
Writing the In-Class Essay Exam

Writing the in-class essay can be made easier with the following tips.

1. Read the exam question carefully.

Understand what is being asked of you. When considering your response don't just briefly scan the essay question; take the time to understand it fully. Find key terms and prepare to respond to them:

analyze - to separate into parts and discuss those parts and their meanings

define - identify and explain essential qualities

discuss - argue for or against, comment or debate, and explore solutions

evaluate - consider the worth of an idea and justify your conclusion

illustrate - use specific examples or analogies to clarify and explain

2. Budget your time.

After studying the exam question and reading the provided essay, consider how much time you have left and allow time for the writing process: 1/4 for prewriting, 1/2 for drafting, 1/4 for revising.

3. Prepare a brief outline.

Formulate an outline of your ideas. What is your thesis? What are your topic sentences? What evidence will you offer as support? How will you connect your evidence to your supporting ideas (analysis)?

4. Write the essay.

After doing all the preliminary work, begin drafting the essay. Follow your outline and budget your time as you write.

5. Allow adequate time to revise and edit your work.

Remember that it is in the revision process that you'll refine your draft into a well-organized and coherent essay. Take the necessary steps to allow adequate time for global revisions (structure and support) and proofreading (spelling and grammar).

In a nutshell:

- *remain calm*
- *try not to be distracted by other students, or to distract others*
- *take time to understand all test directions*
- *note the wording of the question and if more than one question is being asked*
- *budget your time*
- *start with a working thesis*
- *list important supporting ideas in some topic sentences*
- *reference key words from the writing prompt*
- *organize your main points in the order that you'll present them*
- *follow your outline and budget your time as you write*
- *focus on key composition elements: intro, thesis statement, topic sentences, paragraph development, etc.*
- *make global revisions for unity, development, and coherence*
- *look for grammatical errors*