

Writing Papers

Answering Essay Questions

1. Make notes on back of exam sheet, e.g. ACRONYMS.
2. Read directions carefully; e.g. should you answer *all* questions?
3. Survey all questions before answering and note worth of each question
4. Mark key question words.
5. Number *all* parts of the question.
6. Jot notes along side each question as you read it for the first time.
7. Start with the easiest questions to gain confidence.
8. Before you answer, make sure you understand question with precision -- ASK the instructor if you are unsure.
9. When beginning to answer a question, jot down any additional points and number your points and ideas in the order that you will use them.
10. Your attitude when writing should be that this paper is targeted at someone who is virtually ignorant of your topic and thus you should explain everything that falls outside the realm of "common knowledge."
11. Use facts and logic, not your feelings about something; exams are testing your understanding of a subject matter.
12. Answer the question directly and forcefully in the first sentence and include some of the words in the question to keep you focused.
13. Include only *one main idea per paragraph*-- state your important idea clearly and precisely, and then follow this statement immediately supporting factual or logical evidence.

Incorporate instructor's pet ideas.

1. Be neat -- research has shown that when the same paper is written neatly or sloppily, the graders on average rated the neat paper a letter grade higher.
2. Write on only one side of the sheet and leave a generous margin.
3. Double space to make later editing easier.