

TIPS FOR TAKING ESSAY TESTS

- ➡ Read all directions carefully and re-read anything that is not clear. Ask for clarification, if necessary.
- ➡ Read the entire examination first. This allows you to have more time for any blocked information to appear, as well as to write answers that do not overlap.
- ➡ Before starting to write, sketch an outline.
- ➡ Begin with the easiest question. Ideas about more difficult questions may occur to you as you write.
- ➡ Spend a few minutes jotting down key words or phrases for each question; this will serve to stimulate other ideas.
- ➡ Be sure you know what is meant by directional words, such as *name*, *define*, *compare*, or *discuss*. Decide what kind of answer the question requires before you begin writing.
- ➡ As ideas about other questions occur to you, immediately jot them down on the back of the test before they slip away.
- ➡ Get right to the point:
 - Begin with a strong first sentence. State your main point.
 - Use your first paragraph to provide an overview of your essay.
 - Use the rest of your essay to discuss these points in more detail.
 - Back up your points with specific information, examples, or quotations from your readings, notes or professor.
- ➡ If you do not know the answer to a question, try to reason it out. If you cannot, skip it and return to it once you've completed the rest of the test.
- ➡ DO NOT PAD your answers. Strength is more important than length in determining the grade. Include as many specific facts as you can to support your answer.
- ➡ Be sure to leave enough space between answers so you can add to them, if necessary. Give the major points and leave space for later elaboration, as time permits.
- ➡ Strive toward making your first draft your final one; time is usually too short for recopying.
- ➡ Check your answers thoroughly before turning it in. (Consider theme, careless mistakes, punctuation, grammar and spelling).

Adapted from: **The Study Guides and Strategies web site was created and is maintained by [Joe Landsberger](#)**, academic web site developer at the [University of St. Thomas](#) (UST), St. Paul, Minnesota. <http://www.studygs.net/lrmstudy.htm>

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