



## Test-Taking: ESSAY TEST

### BASIC TIPS

1. Be on time. Come equipped with extra pens, pencils, paper.
2. Pace yourself. Scan the entire test first. Proportion time and stick to it. (keep in mind point values.)
3. Do the easier questions first for a morale boost.
4. Note carefully any direction words in questions and follow them. Know their meanings.
  - a. Enumerate - produce a list of items.
  - b. Compare/Contrast - find likenesses; note differences.
  - c. Evaluate/Criticize - state good and bad points; give your opinions on the value of a statement.
  - d. Explain/Discuss - state how and why; or tell the meaning of something.
  - e. Describe/Illustrate - clarify by words or graphics (diagrams, charts, maps).
  - f. Interpret/Define - explain the meaning of a word or idea; tell why.
  - g. Justify/Prove - provide valid reasons to substantiate a statement.
  - h. Trace - follow the course of something, giving apt description.
  - i. Summarize - give main points.
  - j. Relate - show connections between things.
  - k. State - give main points.
  - l. Outline - give main points and important details.
  - m. Diagram - make a drawing and label it.
5. Jot down ideas and technical language for each question as they come to mind on scrap paper. Also write down any memorized material as soon as possible, before beginning the test.
6. Make an outline for each answer before beginning to write.
  - a. Aid memory as well as organization by jotting down main points and important details.
  - b. Plan to include an introductory paragraph that directly responds to the question, describing how the answer will be written. Follow this dictate when writing.
  - c. Take a stand and stay with it, and prove it with as many facts as you can.
  - d. Keep in mind whatever was emphasized in class and what your instructor will be looking for.
  - e. Scrutinize each test question for clues about what should be included in the answer. Be sure these points are in your outline.
  - f. Plan to write a summarizing paragraph which includes your basic statement and main arguments.
7. Write as neatly as you can using ink and lined paper. Research says neatness counts.
8. Write as much as you can, keeping good organization as you proceed. Reread to make sure important points have been included. Edit for spelling, punctuation.
9. Aim to present facts, not to present grand style.
10. Always write something about the topic, even if you can't completely answer the question. You may receive some credit.
11. Present outlines for questions if time does not permit them all to be answered. You may get some credit.
12. Use common sense. Always consider what your instructor will be looking for, based on class lectures and assigned readings.