

HOW TO STUDY FOR ESSAY TESTS

1. Take classroom notes on every lecture. Organize and review these notes regularly, using the key words and phrases you have written. Take notes on each textbook chapter, or mark your text as you read. Again, review these notes regularly. Always try to predict possible test questions as you study.
2. Take lecture and reading notes and bring the main ideas together. This provides an overall view of the material and should include everything that would be on tests. Some students find summary sheets and "information maps" to be useful tools from which to study. Practice reciting summaries of the information.
3. Discover the criteria that will be used to grade the test. By knowing what the instructor is going to be looking for in the test, it will be easier to study for the material. Remember, while you are taking the test you are trying to answer the question in the manner the instructor wants.
4. Practice predicting essay test questions. Observe the way the instructor organizes and emphasizes certain material. Patterns of organization may provide clues to how essay test questions might be designed. Look for similar patterns in the textbook, and turn headings, subheadings, etc., into questions.
5. Make up flash cards using three by five (3X5) index cards. On one side of the card write the question you have predicted. On the other side of the card write an outline of the answer to the question. Devise mnemonics and learn key words to help you remember outlines. Reviewing these cards can greatly enhance recall.
6. Take the questions that you have predicted and try answering them as completely as possible. Set time limits for yourself. By doing this you will have practice taking essay tests and this in itself will help you.
7. Another way to study for tests is to try to obtain an old copy of an essay test that the instructor has given in the class. Answering the questions on this test will give you an idea of what the instructor is looking for and may in fact contain some form of the questions she/he will be asking on the test.
8. When test time comes stop studying at least an hour before the test. This will allow you to relax and can help prevent test anxiety.