

Writing an Examination Essay Question

Another step toward a successful exam
experience!

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Answering the Essay Question

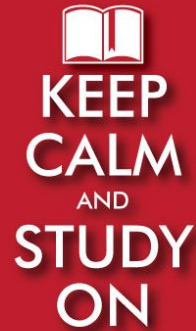
Answering an essay question on an exam can be nerve-racking; all those marks for just one question!

The good news is, that unlike multiple choice or short answer questions, you have much more **freedom** on how you'd like to answer the question. You can **focus on the information you know well**, and leave out content you are less confident about.

Keep calm, but study on!

An essay question usually asks you to agree or disagree with a point of view. Whichever side you take, you will require the **factual evidence to support your viewpoint.**

This means **studying** and knowing the facts are important. More than just your opinion is required.



Break it down!

When you look at an essay question and focus only on the end product, the completed essay, it can be overwhelming. The key to success is to **break it down**. Tackle only one part of the essay at a time. Even if the various steps are not worth marks, you will write a better essay and get a better mark in the end.

Follow these simple rules, and you'll be on your way to essay success!

Rule #1 - The Argument

Remember that you are writing an argument!



An argument influences the reader using **evidence and reasoning** to express a point of view and uncover a truth for the reader.

Steps for creating an argument

1. **Underline the keywords** of the question to aid in your understanding.

Example:

Is science essential to all future human development?

Make reference to three units studied this semester to support your answer with specific evidence.

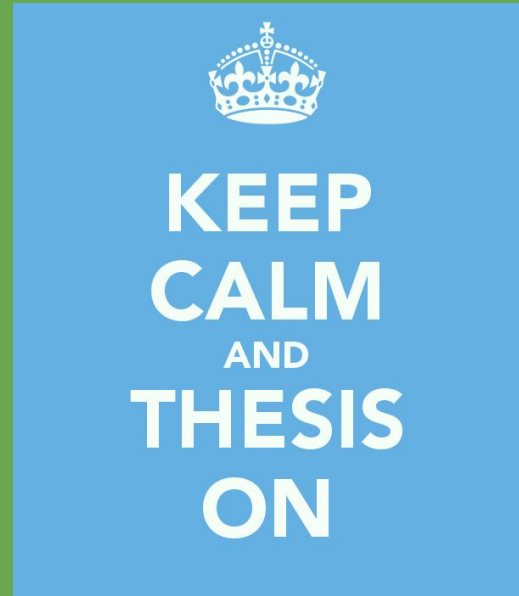
(Notice how broad this question is; you can draw from the materials you understood best. Didn't understand the electricity unit? No problem; don't include it!)

Example:

Is science essential to all future human development?

Make reference to three units studied this semester to
support your answer with specific evidence.

2. Define your position in your mind, making certain that your point of view is clear. Don't argue both sides. Pick one!
3. Use your position on the topic to write a **thesis**.



A SUCCESSFUL THESIS STATEMENT:



- is usually one sentence
- is a statement, not a question
- identifies the subject of the paper
- takes a stand rather than simply announcing a subject

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Is science essential to all future human development?
Make reference to three units studied this semester to
support your answer with specific evidence.

Example Thesis:

Science is essential for future human development because it will save our planet by establishing renewable sources for electricity, ways to repair environmental degradation, and the creation new eco-friendly compounds.

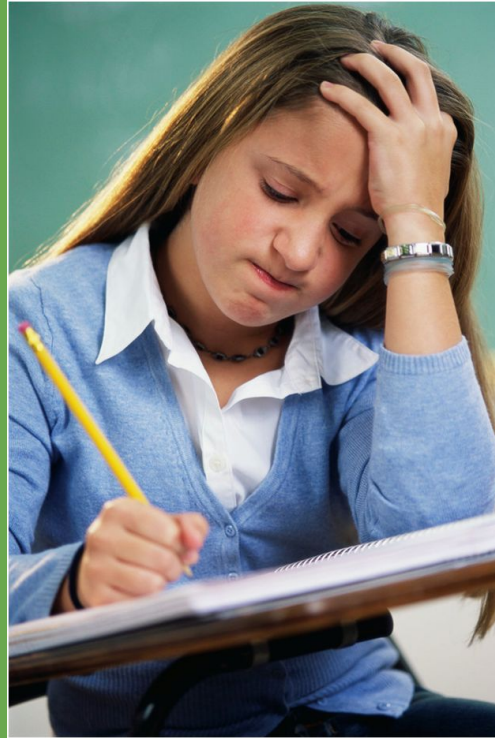
Rule #2 - Make a plan

Make a rough plan or outline of your paragraphs. Even if no marks are assigned for the outline, this is a very worthwhile exercise.

