

Essay Test-Taking Strategy

Step 1: **A**nalyze the Action Words

Step 2: **N**otice the Requirements

Step 3: **S**et Up an Outline

Step 4: **W**ork in Details

Step 5: **E**ngineer Your Answer

Step 6: **R**everview Your Answer

Parts of an Outline

- Main Ideas
- Details
- Numbers

Examples of Introductory Paragraphs for Essay Answers

Question 1: Explain at least four reasons why people have difficulty remembering information.

People have difficulty remembering information for a variety of reasons. These reasons include lack of motivation, too much new information has been presented, information has been presented too fast, and people do not use memory strategies.

Question 2: Describe three factors or issues that led to the Civil War.

The Civil War was caused by three major factors. First, the Northerners and Southerners disagreed over the issue of slavery. Second, the nature of their land led to economic differences between them. Third, they had different cultures.

Question 3: What are the major functions of the three branches of government?

The three branches of the federal government have separate responsibilities. These branches are the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Responsibilities for each relate to particular powers for governing citizens.

Sample Essay Question for Demonstration and Guided Practice

Define “natural resources” and list several examples. Select the natural resource you think is the most precious. Justify your answer.

Step 1:

Analyze the Action Words

- Read the question carefully
- Underline key action words

Step 3:

Set Up an Outline

- List main ideas
- Leave space underneath each main idea

Cue Card #13

Example of an Outline

What are the major functions of the three branches of government?

- I. Exec. branch: Pres.
 1. can declare war
 2. starts legislation
 3. appt judges
 4. can veto legis.
- II. Jud. Branch: Sup. Crt.
 1. decides if laws are const.
 2. hears leg. cases from low. cts.
- III. Legis. branch
 - A. Hse. of Rep.
 1. proposes legis.
 2. accuses in impeach. cases
 3. passes legis.
 4. overrides pres. Veto
 - B. Senate
 1. pass legis.
 2. confirm pres. Appoint.
 3. try impeach. Cases
 4. overrides pres. veto

Examples of Key Action Words

COMPARE: To show how two or more things are the same or similar. *"Compare rap and hip-hop."*

CONTRAST: To show how two or more things are different. *"Contrast socialism and capitalism."*

CRITIQUE/CRITICIZE: To point out both the good points and bad points of something. *"Critique the public welfare system."*

DEFINE: To give a clear meaning of something. This usually involves naming the class it belongs to and how it is different from other things in that class. *"Define the term 'mammal'."*

DESCRIBE: To provide a "word picture" of something. *"Describe the events related to the Alamo."*

DIAGRAM: To organize information in a pictorial or graphic manner such as a chart, table, map, or diagram. *"Diagram the water cycle."*

Step 4: Work in Details

- Indent details under main ideas
- Add numbers

Parts of a Detail Paragraph for Essay Answers

- Topic Sentence
- Detail Sentences

Cue Card #5

Example Essay Questions

- Describe the inside of the eye. Be sure to include all five major parts in your description.
- List at least three types of pollution. Select one of the types and describe it.
- Choose two literary styles and contrast them.
- Are you warm-blooded or cold-blooded? Explain what that means?
- Select one of the following simple machines (pulley, lever, or wheel), and write how you would explain it to a first-grade student.
- Consider these two contrasting statements: "Look before you leap" and "He who hesitates is lost." Select the one you believe to generally be the best advice. Persuade the reader by using an example from your own life as well as an example from historical or current events.

Cue Card #15

Example Detail Paragraph

Question: What are the major functions of the three branches of government?

The three branches of the federal government have separate responsibilities. These branches are the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Responsibilities for each relate to particular powers for governing citizens.

The executive branch, which is headed by the President of the United States, has many different responsibilities and powers. One of the President's most important powers is the ability to declare war on another country although he must have the Senate's approval to do this. The President also has a lot of legislative authority. He can propose any law that he thinks the country needs. He can approve laws made by Congress, or he can veto any law that he does not like. The President is also able to appoint Supreme Court judges, ambassadors, and other top-ranking officers of the federal government. He supervises the members of his Cabinet who run the various departments of the federal government.

Cue Card #10

General Rules for Abbreviations

Rule 1: Use typical abbreviations

Example: + for "and"

w/ for "with"

w/o for "without"

Rule 2: Omit vowels

Example: Lgsltr for "legislature"

Rule 3: Use initials

Example: B.O.G. for "Branches of Government"

Rule 4: Use first two or three letters

Example: Eng. for "English"

Step 2:

Notice the Requirements

- Scan and mark
- Change it into your own words
- Arrange the times
- Name your goal

Step 5:

Engineer Your Answer

- Write an Introductory Paragraph (or sentences)
- Write a Detail Paragraph (or a sentence) about each main idea

Step 6:

Review Your Answer

- Check that all parts of the question are answered
- Check that outlined items are included
- Polish your answer