

After You Write

- **Read** your answers, and in the spaces that you have left, make any additions that are necessary for clarity and completeness.
- **Check** your responses for errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Below, some of the most commonly confused homonyms are defined and used correctly.
 1. **Than:** comparison →→→ **Then:** time
The North had more soldiers in the battle **than** the South. If the South had more soldiers, **then** they would have won.
 2. **There:** a place →→→ **Their:** ownership
There is no way to be sure of the outcome.
Their efforts paid off in higher wages.
 3. **Its:** ownership →→→→→ **It's:** it is
Since the law is new, no one can be sure of **its** results. **It's** all we can do to hope for success.
 4. **Effect:** a result →→→ **Affect:** to change
The **effect** of the legislation was far reaching.
These laws **affect** minors in all fifty states.
 5. **Since:** as a result of →→ **Sense:** thinking
Since he was new, no one knew his skills.
People with good **sense** can see the outcome.
- **Analyze** essays that have been returned to you. Read all comments and suggestions. Be sure you understand the grader's criticisms. Write out any questions that you have so that you can discuss them with your grader. Be tactful yet assertive; you need to understand your grader's expectations.
- **Determine** where your weaknesses lie. Reorganize your study approach on the basis of your evaluation of your weaknesses. Ask yourself how you would have had to prepare to do well on this test. Then develop a plan that incorporates these insights. Finally, get help if you need assistance.

Answering Essay Questions



Many instructors use essay exams to evaluate students' abilities and knowledge. Many students find essay questions daunting. Here are a few tips about what you can do *before*, *during*, and *after* you write an answer to an essay question.

Before You Write

- Before answering any questions, look over all of the questions on the test and judge which ones will be easy for you to complete and which will take more time.
- Budget your time according to the point value of each question; allow time for proofreading and questions that may take longer than expected.
- Begin with the question that seems easiest to you. This procedure reduces anxiety because you will have successfully completed the answers about which you feel most confident.
- Read a question slowly, underlining key words and making sure you understand what you are being asked.
- As you read each question, jot down any ideas that come to mind. These will be the beginning of a more organized answer.
- Number the ideas you jotted down in the order you want to present them, discriminating between main issues and supporting details.

Understand These Terms *before* You Write

Study the following terms thoroughly, for understanding these terms before you write is essential to success on essay questions:

- **Analyze**—Break into separate parts and discuss, examine, or interpret each part.
- **Compare**—Examine two or several items, identifying more similarities than differences.
- **Contrast**—Examine two or more elements and show how they differ.
- **Criticize**—Make judgments by evaluating the worth of an idea.
- **Describe**—Give a detailed account by making a word picture of characteristics, qualities, and parts.
- **Discuss**—Consider and describe the positive and negative features of an issue.
- **Evaluate**—Give your opinion, but base your ideas on the evidence.
- **Illustrate**—Present concrete, clear examples.
- **Interpret**—Explain the meaning of material or an event.
- **Outline**—List in sequence the main ideas, characteristics, or events.
- **Prove**—Support with facts, especially those presented in class lectures or in class texts.
- **State**—Declare in precise words.
- **Summarize**—Give a brief, condensed account, avoiding any unnecessary details and opinion.
- **Trace**—Show the order of events or progress of a subject.

During Your Writing

- State the thesis or main point in your first few sentences so your professor will see this part of the answer right away. Use clear statements that directly answer the question.
- Follow your outline by making main points that are supported with specific, concrete details and relevant examples.
- Write legibly so your professor can read your answer easily. Leave space for additions to your answer by writing on every other line or on one side of each page.
- When you reach the end of your allotted time period for a question, move on to the next item. Partially answering all the questions is better than leaving some blank, which will surely get no credit.
- If you find yourself out of time on a question, but have more to say, quickly write on your test answer sheet an outline of what you would have written. Perhaps you will get partial credit for the outline.
- If you don't know much about a question, relax and brainstorm on the topic for a few moments. Recall pages from your texts, particular lectures, and class discussions to trigger your memory about ideas relevant to the question. Write these ideas down as coherently as you can.
- If your mind goes blank, try to relax. Take some slow, deep breaths, and, just for a moment, think about something pleasant that is unrelated to the test. Then let your mind recall ideas through association. If you cannot think of any ideas, redirect your attention to a different question and come back to this one later.