

# Essay Tests

Develop a strategy for approaching essay tests.

**First, read all the questions**, notice the point value for each question.

**Budget your time**, make sure to answer the questions with the highest point values.

**Underline directional words** such as **list**, **contrast**, and **summarize** to be sure your answers are in the required form. Budget 5-10% of your time organizing your ideas before writing.

**Write down key words** that immediately come to mind. Use the margin or scrap paper to jot down main points.

Finally, write an organized essay, containing an introduction, supporting paragraphs, and a summary. Avoid irrelevant details.

## **Points regarding style:**

- **Write legibly.** Grading essay questions is, in large part, a subjective process. Sloppy, difficult to read handwriting may actually lower your grade.
- **Be concise.** Avoid filler sentences that say nothing. Write as if you expect the person grading your test to be tired and overworked.
- **Use a pen.** Much easier to read than a pencil.
- **Write on one side of the paper.** Writing on the back page will show through and be difficult to read.