

ESSAY TESTS

1. **Set up a schedule.** Decide how many questions you have to answer and how much time you can spend on each one. You may determine which questions have the highest number of points possible and devote more time to them. The important thing is to not get stuck on one question for too long. Make a schedule and stick to it.
2. **Read through all the questions once.** Do at the beginning before you start writing any answer. Jot down any key words or thoughts that come to mind. This will save you from mind blocks later on in the test; it will also help you decide which questions you know the most about (in case you have a choice, and/or want to begin by answering those).
3. **Before attempting to answer a question** decide what the topic of the question is and what information about the topic you are asked to supply.
4. **Outline the answer before writing.** Allow yourself a few minutes to think through and outline your answer. The notes you jotted down earlier will be a great help here.
5. **Use simple words** that you understand and can spell. Avoid using slang except for emphasis. If you are a poor speller, ask the instructor before the test if you can bring in a dictionary with you. If so, use it. Unless you are good at punctuation, avoid using long sentences that require complex internal punctuation. Write neatly and make all corrections neatly. Neatness indicates pride in work and makes a good impression before your instructor starts reading. Studies have shown that instructors, no matter how fair they try to be, give a lower grade to papers which are messy and hard to read. Print if your writing is illegible. Strive to make your first draft your last. Often there is not enough time to recopy an answer.
6. **Qualify answers when in doubt.** It is better to say "Toward the end of the 19th century" than to say "In 1894" when you are unsure. In many cases the approximate date is all that is wanted.
7. **For medium length to long answers, or if the instructor requires it, take the time to write an introduction and conclusion.** The introduction will consist of the main points to be discussed and the conclusion simply restates the main points.
8. **Take time to review each answer.** Proofread your work after you have completed the test. People often make mistakes that are easy to correct, such as misspelling words, omitting words or parts of words, leaving parts of questions unanswered, and miswriting dates and figures.