

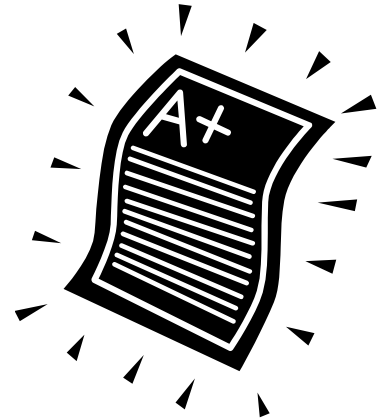
TAKING ESSAY TESTS

DIRECTIONS: Read the following tips.

Check off the ones that you already do, and star the ones that you want to start doing.

BEGINNING

- Make sure your name** and other required identification is on the test.
- Follow directions.** Be sure that you understand the directions, so you can follow them closely.
- Read through all the questions once.** Quickly reading through the test gives an overview of the information to be covered and may prevent unnecessary and time-consuming overlap in your answers. Answers will come to mind immediately for some questions. Write down key words, listings, etc., now when they're fresh in mind. Otherwise these ideas may be blocked (or be unavailable) when the time comes to write the later questions. This will reduce "clutching" or panic (anxiety, fear which disrupts thoughts.)
- Budget your time.** After reading the questions, determine (1) the total time allowed for the test, (2) the total number of questions to be answered, and (3) the point value for each question. Make sure you budget enough time for questions with higher point values, and leave some time at the end to proofread.
- Before attempting to answer a question,** put the question in your own words. Compare your version with the original. Do they mean the same thing? If not, you've misread the question. You'll be surprised at how often they don't agree. If the question seems ambiguous, vague, or too broad, make clear your interpretation before answering.



DURING

- Plan and outline the answer before writing.** Whether the instructor realizes it or not, he or she is greatly influenced by the compactness, completeness, and clarity of an organized answer. To begin writing in the hope that the right answer will somehow turn up is time-consuming and usually futile. It is a good idea to use scratch paper or the inside cover of a blue book to make a rough outline of the ideas in order to discuss their relationships.
- Write legibly.** Professors cannot give credit to answers they cannot read.
- Take time to write an introduction and summary.** The introduction should consist of the main point to be made; the summary is simply a paraphrasing of the introduction. A neat bundle

with a beginning and ending is very satisfying to the reader.

- Answer questions clearly, directly, and completely.** Give your thesis or main idea at the beginning of your answer. If you have two or three subpoints, indicate this in your thesis (example: The Indians of North and South America differed in their civilizations, their governments, their religions, and their property concepts). As you develop your thesis, include specific and thorough support, but don't ramble. Use the technical vocabulary of the course, and leave space at the end for additions to your answers.
- Qualify answers when in doubt.** If essay questions seem ambiguous, vague, or too broad, make clear your interpretation before answering.
- Be general when needed.** It is better to say, "Toward the end of the 19th century," than to say, "In 1894," when you can't remember whether it's 1884 or 1894. In many cases, the approximate time is all that is wanted; unfortunately 1894, though approximate, may be incorrect and will usually be marked accordingly.
- Can't remember the answer to a question?** Leave space and return to it after you have responded to the others. The answer may come to you before you finish the test.
- Follow your time schedule.** Be aware of the time, and move on when your budgeted time for a question is up. Six incomplete answers will usually receive more credit than three complete ones.

END

- Proofread your answers.** Rereading your answers will give you a chance to catch careless mistakes in spelling and punctuation as well as in content. When writing in haste, we tend to:
 - Misspell words
 - Omit words and parts of words
 - Omit parts of questions
 - Incorrectly write dates and figures (1353 written as 1953; \$.50 as \$50, etc.)
- Check to see** that your answers are clearly identified with the proper question.

