

Studying for an Essay Test

Tests such as multiple-choice tests and true/false tests assess specific factual knowledge. When studying for these tests, your goal should be to recognize facts.

Essay tests assess your mastery of themes and overall ideas. When studying for essay tests, your goal should be to recall broad information in an organized way. Your studying for essay tests should be related to this goal.

Here are the steps to follow when studying for an essay test.

1. Assemble the materials that contain the information that will be covered on the test. This includes your textbook, your textbook notes, and your class notes.
2. Read these materials to identify themes and overall ideas. Each time you identify one, label an index card with the name of that theme or overall idea. You will often find the same theme or overall idea in one or more places, but use just one card to represent it.
3. For each card you prepare in Step 2, carefully review your textbook, textbook notes, and class notes and add written details about the theme or overall idea to the card.
4. Once you have completed Step 3 for each card, review your cards several times. Doing this will give you a working familiarity with the information that is most likely to be the basis of questions on the test.
5. Now is the time to think like your teacher. Try to predict the questions your teacher will ask on the test. Write each question on its own index card. When writing the questions, include direction words often used by teachers, such as explain or compare.
6. For each card you prepared in Step 5, write a response to the question on that card (write on the back of the card and on additional cards if necessary). Use the cards you developed in Step 3 to help you answer each question. When you complete Step 6, you will have a set of study cards, each containing a possible test question and a written response to that question.
7. Carry the study cards you developed in Step 6 with you so that you can review them frequently. Be sure to review these cards the evening before the test.

Essay tests can be scary. Take the scare out of them by following the study steps above.

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