

# Ways to Predict Test Questions

## Predicting Test Questions from Instructors

Predicting test questions can do more than get you a better grade on a test. It can keep you focused on the purpose of the course and help you design your learning strategy. It can be fun too.

First, get organized. Have a separate section in your notebook labelled “Test Questions”. Add several questions to this section after every lecture and assignment.

You also can create your own code or graphic signal—maybe a *T!* in a circle—to flag possible test questions in your notes.

The format of a test can help you predict questions. Ask your instructor to describe the test—how long it will be and what kind of questions to expect (essay, multiple choice). Do this early in the term so you can be alert for possible test questions from the very beginning.

During lectures you can watch for test questions by observing not only what the instructor says but also how he says it. Instructors give clues. For example: Instructors might repeat important points several times, write them on the board, or return to them in subsequent classes.

They might use certain gestures when making critical points. They might pause, look at notes, or read passages word for word.

Also pay attention to questions the instructor poses to students, and note questions other students ask.

## Predicting Test Questions from Reading Material

When material from reading assignments is also covered extensively in class, it is likely to be on the test.

Use essay question words such as the following, as a guide to turn the key words in your notes into questions.

*Analyze:* Break into separate parts and discuss, examine, or interpret each part.

*Compare:* Examine two or more things. Identify similarities and differences.

*Contrast:* Show differences. Set in opposition.

*Criticize:* Make judgments. Evaluate comparative worth. Criticism often involves analysis.

*Define:* Give the meaning; usually a meaning specific to the course or subject. Explain the exact meaning. Definitions are usually short.

*Describe:* Give a detailed account. Make a picture with words. List characteristics, qualities, and parts.

*Discuss:* Consider and debate or argue the pros and cons of an issue. Write about any conflict. Compare and contrast.

*Enumerate:* List several ideas, aspects, events, things, qualities, reasons, etc.

*Evaluate:* Give your opinion or cite the opinion of an expert. Include evidence to support the evaluation.

*Explain:* Make an idea clear. Show logically how a concept is developed. Give the reasons for an event.

*Illustrate:* Give concrete examples. Explain clearly by using comparisons or examples.

*Interpret:* Comment upon, give examples, describe relationships. Explain the meaning. Describe, then evaluate.

*Outline:* Describe the main ideas, characteristics, or events. (Does not necessarily mean “Write a Roman numeral/letter outline.”)

*Prove:* Support with facts (especially facts presented in class or in the text.)

*Relate:* Show the connections between ideas or events. Provide a larger context.

## Ways to Predict Test Questions

*State:* Explain precisely.

*Summarize:* Give a brief, condensed account.  
Include conclusions. Avoid unnecessary details.

*Trace:* Show the order of events or progress of a subject or event.

If any of these terms are still unclear to you, go to your unabridged dictionary.

### **Predicting Test Questions Yourself**

Put yourself in your instructor's head. What kind of questions would you ask? Make practice test questions.

Save all quizzes, papers, lab sheets, and graded material of any kind. Quiz questions have a way of appearing, in slightly altered form, on final exams. If copies of previous exams are available, use them to predict test questions.

For science courses and other courses involving problem solving, practice working problems using different variables.

You can also brainstorm test questions with other students. This is a great activity for study groups.

Finally, be on the lookout for these words:

*This material will be on the test.*

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