

The Essay Test

Preparing to take the test

- Review reading, lecture notes, handouts.
- Write sample questions covering major points and practice answering them.
- Familiarize yourself with key terms that may appear on tests (See reverse side of handout.)

Taking the test

- Read the directions. Look for how many questions must be answered and point value.
- Answer the question you are most confident about first.
- Organize *before* you begin to write. Take time to collect what you know and form a thesis. Use the inside covers of your blue book to list your ideas.
- Rephrase the question to form an affirmative statement. Example: In what ways did labor unions affect economic growth in the 1980s?
Thesis: Labor unions affected growth in the areas of _____.
- Read over each paragraph as you write. Make certain you continue to answer the question.
- Look over your answer for last minute additions and corrections

TERM	EXAMPLE	HOW TO:
Define: Asks you to determine the qualities of a concept or thing	Define a democratic society	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Break the concept down into its parts 2. Attribute characteristics 3. Give examples 4. State the functions
Compare: Asks you to tell how tow things are a like and/or different in specific categories	Compare the Democratic and Republican party platforms on health care.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Break the issue /event into specific parts 2. For each part, explain how x and y are alike and/or different
Trace: Asks you to relate in chronological order the steps that lead to x; tell how each step is significant	Trace the development of the open-classroom concept in education.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify major steps, events, ideas 2. Show specifically why or how each item changes the concept or leads to the next
Analyze: Asks you to break a concept or idea into its parts	Analyze the plots of the short story "The Lottery."	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Break the concept down into its separate parts 2. Relate how the parts are connected
Discuss: Asks you to determine the most important feature or ideas related to a subject	Discuss the world view of Columbus as he prepared to voyage to the Indies.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe the idea in detail 2. Provide examples 3. Compare it to something that came before or after.
Agree or Disagree: Asks you to support or refute a statement	Critics claim that television news is poor journalism.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Define the ideal 2. Ask yourself how the particulars of this case compare to the ideal 3. Draw a conclusion: this is your thesis