Sample:

Thesis:	
Arguments:	Evidence to support your argument.
1)	
2)	
3)	

Writing an essay question without a plan...



Writing an essay question with a plan...



Thesis: *Science is essential for future human development because it will save our planet by establishing renewable sources for electricity, ways to repair environmental degradation, and the creation new eco-friendly compounds.*

Arguments:	Evidence to support your argument
1) renewable sources for electricity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● solar● wind● geothermal
2) prevent environmental degradation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● planting biodiverse forests● crop rotation● no-till farming
3) eco-friendly compounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● biodegradable plastics● eco-friendly gases (ethanal)● solvents that break up oil spills

Rule #3 - The Introduction

Write a good introductory paragraph.

Steps for writing a good introduction

1. Do not recopy or restate the question. You **CAN use keywords** from the question in your answer/thesis. This will help you to be sure you have addressed exactly what the question asks.

Is science **essential** to all **future human development**?
Make reference to three units studied this semester to support your answer with specific evidence.

The sample thesis repeats key words:

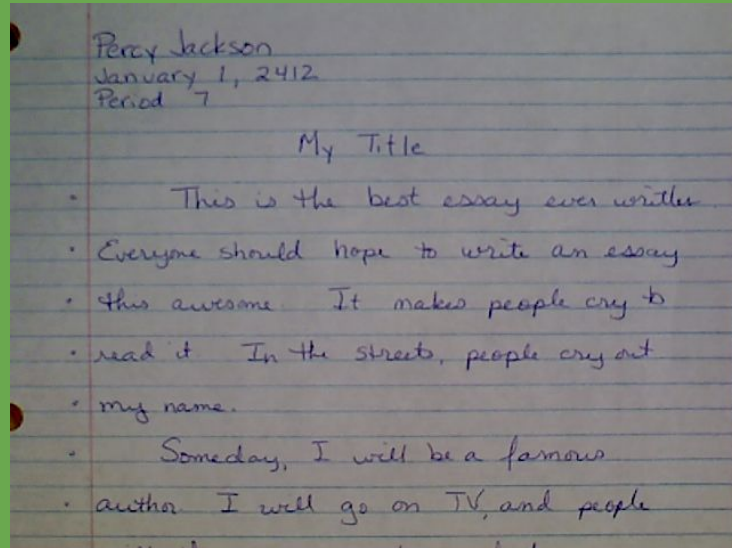
*Science is **essential** for **future human development** because it will save our planet by establishing renewable sources for electricity, ways to repair environmental degradation, and the creation new eco-friendly compounds.*

2. Use the introductory paragraph to **state your position**, alert the reader to your argument and to **indicate your plan of attack**. Turn the point form notes from the plan into sentences, and you'll have covered all the bases.

3. Avoid the use of “I” statements in the introductory paragraph. Writing in 3rd person is more formal, and more authoritative.



Tip: When you begin writing the essay, *DOUBLE SPACE!*
This will leave room for you to make changes or add details if necessary.



Rule #4 - The Body Paragraphs

Steps for the body paragraphs

1. One paragraph will be written to develop each point of evidence in support of the argument or idea.
2. Each paragraph will contain a **topic sentence** and its **supporting evidence**. This is where you demonstrate to your teacher that you have learned the course content so **be specific with your evidence**.

Rule #5 - Precise Evidence

Use precise evidence and be certain that it supports your argument.

Steps for including precise evidence

1. Use factual evidence (names of people, important events and dates etc.)

2. Select evidence that is **most suitable** to your argument. Do not just write whatever comes into your mind. Just because the information was covered in class does not mean it answers the question that was asked on the exam.



Rule #6 - The Conclusion

Write a brief conclusion.

Steps for a strong conclusion

1. **Do not repeat** your exact argument from the introduction.
2. Try to **state your position in a different way** in order to **pull together** the major threads of your argument.

3. Conclude your essay with a **brief summary** of your argument.



Rule #7 - Proofread

Proofreading is an essential part of essay writing.

Steps for proofreading your essay

1. **Slowly re-read** your work. Be sure that what is on the page is what you meant to say.
2. If changes need to be made, cross out errors. Do not worry about “liquid paper”.
3. If you need to add details, use an arrow and the blank line above or below to add the additional information.

When writing hastily for a timed exam, it is easy to say “Tom Robinson is treated fairly by the court system in Maycomb, Alabama”, when you meant to say, “Tom Robinson is NOT treated fairly...”

The missing word, entirely changes the meaning of your statement, and shifts all of your evidence from being in line with the thesis to being contradictory to the thesis.





That's all Folks!
Any Question?