

Written Tests

Learn how to prep for your short answer & essay exams

Long-term preparation

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- Read the course syllabus
- Make note of any themes or connections you notice
- Check with your instructor to see if he/she agrees with the connections you have made
- Learn from instructors and other resources about the form and content of upcoming tests, including grading criteria

Short-term preparation

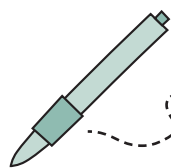
- Review your notes and reading assignments 1-2 weeks before the test
- Make a list of main ideas or themes that your instructor covered in class
- Note the relationships between these ideas. (They may be clues to possible essay questions!)
- For each idea or concept, create a summary sheet of relevant data
- Review the topics actively by integrating notes, text, and supplementary information (i.e., diagrams)
- Show your review sheets to your instructor to make sure you are on the right track
- Generate a list of possible questions using your relationship charts and summary sheets
- Outline answers to as many of these questions as time permits
- Create a chart similar to the one found below before tackling compare and contrast questions that are typically found on essay tests

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Example:

Compare and contrast President Bush's proposed private accounts for Social Security and the current system

Issues	Private accounts	Current System
Social	Individual assumes risk	Society assumes risk
Political	Republicans	Democrats
Economic	Potentially gaining higher investment yields	Risks of the marketplace



Before you write

**budget
your time**

Spend more time on questions that are worth more points

Allow time for reviewing & proofreading at the end

**read
carefully**

Read all essay questions before you start to write

Pay attention to key words such as compare, explain, justify, and define

Ask your instructor for clarification if you don't understand a question

**start
off easy**

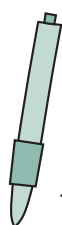
This might seem obvious, but it can help you manage your time

**make
an outline**

Quickly list the ideas and facts you want to include

Number the points in the order you want to present them

Be sure to distinguish main topics from supporting examples



While you write

Write on every other line

- This will leave space for any additions you may want to make to your answer

State a definite, clear thesis

- Include it within the first few sentences of your answer

Follow your outline

- Be specific with examples and details

When time is up for a given question, move on to the next one

- Partially answering all questions is better than fully answering some and not answering others at all

If you're running out of time, write an outline for the rest of the answer

- The grader might be able to give you partial credit for it

Brainstorm if you don't know much about a question

- Relax and try to recall your reading, lectures, and discussions; this may trigger memories relevant to the question

If your mind goes blank, don't panic

- Think about something pleasant, unrelated to the test

- Take some deep breaths

- If you're still blank, move on to a different question

After you write



**read through your answers
proofread**

Make any necessary additions

Check for errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation