

CONQUERING ESSAY TESTS

You can successfully complete essay tests if you know how to “attack” them.

1. Read all directions and each essay question carefully before you begin to write. Reread anything that is not clear to you. Doing so will give you the time to think and prevent overlapping answers.
2. Star, circle or underline important ideas, terms and instructions.
3. Know the meaning of directional words.
4. Budget your time; spend the most time on the question that counts the most.
5. Begin with the easiest question. Ideas to answer the more difficult questions may occur to you as you write.
6. As ideas to answer other questions come to you, immediately jot them down on scratch paper. Jot down key words or phrases to stimulate and anchor your thought process.
7. Organize your ideas by quickly and briefly sketching an outline or list before you begin to write. The time spent planning your answers will pay big dividends in the end by helping you move quickly from one point to another.
8. Write quickly and efficiently with determination and purpose. Don't forget to use proper essay structure where appropriate: introduction, which includes a thesis; body; and conclusion.
9. Write your thoughts clearly and to the point, using formal English (no slang or contractions). Keep the writing simple, but use a variety of words and sentence structures to keep the reader's attention. **REMEMBER:** it is more important to write clearly than to try to appear brilliant. Write legibly.
10. If you don't know an answer to a question, try to reason it out. Don't leave it blank unless you have absolutely no idea of an answer and don't waste time giving an incorrect or absurd answer. Save this question for last. Go to other questions; the answer to the difficult one may come to you while working on others. **REMEMBER:** you may earn partial credit for a related answer to the question.
11. If information you've given for a question relates to another question, point out the relationship.
12. Leave time to read over your answers. Make sure your answers answer the question(s) appropriately, making sure that you followed the exact directions (directional words). Check and edit your essay for meaning, correct spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure.