

# Test Taking Tips

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## OBJECTIVE EXAMS

- 1) **The moment you get the exam, do a "memory dump," which includes quickly writing down the things that you memorized that you are afraid of forgetting as the exam proceeds.**
- 2) **Review or Survey the exam to see what types of questions are being asked—don't answer just look and read.**
- 3) **Read the Directions Carefully!!**
  - a) **Look for scoring rules (penalized for guessing, etc.?)**
  - b) **Give answers exactly the way the directions ask for them**
  - c) **Label short answers appropriately, especially in math and science (% , miles per hour, psi, etc.)**
- 4) **Go through and answer all the easy questions first.**
  - a) **Too much time spent on hard questions may prevent you from finishing the exam and even missing points on easy questions.**
  - b) **Answering easy questions first may help you recollect as well as build confidence for the tough questions.**
- 5) **Pick out key words**
  - a) **Key words are words or groups of words on which the truth or falsity of a questions hinges (look for extreme words like always and never).**
  - b) **Circle or underline key words in the question to keep you focused on what the right answer is.**
- 6) **Read multiple choice questions like they are T/F questions**
  - a) **Eliminate all false answers and physically cross them out.**
  - b) **Look for extreme words in the answer; these are usually wrong answers, especially in the social sciences.**
  - c) **Your gut instinct is usually the right one. Do not change your answer unless you can prove to yourself that your first instinct was wrong.**
- 7) **Always check your answers!**
  - a) **Make sure you read the question properly and gave the appropriate answer.**
  - b) **Make sure bubbles on Scantrons are filled in completely and changes are erased completely.**

c) Check for Legibility in short answers and on answer keys (Will the instructor be able to tell the difference between your T's and F's or 7's and 4's?)

## ESSAY EXAMS

- 1) Do a memory Dump, which includes quickly writing down the things that you memorized that you are afraid of forgetting as the exam proceeds.
- 2) Read Directions Carefully!! (How many questions do you have to answer?)
- 3) Review or survey the entire exam by reading through all the questions without answering them—jot down notes next to each question as you do this.
- 4) Plan time allocation for each question you will answer (1 hour to answer three questions==15 minutes per question and 15 minutes to review and check at the end)
- 5) Look for key words to determine exactly how the question should be answered. (If you do not understand completely, ask the instructor to clarify before you begin writing.
- 6) Prepare an outline for each question. This should list points, in order you will use them to answer the question. (This then only leaves you filler words to create your final answer.
- 7) Your answer should be targeted toward someone who is virtually ignorant of the topic (explain everything outside the realm of common knowledge) and do not leave anything to be inferred or concluded by the instructor or grader.
- 8) Always use facts and logic and not your own personal feelings to answer the question. The exam is testing your understanding of the subject matter, not your opinion. Using correct and factual details will help you here.
- 9) Always justify your answers. Does it explain who, what, when, why and/or how? Does it get at what the key words are asking for?
- 10) Double check your answers for spelling and grammar errors that may make it hard to interpret your answer properly.
- 11) Write neatly and legibly! The same answer written neatly has been proven to get a higher grade –as much as an entire letter grades.

## Key Words Commonly Found on Exams

## **IDENTIFY**

This first group comprises question words which elicit direct answers and may tend not to elicit developed answers. Consequently, they may be rarely seen on essay exams. Nonetheless, they appear, and when they do, they often imply that the student should explain or elaborate.

<b>LIST</b>	<b>Write an itemized series of concise statements.</b>
<b>ENUMERATE</b>	<b>Write in a list or outline form, making points concisely one by one.</b>
<b>DESCRIBE</b>	<b>Recount, characterize, sketch, relate in a sequence or story form.</b>
<b>DEFINE</b>	<b>Give clear, concise, authoritative meanings</b>
<b>STATE</b>	<b>Present main points in brief, clear sequence, usually omitting minor details and examples.</b>
<b>SUMMARIZE</b>	<b>Give the main points or facts in condensed form, like the summary of a chapter in a text, omitting details and illustrations.</b>
<b>DIAGRAM</b>	<b>Give a graphic answer, a drawing, a chart, a plan, a schematic representation.</b>

## **EXPLAIN**

As a group, these words tend to suggest fully thought out and demonstrated answers. These terms tend to be a little slippery and it is often advisable to clarify the meaning of these words within the context of your course.

<b>DISCUSS</b>	<b>Consider various points of view, analyze carefully, and give reasons pro and con.</b>
<b>ANALYZE</b>	<b>Summarize fully with detail in accordance with a selected focus, consider component parts of ideas and their inter-relationships.</b>
<b>EXPLAIN</b>	<b>Clarify, interpret, give reasons for differences of opinion or of results, analyze causes.</b>
<b>ILLUSTRATE</b>	<b>Use a word, picture, diagram, or concrete example to clarify a point.</b>
<b>OUTLINE</b>	<b>Organize a description based on main points and subordinate points, stressing the arrangement and classification of the subject matter.</b>
<b>TRACE</b>	<b>In narrative form, describe the evolution, development, or progress of the subject.</b>

## **COMPARE**

These action words are premised on an analysis which works to integrate ideas under focus; emphasizing how similarities, differences, and connections between these ideas deepens our understanding of the ideas and may help you contextualize ideas more effectively.

<b>COMPARE</b>	Look for qualities or characteristics that resemble each other. <b>Emphasize similarities, but also note differences.</b>
<b>CONTRAST</b>	Stress the differences, dissimilarities of ideas, concepts, events, problems, etc., but also note similarities.
<b>RELATE</b>	Show how ideas or concepts are connected to each other.
	Related words: <b>DISTINGUISH</b>

### ASSESS

Writing an essay question with these action words involves invoking acceptable criteria and defending a judgment on the issue, idea, or question involved. Underlying questions here include "to what extent?" and "how well?"

<b>CRITICIZE</b>	Express your judgment about the merit or truth or usefulness of the views or factors mentioned in the question.
<b>EVALUATE</b>	Appraise, give your viewpoint, cite limitations and advantages, include the opinion of authorities, give evidence to support your position.
<b>INTERPRET</b>	Translate, give examples of comments on a subject, usually including your own viewpoint.
<b>REVIEW</b>	Examine a subject critically, analyzing and commenting on it, or statements made about it.
	Related words: <b>RECOMMEND</b>

### ARGUE

The words in this group direct the student to take a position on an issue and defend his or her argument against reasonable alternatives.

<b>PROVE</b>	Establish the truth of a statement by giving factual evidence and logical reasoning.
<b>JUSTIFY</b>	Show strong reasons for decisions or conclusions; use convincing arguments based on evidence.
	Related words: <b>AGREE, DISAGREE, DEBATE, DEFEND</b>

Taken From: <http://www.yorku.calcdc/lsp/eponline/exm5.htm>