

HOW TO WRITE AN EXAM

- Key Ideas**
- Write any information you think you'll forget on the back of the exam as soon as the teacher has given the go ahead.
 - Keeps your mind clear and uncluttered.
- Skimming**
- Quickly look over the whole exam.
 - Budget/plan your time.
 - No need to answer questions in order they are given.
- Directions**
- READ QUESTIONS CAREFULLY!
 - Underline key words.
- Value of Question**
- Match time spent to marks given for a question.
Set aside more time for questions that are worth more.
- Quicksand Question**
- Don't spend too much time on any one question.
You might not have time to finish the whole exam.
- Tip of the Tongue**
- Don't waste valuable time trying to remember something.
 - o Go on to next question.
 - o Many answers may pop into your mind later.
 - o A helpful clue may be contained in another question.
- Diagrams**
- You can organize ideas about a question with a diagram.
This will make it easier for you to write answers later.
- Leave Time**
- Check your paper before handing it in.
 - Make sure you have attempted to answer all questions.

Writing the Exam: Tips for Success

THE DAY OF THE EXAM

The time just before the beginning of the exam can be crucial to how well you consolidate the information you have worked with, and how calm you remain.

Here are some basic tips and strategies for what to do during this time:

- ✓ Get plenty of sleep the night before. At this point, an hour of sleep is more valuable to your performance than an hour of cramming.
- ✓ In the hours immediately before the exam, don't try to learn anything new. Use this time to review and rehearse what you already know. Practice output, don't read passively.
- ✓ Time and regulate your eating and drinking. Don't eat a heavy meal and don't drink caffeinated drinks such as colas or coffee.
- ✓ Arrive early!
- ✓ Use positive visualization and self-talk. Imagine yourself: doing well, recalling easily, and calmly dealing with uncertainty and difficult questions.
- ✓ Generally, avoid talking to other nervous students. It will feed your anxiety and inhibit your concentration.
- ✓ Have all your materials ready. Bring extra pens, pencils, a calculator, extra batteries, and any other material you are allowed to bring in. Pack it all the night before and have it waiting for you by the door.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR ALL EXAMS

- ✓ **Stay for the whole exam.** Even if you think you've done all you can, stay to the end. Relax, let your mind wander. You'll be surprised what comes back to you in a relaxed state that helps you improve answers or answer a question you were stuck on earlier. Give yourself that chance. Only make changes if you are sure of the answer.
- ✓ **Focus on your own work and your own pacing.** Ignore what others are doing, what questions they are working on, and when they are leaving.
- ✓ **Look over the entire test, before you begin writing.** Survey it.
- ✓ When surveying the test, if you think of something you want to remember for a question, write it down (maybe on the back of the exam).
- ✓ **Read all direction carefully.** The single biggest cause of error on exams is failure to read the instructions. Underline key words in the instructions.
- ✓ Read each question very, very carefully underlining key words/terms.
- ✓ **Budget your time wisely.** Spend time on each question or section according to how much it counts toward the mark. If an essay counts for 25% of a two hour exam, you should spend no more than half an hour on it. Stick to a strict allocation initially then return to unfinished items if you have time left over.
- ✓ **Do the easy questions first.** Skip the difficult ones and go back to them later. There is no need to answer the questions in order.
- ✓ Immediately **rule out the obvious wrong and foolish answers.**
- ✓ **Choose the answer that is most correct.** There may be choices that seem very similar or also correct. Choose the BEST ONE.
- ✓ **Watch for clues** in questions that will help with answers on other questions.
- ✓ **Write something for every question.**
- ✓ **Check for inconsistency in number agreement.** If the stem is singular, but one of the alternatives is plural, it can most likely be eliminated.
- ✓ **Check for verb tense agreement.** If the stem of the question is written in the present tense and an alternative is in past or future tense, it can most likely be eliminated.
- ✓ Check for other grammatical errors between the stem and the alternatives.