

EXAM ESSAYS

Writing an essay in an exam can be daunting, but the following tips will help you feel prepared and get the best results.

Exam essays test your ability to:

- answer the questions appropriately;
- develop an argument;
- use evidence to support your claims;
- articulate your critical voice; and
- write clearly and correctly.

They provide the chance to show what you know about a number of topics.

TIP

It is **compulsory** to bring your **campus card** to all examinations.

If you do not have your card, you will not be permitted to sit your exam.

For good results, planning is essential

Before the exam, find out :

- how long the exam will be; and
- how many questions you will have to answer.

Then you can determine how much time you should spend on each question.

TIP

Work out at what time you should finish each section, and stick to this timing in the exam.

Effective revision

- Organise your notes so that you have information and examples which could be used to answer related questions.
- Prepare at least one “extra” topic in case you can’t answer your “favourite” question, or it hasn’t been included in the exam.
- Practice writing succinct, clear answers.

TIP

Practice writing essays under exam-like conditions. Use past exams if they are available and still relevant.

Writing practice essays under exam-like conditions will:

- Show you how much you can write in a specific time frame;
- Work as a form of overlearning and so help move information into your long term memory; and
- Boost your confidence that you can write what you need to in the given time.



During the exam

1. Choose the essay question(s) you intend to answer.
2. Analyse each question and identify what your main focus will be.
3. Decide on your thesis statement, i.e. the position you are going to argue for.
4. Jot down the points you will use to develop your argument.
5. Prioritise these dot points. They will be the focus of your paragraphs.

TIP

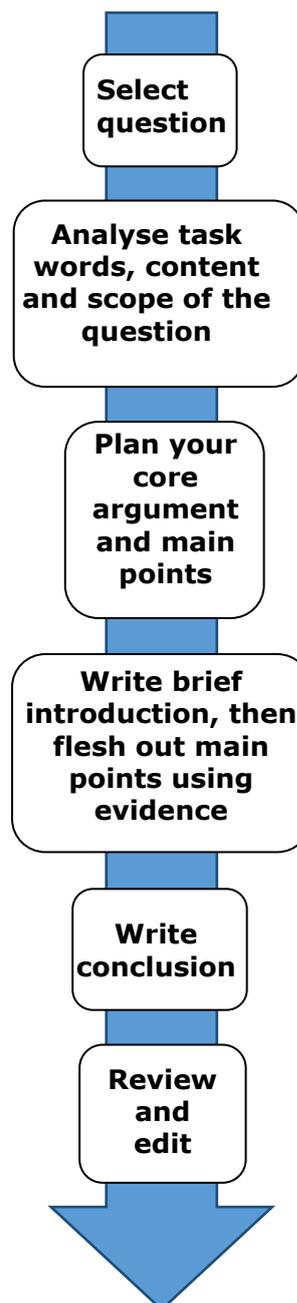
Write neatly so your examiner can readily understand your ideas.

6. Write your essay following the conventions of a good essay:
 - Start with an introduction that includes your thesis statement and a roadmap; and
 - Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence, develop one main idea in each paragraph, and then tie ideas together in the conclusion.
7. Do a quick spelling and grammar check if you have time at the end.

TIP

Use dot points in exam essays **only** if you have run out of time (which you won't if you follow your exam plan and the tips in this handout).

Use your time efficiently during the exam



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