

# In-Class Essay Exams

## **In-Class Essay Exams**

• These are timed exams that are given in a classroom environment. They typically ask you to answer questions from a given prompt.

## How do I prepare?

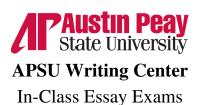
- Actively attend lectures and take notes.
- Review notes and look for connections between concepts.
- Gather information on the essay type. (compare and contrast, persuasive, argumentative, etc.)
- Brainstorm sample prompts based on course themes.
- Review previous writing feedback to determine what your instructor expects.
- Make sure to take some time to rest to avoid burnout.

#### **During the Exam**

- Remember to breathe and affirm yourself that you are capable of success.
- Budget your time.
  - Example: if given 75 minutes: spend 15 min planning, 50 min writing, and 10 minutes to review.
  - Example: if given 50 minutes: spend 3.5 min evaluating prompt, 3.5 min brainstorming, 8 min making a outline, 30 min writing, and 5 min proofreading.
- Read the prompt carefully and look for keywords.
- Narrow your topic down and develop a thesis statement.
- Provide a preview of how you will arrange your essay.
- Put ideas in a logical order by including topic sentences and transitions.

## **Exam Question Keywords** (from GMU Writing Center)

- **Analyze:** Break a topic into its parts. Identify the parts and demonstrate how they relate to each other to make the whole.
- **Compare:** Give detailed similarities and differences between two ideas and tell why these similarities or differences are important or significant to overall meaning.
- **Define:** Tell what a concept/thing/event is and what it is not. Place it in a general class or group, and then explain how it is different from other members of that class or group.
- **Discuss/Examine:** The most vague of directions, this asks you to find relationships between ideas, evaluate situations, and/or interpret statements.
- Evaluate/Assess: Make a judgment about something; this leaves room for you to present more than one view on a position.
- **Explain:** Find a relationship between things, and explain how and why this relationship works.
- Illustrate: Use details/examples to show relationships between things.
- Interpret: Translate what something means or explain what an author means.
- Outline/Trace/Review: Organize main and subordinate points to classify the elements or stages of development of a concept/thing/event.
- **Prove:** Declare a point of view about a topic; then give reasons for believing it.



#### References

- Illinois Writers Workshop. (n.d.). *In-Class Essay Exams*. Illinois.edu. Retrieved from https://writersworkshop.illinois.edu/resources-2/writer-resources/academic-writing/in-class-essay-exams/
- George Mason University Writing Center. (n.d.). *Taking In-Class Essay Exams*. George Mason University. Retrieved from https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources/different-genres/taking-in-class-essay-exams
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