

Answer the Essay & Short Answer Exam Questions Well

Part 6: Supported Opinion (Defend/Refute) 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)

6. SUPPORTED OPINION (DEFEND/REFUTE) QUESTIONS

Answering supported opinion questions:

1. The supported opinion essay is the most demanding essay question your professor will ask. Not only do you have to know the material, you have to have analyzed it and taken an opinion about the material that you can support with facts and figures (i.e. documented).
2. This type of question is not one you can cram for the night before the class. Rather it requires consistent long-term study and internalization of the content.
3. Typical supported opinion questions can look like:
 - A. Discuss the socio-economic factors which support or hinder participation in the political process.
 - B. Researchers find that the tectonic strain that had accumulated in Enriquillo-Plantain Garden fault system was only slightly released in the January 12 earthquake in Haiti. What is your opinion about future development of that country? Defend your position.
 - C. Defend or refute the use of acupuncture to relieve pain.

Strategies to use in answering process questions:

4. Start your answer by writing a clearly worded statement of your opinion or interpretation.
5. Defend your statement with all of the data, examples, facts, and research that you have studied which led you to take the position you have taken.
6. 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:

therefore	as a result	consequently	for this reason
it follows that	however	hence	and so
because	accordingly	so	

Illustration of supported opinion answers:

Typical supported opinion questions would look like this:

1. Despite criticism to the contrary, television and video games aids in the socializing process of our children. Defend or refute.

Answers to this questions could look like this:

1. I believe television and/or video games are detrimental to the socialization of children for the following reasons: Lack of parental monitoring, exposure to repeated violence, inactivity leading to obesity and poor large muscle development and strength, and lack of socialization with peers. *(The remainder of the essay would provide the documentation of each point.)*

Avoid Answers that look like these:

1. I believe television and/or video games are detrimental to the socialization of children for several reasons such as lots of seat time, sleeping late, and loosing track of time. *(Even if you have the documentation, this weak thesis statement will make it difficult to finish the question effectively.)*