

Preparing for an In-Class Essay

- Put the thesis (often the answer to the test question) up front.
- Use topic sentences at the beginning of each new section or paragraph.
- Use the back of the test or tear out the center sheet for scratch paper.
- Don't worry about the audience: it's your instructor—but be sure to read the question carefully so that you answer all parts.
- Prewrite your answer briefly—using shorthand, abbreviations:
 - clear thesis statement
 - specific and accurate evidence
- Organize your prewrite using numbers, lines, and so on. Cross out unnecessary info.
- Write out the essay:
 - skip lines unless required not to
 - leave a couple of lines at bottoms of pages in case you think of something extra
- Revise if you have time at the end:
 - don't rewrite the whole thing unless you really have a lot of time left
 - use lines, arrows, numbers for any additions or rearrangements—make sure whatever system you use is clear (It might be a good idea to ask your instructor.)

Where you have leeway (only if the errors are not distracting):

Spelling errors
Small grammar errors
Slight punctuation errors

Where you don't have leeway:

No thesis
Off topic statements
Unsupported points, vague generalizations
Repeated ideas
Incomplete sentences
Poor logic
Confusing organization or transitions