

Taking Essay Exams

Key Terms to be Successful

Essay Exams Require You to...

- Do the text reading and keep up with these topics in class.
- Go to lectures and pay attention.
- Take careful notes that you'll understand months later.
- Participate in discussion groups so that you absorb the material better so you don't have to study as hard.
- Organize small study groups. As long as what you write on the essay is your own work, formulating ideas and sharing notes is good.
- Predict essay questions from main ideas covered in class.

Preparing for Essay Exams

- Review the writing process: brainstorm, organize, outline, add, support, write, revise, edit.
- Study concepts and major themes with details to support main ideas.
- If your professor gives possible topics for questions, go through the following process for each possible question: write a thesis or argument, write supporting statements, and write a concluding statement.
- Organize your ideas for what you could possibly write in an essay.
- Practice writing; if you are given topics use them as prompts and if not then make up your own topics from class notes.
- Look at old papers: what problems did you have? See your professor or the Writing Lab for help. Don't make the same mistakes twice!

Taking Essay Exams

- Get there early, have all supplies, and find a comfortable spot.
- Read all directions carefully!
- Assign times to each question, leaving time to edit at the end.
- Make a brief outline for each question while ideas are fresh in your mind. Follow this outline while you are writing.
- Watch grammar, spelling, and format because you won't have time to correct all of these things at the end.
- At the end, re-read questions and review your essay – did you answer the question? Do your points support your thesis? Do you have an introduction and a conclusion?

Key Terms in Essay Exams

Analyze	Separate into parts and show nature, proportion, relationship, and/or effects
Compare	Examine qualities and characteristics to show resemblances
Contrast	State dissimilarities, differences of associated things
Criticize	Express judgment as to merit of topic being considered
Define	Give concise and clear meaning; differentiate term from others
Discuss	Examine, analyze carefully, and present pros and cons
Enumerate	List or outline briefly, naming each point
Evaluate	Present value or worth; point out both advantages and limitations
Explain	Clarify and interpret material
Illustrate	Give drawings, diagrams or concrete examples
Interpret	Translate, explain by example, solve
Justify	Prove thesis or show grounds for decisions
Outline	Give main points and supplementary data in a systematic format
Prove	Establish with certainty by citing evidence
Relate	Emphasize connections and associations
Review	Analyze and comment briefly, in sequence, on main points
State	Express major points in clear, brief form
Summarize	Give main points or facts in condensed form
Trace	Give description of progress or development in sequence