



Test Taking

Subjective Tests

Subjective exams ask you to write answers rather than choose from a set of possible answers; answering them is much like writing short papers on assigned topics. The information below provides you with information about the words instructors use in essay questions. It also provides guides for answering them.

Subjective Test Taking Tips

READ directions and ALL questions carefully before beginning the test	Do you have to answer all the questions or do you have choices?
Examine each question and look for directional words	Its wording indicates how you should organize and write your answer. Some questions feature a combination of organizational patterns rather than a single type.
Budget your time	Plan to spend more time on questions with higher point values.
Choose a title	Even though you won't necessarily title your paper, a title helps you focus your thoughts and narrow your subject.
Outline or map your response before you write	This listing of main points keeps you from omitting details and helps trigger your memory.
Have a beginning, middle, and end	Topic and summary sentences make your answer seem organized and complete. Think in threes: three paragraphs, three sentences, etc.
Use transitional words	The key words in each question help you identify the transitions you need for clarity such as next, finally, meanwhile, soon, in addition, also, too, as well as, in comparison, comparatively, etc.
Use space wisely	Don't skip lines between sentences or only use the fronts of pages.
Use appropriate grammar and language	Don't abbreviate words by using symbols and don't use slang terminology. You may lose points.
If you run out of time, outline the remaining questions	This shows your knowledge of the content, if not your writing style. Partial responses often result in partial credit.
Proofread your answers	Check spelling, grammar, and content.
If a question confuses you, write any thoughts you have about the topic on the back of your paper	This helps you focus attention and increases recall.

Adapted from Study Methods and Reading Techniques, Rhonda Atkinson and Debbie Longman, West Publishing.