

PREPARING FOR ESSAY TESTS

The essay examination is probably the most frightening for college freshmen. The essay test, however, gives you the most flexibility in answering and the best chance to impress your professor with your knowledge and writing ability.

MENTAL PREPARATION

Long-range preparation: To be ready for an essay exam, begin working far in advance.

- Attend class every day, and sit close to the front where you can hear the professor.
- Take thorough and well-organized lecture notes, and review them daily as soon after class as possible.
- Read the textbook using a study method in which you survey, read, recite, and review all the daily and weekly assignments.

Short-term preparation

- About a week before the exam, use time outside of class to review, organize, and synthesize the material (textbook *and* lecture notes) the exam will cover.
- Determine what the professor has emphasized in the textbook or lecture, and write an outline for the course material. List only the major blocks and sub-blocks of material covered.
- Make a detailed study guide for each section. Write an outline of the information, including enough material to trigger your recall of all essential information but not so many details that your study sheets become unmanageable.
- Try anticipating a type of question, such as compare/contrast, and arrange your information accordingly.
- Talk to other students about the material. This may help each of you remember different aspects of the material as well as develop new perspectives.

PHYSICAL PREPARATION

- At the beginning of each semester, set up a study schedule, allowing plenty of time for studying, eating, sleeping, and relaxing.
- The night before the exam, you should review your study sheets and then get a good night's sleep.
- The morning of the exam, allow plenty of time to get to class, and give your study sheets one last look.
- Relax. Usually, it is good not to talk to other students about the test: it is too late to go back and study, and if someone brings up a point on which you are unprepared, you might panic and forget information that you know well.