Strategies for Writing Essay Tests

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- 1. Do not start writing immediately.
- 2. Analyze the question that you answer by underlining the cue words and key words.
- 3. Use a writing process as much as possible within the constraints of the time limit. Try to allot time to plan and revise. For a one-hour test of one question, take about 10 minutes to jot down preliminary ideas about content and organization, and save about 10 minutes to reread, revise and edit your answer. If you feel blocked, try free writing to get your hand and your thoughts moving.
- 4. Support any generalizations with specifics.
- 5. Beware of "going off the topic". Respond to the cue words and key words in the question, and do not try to reshape the question to conform to what you might prefer to write about. Remember, your reader expects a clear line of presentation and reasoning that answers the given question.

http://ruby.fgcu.edu/courses/10251/stressay.html

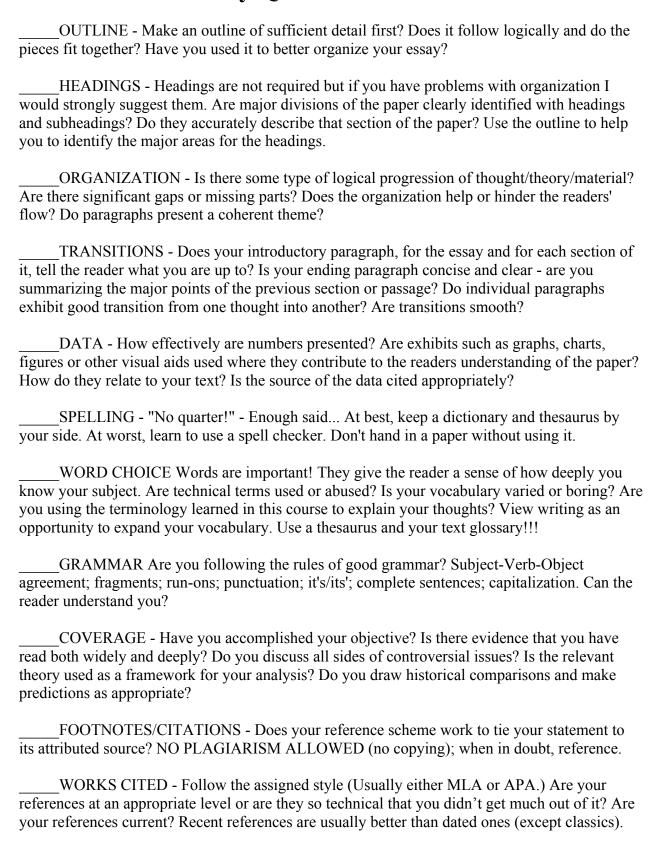
Six Guidelines for Taking Essay Exams

Six Guidelines for Taking Essay Exams [This is for non-book times exams, but I have included it for your later use. Perhaps it will help you minimize your time spent developing your essay.]

- 1. Organize around a clear focus, one that is limited enough to cover in the time allotted and that allows inclusion of all the material the teacher will expect to find. This focus should be expressed in a thesis statement.
- 2. Outline the answer. Know the three or four points to be covered to be sure that they all develop, explain, or prove the thesis statement.
- 3. Come to the point quickly, perhaps even beginning with the thesis statement.
- 4. Stick to the subject. Telling everything isn't expected. The test is to select, organize, and analyze major points.
- 5. Be thorough. Do not leave out anything important to the defense of the thesis statement.

A. Support generalities with specific and relevant evidence.

Guidelines for Essay Questions:



MLA or APA or Chicago STYLE - The goal of this requirement is to get you to look up a style and follow it. Are you following the style as required? The St. Martin's Guide to Writing or any good College Handbook should be part of your personal library.
SUMMARY ABSTRACT Your abstract should provide a brief summation of your research question and your conclusions. It should be labeled as the Summary Abstract, written on a single page, and attached to the front of your paper. Mainly for writing papers]
WRITING STYLE - Does your paper hold the interest of the reader? Is your paper a pleasure to read or a pain to endure? Do your thoughts fit together well? Do your thoughts flow well? Is your writing choppy or smooth? sophisticated or crude? varied or monotonous? provocative or bland? effective or incoherent?
OVERALL IMPRESSION - Good writing is more than the sum of its parts; synergy is everything! A well-written essay is a work of art that deserves global, as well as specific, assessment.

Cue Words Found in Questions for Essay Tests

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Analyze: means to separate something into parts and then discuss the parts and their meanings.

Clarify: means to make clear, often by giving a definition of a key term and by using examples to illustrate it.

Classify: means to arrange in groups on the basis of shared characteristics.

Compare and Contrast: means to show similarities and differences.

Criticize: means to give your opinion concerning the good points and the bad points of something.

Define: means to give the definition of something and thereby to separate it from similar things.

Describe: means to explain certain features to make clear an object, procedure, or event.

Discuss: means to consider as many elements as possible concerning an issue or event.

Evaluate: means to give your opinion about the value of something.

Explain: means to make clear or intelligible something that needs to be understood or interpreted.

Illustrate: means to give examples of something.

Interpret: means to explain the meaning of something.

Justify: means to show or prove that something is valid or correct.

Prove: means to present evidence that cannot be refuted logically or without other evidence.

Relate: means to show the connections between two or more things.

Review: means to reexamine, summarize, or to reprise something.

Show: means to point out or demonstrate something.

Summarize: means to repeat briefly the major points of something.

Support: means to argue in favor of something.