

Common “prompt language terms” Used on the HSGQE

From the (State of Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, 2006)

Analyze: to analyze means to *break down into parts or principles* in order to understand the whole. It means to take apart in such a way that a complete understanding of the whole can be acquired by an explanation of its parts.

Compare/Contrast: To compare is to bring out both *similarities and differences*, with the emphasis on similarities. To contrast is to stress the differences. Some of the ways to organize these ideas is using the *block method* or *semantic mapping* of ideas.

Criticize: To point out the *good and the bad points* of a particular idea- to judge the merits and the faults.

Define: To give a clear, concise meaning for a term.

Describe: To give a *word picture* of something, to tell a story in detail. The answer should be organized spatially or chronologically.

Diagram: To organize in a *graphic way*- chart, drawing, sketch, or outline. All parts should be labeled appropriately.

Discuss: this requires a *long and complete response* to the specific question. Discuss means to talk or write about an issue from *all angles*.

Evaluate: to give a *judgment of value*, including positive and negative factors. To assess or to show the worth or lack of worth of something.

Explain: this means to *make plain, to clarify, to analyze, and to account for*. Perhaps a cause/effect evaluation. Step-by-step organization is needed.

How: this question directs you to provide an answer which considers the *cause, manner, extent, or condition of something*.

Identify: means to *name, to make known, to bring out*

Illustrate: to show by means of a *picture, chart, diagram, or some other visual presentation*. Used more loosely, however, illustrate can simply mean to *give an example of*

Interpret: To *clarify, elucidate, expound, or explain the significance of*. It also means to translate the meaning of. It can often be used with famous quotations.

Justify: To show *what is right, positive, valid, proper, and reasonable*. The writer must stress the advantages of a position over the disadvantages.

List or Enumerate: Interchangeable, they both mean to *itemize, to catalogue*.

Outline: to outline means to organize a set of ideas into *main divisions* and *subordinate divisions*. A somewhat formal system is required.

Prove: to give evidence, present facts, or argue so as to convince. It means to establish the *truth or validity* of something.

Relate: To show the *connections or logical association* between two or more things such as their origins, functions, results, or traits. It also means to tell a story. It should be developed chronologically including a beginning, middle, and ending.

Review: Means to *re-examine key ideas or facts*, to survey. Review and summarize are similar in meaning. The answer to a question of either type should be developed chronologically.

State: to *declare* or *say simply and briefly*. This term suggests a shorter answer than the one provided for *discuss* or *explain*.

Summarize- means to give the *main points* in condensed form with the small details left out. Summarize suggests a step-by-step or chronological development.

Trace: means to ascertain the *stages in the progress or development* of something. A trace question calls for an answer developed chronologically.

What: directs you to name, to make a statement of amount or extent, or to cite evidence to prove a point.