Essay Exams
Getting the Most for Your Answers

Practicing College Learning Strategies
Carolyn H. Hopper
Your Checklist

Do I really understand what the question asks me to do?
Have I done preliminary planning of my major points?
From reading the first sentence of my answer, does the reader know both what the question is and how I will develop my answer?
So the first 3 steps are

Analyze the task.
*What does this involve? Make a list of everything you need to do in order to understand what the question requires of you.*

Decided what your major points are.
*Describes some ways that you can determine what major points are needed to answer the question.*

Write the first sentence to your answer.
*What is the test for your first sentence?*
Next on the Checklist

Do major points stand out?
Are my major points supported with examples and facts?
   Are there clear transitions between major points?
OK, so you start to write your answer using your first sentence as your guide.

List some ways to make your major points stand out.
Describes some specific ways to support the major points.
List some transitions that you might use to guide the reader in understanding where one major point ends another begins.
Back to the **Checklist**

Would someone who had not taken this class be able to understand my answer?

Have I completely covered all major points?

Did I stick to the question?
You have written your answer

You want to check to make sure you have written enough and that it makes sense.

Explain why asking *if someone who had not taken the class would understand your answer* is a good check.

Explain how you determine how many major points your need.

Give some examples why the reader might think you did not stick to the point.
Have I concluded with a summary statement?
That was the last step in actually **composing** your answer.

Explain the purpose of concluding with a **summary** statement.
Explain how you know what to put in the summary statement?
Last 2 things on the Checklist

Did I proofread for misspelled words, sentence fragments, run-on sentences, comma splices, subject/verb or pronoun/antecedent agreement errors, and other errors which might confuse the reader?

Is my handwriting readable, and have I left enough space for comments or additions?
The composing is done. Now you need to proof read and edit.

Explain why essays written under test taking conditions are likely to have more errors than an assignment involving a written essay answers.

Make a list of your most common mistakes. (You can use them at a starting point for proofing your answer.)

Other than “college students are expected to write grammatically correct answers,” list other reasons for proof reading and editing your answer.
Handwriting?

List some things you should do to ensure that the grader can read your answer if your handwriting is REALLY BAD.

Food For Thought.
Do you think that a grader is influenced by a student’s handwriting?
There are 12 Questions on the Checklist. How many can you list?

Number your paper and try to think of the questions to ask by recreating the process of writing your answer.
To check your list

You can review the presentation from the beginning.