http://wac.gmu.edu/teaching/cca.html>)

Analyze

Analysis involves characterizing the whole, identifying the parts and showing how the parts relate to each other to make the whole. In analysis, a whole is broken down into its parts, for example, a theory into its components, a process into its stages, an event into its causes.

Assess/Criticize/Evaluate

Determine the importance or value of something. Assessing requires you to develop clearly stated criteria of judgment and to comment on the elements that meet or fail to meet those criteria.

Classify

Sort something into main categories and thereby pigeonhole its parts.

Compare/Contrast

Identify the important similarities and differences between two elements in order to reveal something significant about them. Emphasize similarities if the command is to compare and differences if it is to contrast.

Define/Identify

Give the special characteristics by which a concept, thing, event can be recognized, that is, what it is and what it is not. Place it in its general class and then differentiate it from other members of that class.

Describe

Give an account of and present the characteristics by which an object, action, person, or concept can be recognized or an event or process can be recognized.

Discuss/Examine

You are given room to analyze and/or evaluate a particular topic. You must decide on your own questions concerning the things to be discussed. You are expected to go beyond summary.

Explain/Justify

Make clear the reasons for or the basic principles of something; make it intelligible. Explanation may involve relating the unfamiliar to the more familiar.

List/Enumerate

Give essential points one by one in a logical order.

Interpret/Explain

Write about what the author or a quotation means (not what you mean).

Illustrate

Use a concrete example to explain or clarify the essential attributes of a problem or concept.

Outline/Trace/Review/State

Organize a description under main points and subordinate points, omitting minor details and stressing the classification of the elements of the problem or the main points in the development of an event or issue.

Prove/Validate

Establish that something is true by citing factual evidence and/or giving clear logical reasons for believing in the truth of something.