

Answer the Essay & Short Answer Exam Questions Well

Part 5: Process Analysis Questions

FACULTY PROMPTS & PATTERNS OF RESPONSE

Most essay questions contain an Action Word that you can use to help you organize your response to that question. In general, there are six of these Action Words:

Define / Definition of Analyze / Analysis of Cause & Effect
Compare / Contrast **Process Analysis / Describe / List** Supported Opinion (Defend/Refute)

1. Differentiate the term from other members of the class, if appropriate.

5. PROCESS ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

Answering process questions:

1. Process questions are designed to test the depth of your knowledge about a subject and your ability to analyze how the various components (i.e. processes) of a system contributed to create the whole.
2. As such, process questions are almost always chronological or linear and involve multiple, sequential steps.
3. Process questions will most often look like:
 - A. Describe how DNA is used for forensic use.
 - B. List the steps in osmosis.
 - C. Explain what the evolution of the two-party system in America from 1796 forward. .
 - D. Analyze the flow of electricity through a copper filament.
 - E. What are the procedures involved in supply and demand?

Strategies to use in answering process questions:

4. If you are asked about a complex process, jot down the steps or draw a schematic of the process before you begin to write. This will help you to not forget a critical step in your answer.

5. As you write your essay, take advantage of transitional phrases which will help you make the links between the steps of the process you are analyzing.

Examples of these transitional phrases are:

first, second, third . . .	next	successive	following this
afterward(s)	subsequently	after that	later
at that juncture	concurrently	in tandem	at the same time
finally			

Illustrations of process answers:

↪ Typical process questions would look like these:

1. List the levels in a hierarchical classification and concomitant binomial of the domestic cat.
2. Define the three basic memory processes and the Process Types which support them.

↪ Answers to these questions could look like these:

1. From specific to more general, the classification of the domestic cat includes Species (Felix Catus), Genus (Felix), Family (Felidae), Order (Carnivora), Class (Mammalia), Phylum (Chordata), Kingdom (Animalia), and Domain (Eukarya).
2. The three basic memory processes are Encoding, Storage and Retrieval. Encoding involves using Acoustic, Visual, or Semantic Codes to help store an item in memory. The storage process involves maintaining the item in memory using episodic, procedural or semantic types of long-term memory. The retrieval involves recovering the item from memory using recall or recognition.

↪ Avoid Answers that look like these:

1. The domestic housecat is a mammal and carnivore. *(This answer only provides a partial answer to two steps of the classification system. As such, it would clearly demonstrate that you do not understand the classification system in general.)*
2. The three processes of memory are encoding, storage and retrieval. *(While correct, this answer does not answer the whole question, i.e. define each process.)*