



QUICK TIPS ON WRITING ESSAY EXAMS

BEFORE THE EXAM:

Review your notes

1. Combine your reading and lecture notes.
2. Look for key concepts or ideas in your notes.
3. Develop statements that explain these key concepts.
4. Create an organized list of key ideas.
5. Select evidence to support each key idea.
6. Note concrete applications of key ideas.
7. Note connections among key ideas.

Know what you are studying for

1. Know what the exam will cover.
2. Know the format of the exam beforehand.
3. Know how many essay and short-answer questions will be on the exam.
4. Think about what your instructor has emphasized.
5. Try to guess the questions you will be asked.
6. Use old exams to practice with.

Make final preparations

1. Practise answering likely questions.
2. Try studying with a group or a peer.
3. Don't stay up all night the night before an exam.

DURING THE EXAM:

For the first 5 to 10 minutes

1. Read the whole exam.
2. Quickly write down important facts, definitions or formulas you think you will need and might forget.
3. Underline key words in the questions to try to decide whether the questions are asking for definitions, problem solving, application of knowledge, or explanations.

4. Divide the exam time according to the marks awarded.

During the Rest of the Exam

5. For each essay make sure you have:
 - An argument that is relevant to the question.
 - A plan of how you will provide evidence for that argument.
 - Sufficient evidence to prove your argument.
 - A conclusion that summarizes the main points

REMEMBER:

1. Use vocabulary appropriate to the exam's discipline.
2. Make use of theories or arguments that are central to the topic.
3. Analyze: don't list or summarize unless the question asks you to do so.
4. Explain information clearly and make connections between points.
5. Watch the time: If you run out of time, it is better to make a good start at two essays than to leave one essay completely untouched.