



higher education
& training

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Exam preparation and answering of question papers

WRITING EXAM TIPS.

➤ **Plan to peak for test**

- Reach for your ultimate preparation and alertness for the exam time.
- Focus and supercharge your mind.
- Get some sleep.
- Have something to eat before you leave home.
- Remember the main points of your notes.

➤ **Maximize your short memory**

- Be at the exam venue at-least 45 minutes before the exam begins.
- Review crucial facts and info in the minutes while you are waiting for the exam room to open up.
- Use memory tricks to help you to remember the facts.
- Recall and write that info immediately when the exam starts.

➤ **Answering the question paper.**

- Check that you have the correct question paper for the subject and grade you are writing.
- Read the instructions for each section and make sure you understand it.
- Take note of the mark allocation and the time given to answer the question paper.
- Divide the time by the number of sections or questions you have to answer so you know how long to spend on a section unless you have to answer all questions.
- Always leave time at the end so you are able to go through the paper.
- Begin by skimming the question paper as quickly as possible and note any initial thoughts beside each question.
- Read each question carefully, understand and underline the key word in pencil.
- Is it a one or two part question? Use a vertical pencil line to separate the parts.
- Answer the questions you know best first.
- If you are unsure about the answer of a question – take a deep breath, relax and try to accept the fact that it is only one question.
- If you are taking too long to answer a question – skip the question and carry on with the next question, but leave enough space to complete the question if you have time at the end of the exam. Rule of thumb is leave a line for every mark allocated ie two marks = 2 lines / four marks= 4 lines etc.
- Write something down for every question-do not leave a blank
- Spend more time on heavier weighted question.
- If you run out of time, answer in point form instead of complete sentences.
- Use the back of the question paper and jot down a quick out line/ spider web-put a line through when finished.
- On true/false and multiple questions, always take a guess if there is not penalty for wrong answers.
- If you draw a “blank” do not panic. Ask yourself what you need to know to answer the question.
- Take time to go over the exam and check your answers. Do not change anything unless you are 100% sure.
- Make sure you have answered everything that has been asked.
- **Stay until the end** – sometimes it takes a little time for the information to “surface”, so use all the time you are given.

TEST/EXAMINATION TERMINOLOGY

The following verbs often appear in the test and examination questions:

Verb	Meaning
Analyse	Break the material down to its main components and discuss them and their relations to each other.
Assess	Estimate the worth (value) of certain definitions, concept, ideas, arguments and actions.
Comment	Discuss, criticise and explain in detail.
Compare	Identify similarities and differences between facts or examine the differences between phenomena, structures, ideas, viewpoint, influences, et cetera.
Compile	Collect and put together information collected from various sources.
Contrast	Point out the differences between certain objects or characteristics.
Criticise	Point out the positive and negative characteristics, and give your own opinion after taking all the facts into account.
Debate	Discuss the topic from various viewpoints, giving the arguments in favour of and against each viewpoint.
Define/give a definition	Distinguish precisely and accurately what is necessary from what is not.
Describe	Give a detailed, logical and well-structured account of topic, mentioning characteristics, components, structures, et cetera.
Discuss	Write in detail, using a critical approach in favour for and against the statement (agreement with statement in question not necessary)
Distinguish	Note the differences between characteristics of two objects.
Evaluate/give an evaluation	Discuss the worth, truth and importance of a statement, using certain standards or criteria as a basis – using your own ideas and those of others.
Examine	Discuss a topic critically using specified criteria or guidelines.
Explain	Interpret and clarify, with reasons – illustrations, descriptions or simple, logical explanations can also be used.
Formulate	Draw up a definite and systematic statement.
Give	Note only the facts without any discussion.
Identify	Name the most important characteristics, phenomena or topics.

Illustrate	Give concrete examples and comparisons.
Indicate (how)	Point out, show or state.
Interpret	Explain or give the meaning using your own ideas and giving examples.
Investigate	Examine systematically and in detail.
Justify	Give arguments to support a specific viewpoint.
List	Give a list/catalogue/register of names, facts, items, characteristics, methods, et cetera in a specific order or category.
Mention	Indicate or show.
Name	Give the names, characteristics, items or facts.
Outline	Give a summary, with the main points presented in a brief, logical and systemic manner.
Pay attention to	Topics which should be included – indication of focus.
Place in context	Discuss something in relation to its surroundings.
Point out	Show or indicate.
Refer to	Topics which should be included – indication of focus.
Relate	Indicate links/connections between facts of concepts.
Show	Indicate.
Substantiate	Give arguments to support a specific viewpoint.
Summaries/give a summary	Give the key aspects of a topic.
State	Give a precise description of most important aspects of topic.
Write down	List, mention.

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