

## ESSAY QUESTIONS



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### Time

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- Managing your time here is important
- Be aware of how many questions you need to answer and how long you have to answer them
- Writing shorter, less complete answers for each question will likely yield better results (mark wise) than leaving a question blank

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### Know What is Being Asked of You

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- Comparing the ideas of Nietzsche and Descartes is different than explaining them
- Understand the question you're meant to answer
- These are the "mental action" verbs in the question
- They point to the type of thinking your instructor wants from you
- Don't lose marks for comparing when you should have been explaining
- Look at the WORDS TO WATCH FOR handout for definitions on the types of "mental actions" you might be asked on a test or exam

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### Make an Outline

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- This is no different than an outline you'd make for any other essay
- You are less likely to forget important points
- And it allows you to organize these points into a sequence that flows
- Being organized also reduces the stress of trying to figure out what you will write about
- It's there, all you need to do is expand
- And if you run out of time, you may get marks for your outline as it shows your instructor how you planned to answer the question

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**Be to the Point**

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- Don't waste time on fluffy introductions
- Begin your essay by answering the question
- Your instructor should know your views after the first sentence
- Do not waste time with filler sentences
- You only have so much time to write
- Every sentence should help you answer the question

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**Support Your Arguments**

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- An essay question on a test or exam is no different than one you would write to hand into your instructor
- You still need evidence and examples to support the arguments you are trying to make

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**Be Detailed**

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- Do not assume your instructor knows what you're talking about
- Assume they know nothing
- It is better to over-explain, than under-explain an answer

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**Keep that Answer Tidy**

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- Make things easy on your instructor
- Write neatly
- Double-space your answer
- And write only on one side of the paper (your writing can bleed through the other side, making it harder to read)
- Marking your answer is a subjective process, and you don't want to lose marks because your instructor could not read your answer
- And by leaving space, you can go back and add information you missed
- You could also use the margins, but this can get messy

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**Proofread**

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- If you have time, read over your answer and fix any spelling, grammar or punctuation errors
- Look out for poorly supported key points and poorly phrased sentences
- You put the work in, polish it off!

Carter, Carol, Joyce Bishop, Sarah Lyman Kravits. *Keys to Effective Learning*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1998.

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Ellis, Dave. *Becoming a Master Student*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006.