

Tips on Essay Questions

- Read questions carefully. Make sure you are answering ALL of what is being asked.
- Try putting the question in your own words before answering to make sure you comprehend what is being asked. Compare your version with the original. Do they have the same meaning? If you find they don't, then maybe you misunderstood the question.
- Before beginning the essay, create an outline to help you organize your thoughts.
- Begin with a strong first sentence that states the main idea of your essay. Write key points to create the introduction (first paragraph).
- The rest of the paper you will be developing your argument.
 - Each following paragraph should start out with a key point from the introduction. There should be a different paragraph for each key point.
 - Each key point should be explained in each paragraph.
 - To connect ideas, use transitions.
 - Make sure your paper follows your outline. If you find that when you begin writing that you came up with a better way of organizing, go with that way. However, if you have major difficulty organizing a paper, stick with your outline.
 - If you're not sure of exact dates, use approximates.
 - You may get more points by saying "towards the beginning of 20th century" than to say "in 1900". Most of the time, all a teacher wants is an approximate time. If you answer, 1900, and it is incorrect, and might be counted wrong. Whereas if you answer "towards the beginning of the 20th century" it is technically correct and you might not be marked wrong.
 - The last paragraph is your conclusion paragraph. This paragraph should summarize your main points.
 - In this paragraph, the central idea is reinforced.
- In an essay, it is important to write as many facts and details as you can.
- If asking for opinion, make sure you give opinion. If just facts, just give facts.
- Make sure it is legible. Instructors can't grade it if they can't read it.
- Focus on one main idea in each paper. Sometimes students can get several ideas and want to write about every idea. Stay focused on your main idea.
- A common mistake is writing long introductions or conclusions. Remember, the body of the paper IS THE PAPER. An introduction is just to introduce what you are going to talk about, and the conclusion summarizes the main key points.
- If you make a mistake, draw a single line through it. If you draw more than one line, it looks messy.
- Above all, make sure to proofread!! You don't want an instructor to take off points just because you misspelled a word.