



Academic Support Center

Essay Test Strategies

Essay test questions can be very intimidating, but the following strategies will prepare you to effectively answer essay questions.

- Before answering essay questions, thoroughly read the instructions. Do not jump to a question without being sure of what is being asked. In many cases, the teacher is looking for specific types of responses and only a few of the questions must be answered.
- Read an essay question in its entirety before preparing an answer. If the instructions are unclear, ask the teacher to explain.
- Provide as many details and specific examples when answering an essay question. Teachers are usually looking for very specific responses to see whether or not you've learned the material.
- Manage your time wisely when answering essay questions, so you can answer all the questions, not just the easy or hard ones. If you finish before time is up, go back and review your answers and provide additional details.
- When a question is only requiring facts, be sure to focus only on facts. Only provide the information the question wants.
- In your answers, get to the point and be very clear. If you provide numerous facts or details, be sure they're related to the question.
- Be sure your essays are legible and easy to understand. If a teacher has a difficult time reading or understanding what you've written, you could receive a lower score.
- To organize your thoughts before answering an essay question, develop a short outline or list. This strategy will help you save time and keep your essay organized.
- Only spend time answering the question and keep your essay focused. If your essay does not fully answer the question, it will not receive full credit.
- Keep main ideas and other important details separated with paragraphs.
- If time permits, review your answers and make changes if necessary.