

## The Essay Exam

1. Read over questions to decide which to answer, if you have a choice. Note relative value of each question.
2. Underline or circle key words.
  - o Key terms (e.g. compare, describe, evaluate, explain)
  - o Conditions (e.g. two versions of, main evidence for)
  - o Signal words (e.g. best, however, always, never)
3. Jot down ideas, organize answers. Only one fourth of time should be spent on this plan.
4. Formulate answer in outline form. *Stick to this plan.*
5. Follow essay-writing format:
  - o Opening paragraph: Answer essay question in first sentence or two. No lengthy introductions
  - o Body: Each new point gets its own paragraph. Link topic sentence of each paragraph to central question.
  - o Use transition words between paragraphs. (e.g. but, what is more, while, however, apart from)
  - o Concluding paragraph: Summarize, restate opening sentence.
6. Write legibly. Double space.
7. Check spelling and grammar.



The essay exam requires you to analyze a question, organize your answer, and communicate to your professor that you know the material.

Read and re-read the questions so you know what each question is really asking.

Organize your thoughts with a brief outline. The outline could be a mind map or diagram.

Spend at least a fourth of your time generating ideas and organizing your answer. This prevents free association as you write.

Your opening paragraph is the most important paragraph. Your opening paragraph should be a brief introduction including your statement of thesis adapted from the question you are answering.

Tell the reader what information you will provide to support the thesis.

In the body of the essay keep your points straightforward and clear.

Use simple, clear transitions to link your points.

Illustrate your ideas with examples from course materials.

In your concluding paragraph sum up what you have said to reinforce the coherence of your answer. This is the second most important paragraph

When you are finished, review the paper for obvious errors, legibility, labeling of your questions.

If you run out of time, turn in any partial notes. (You may get part marks for these).

