Prepare for Essay Exams

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Learn to recall information from your memory bank for essay exams, rather than recognize information as you would for objective tests.

1. Prepare a study schedule a week before the test
2. Organize and reduce your class notes and reading notes
3. Make study notes on each topic
4. Memorize your notes and review them
5. Predict questions that may be on the test
6. Make your own essay exam questions from your study notes
7. Outline your own answers to the questions
8. Practice writing an essay within the given time limits

Practice making your own Essay questions
Practice making and answering your own essay questions either alone or with study partners. There are five major types of questions. Each type of question has its "key terms" that help the student answer it.

Identify questions. These questions ask you for the bare facts only, to give a name, a date, or a phrase.

Key terms: list, identify, classify, give an example, briefly define, name, state.
Ex: List the five key terms used for making up essay questions.

Describe questions. These questions ask you to tell about the topic using a certain amount of detail.

Key terms: describe, discuss, summarize, outline, trace, review.
Ex: Summarize the usage of the five key terms used for making up essay questions.

Relate questions. These questions ask you to describe the relationships between two or more topics.

Key terms: compare, contrast, distinguish between, compare and contrast.
Ex: Compare and contrast the differences between the five key terms used for making up essay questions.

Demonstrate questions. These questions ask you to show, not tell, why something is true or false. You must make arguments and give evidence, and your answer will be essay length.

Key terms: analyze, demonstrate, explain, interpret, discuss, justify, prove, show.
Ex: Explain why it is important to understand key terms when taking essay tests.

Evaluate questions. These questions ask for your judgment or opinion on the topic. You must justify and support your stand in a logical, consistent manner.

Key terms: evaluate, assess, criticize, interpret, give your opinion, justify, defend.
Ex: Evaluate your ability to use key terms while taking an essay test.