

STRATEGIES FOR TAKING ESSAY TESTS

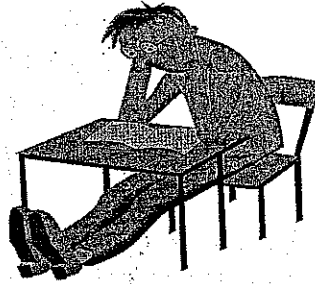
GOAL: Answer all questions as thoroughly, clearly and concisely as possible.

1. **Budget Your Time:** After you have received the test, quickly scan the test noting how many questions there are to answer and the point value for each. If no point value is mentioned, you may ask to ask your instructor. If some questions seem easier than others, choose them first. Finally, plan a schedule. Allow time to read each question carefully, outline the answers, and make a final check for careless mistakes.

Example: For a 55 minutes essay with three equally weighted questions to answer:

- 5 minutes to assess and schedule
- 36 minutes to answer questions
- 10 minutes to reread and finish
- 4 minutes for a final check.

**If some questions are worth more points than others, budget your time to spend more time on the ones worth more points.



2. **Read the Question CAREFULLY!** Your answer must fit the question. If you are asked to analyze don't just describe the event. If you are asked to interpret a sonnet, don't just summarize it!! Understand the essay exam terms below and their meaning to know how to correctly answer the questions:

Short Answer Terms:

Classify: Group information using diagrams, charts, etc, according to its main parts.

Define: Give a clear concise meaning-details are not necessary

Enumerate: Write answer in a list or outline format

Give an Example: Cite one instance or situation to support your point.

List: Write an itemized series of concise statements.

Illustrate: Use pictures, diagrams, etc.

Name: Make a list of important names or ideas

State: Present main points only in a brief clear sequence

Summarize: Give the main points in a condensed form, eliminating details.

Long Answer Trace Terms:

Describe: Recount the steps requested in sequence.

Outline: Organize a description under main points and subordinate points, to show a process or relationship.

Trace: In a narrative form, describe the process, development, or steps.

Compare/Contrast: Emphasize the similarities or differences between two or more things

Relate: Show how two things are connected to each other and how they are not connected.

Long Answer Discussion Terms

Analyze: Evaluate the situation or problem mentioning both advantages and disadvantages

Criticize: Express personal judgment of factors and present your analysis of them.

Defend: Be complete and detailed in analyzing events, reasons, and details.

Evaluate: Appraise a situation and give advantages and disadvantages.

Explain: Carefully spell out material you present.

Interpret: Translate, give examples of, solve, or comment on a subject

Justify: Be convincing. Prove or give reasons for conclusions.



OUTLINE THE ANSWER

If your answer needs to be long and complex, outlining is a great way to organize your ideas so that writing the essay is much easier.

When making an outline try to visualize your notes, readings, and lectures about the topic. You will want to cover all of the main topics and facts that the teacher will look for in grading the essay.

Make it brief. Use only short phrases and abbreviations. Don't spend a lengthy amount of time writing the outline. Keep all of the key words in the exam question in mind when writing the outline. Make sure everything in the outline is in the order you will write in your essay.

Write your outline on a clean sheet of paper, separate from the exam booklet. If you run out of time to finish your answer, you can at least turn in the outline. Be sure to let your instructor know it is included because you ran out of time.

WRITE OUT THE ANSWER

Knowing a little information and presenting it well, is better than knowing a lot and presenting it poorly!

The Opening Statement:

Rephrase the question as your opening statement. Once this statement is complete, your thoughts will begin to logically flow.

Essay Paragraphs:

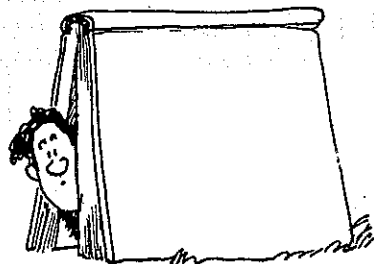
Refer to your outline. Your first main heading and its sub-points should comprise the first paragraph. Be sure to remember the key words of the question. The second main heading and sub-points comprise your second paragraph. This pattern should follow to complete the essay. Once you have covered all of the main headings, write a few sentences to summarize your thoughts and answer.

Pointers:

- Avoid definite dates and times of which you are unsure. It is safer to say, "At the end of the nineteenth century..." rather than 1893, if you are unsure of the date.
- Leave sufficient space in case you remember certain points that you want to cover later.

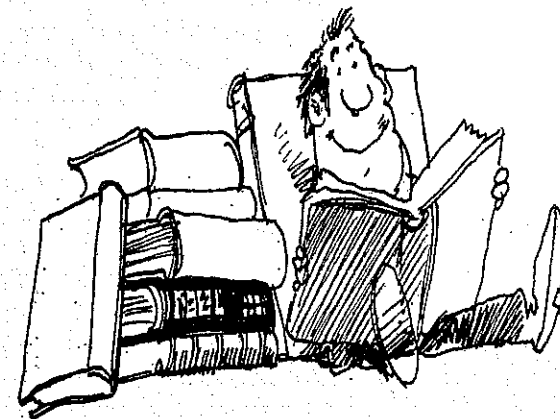
Re-Read Your Answers:

Re-Read each answer that you wrote. There are often misspellings and grammar mistakes when we write quickly. Check to be sure you included all memorized facts. If you need to add anything, use the space you left and draw an arrow to where it belongs in the essay. Make the essay as neat and legible as possible.



TAKING ESSAY TESTS:

Grades 7-12



Compiled by Strongsville High School Guidance Staff and Intervention Assistance Team

Adapted from
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