

Timed Writings

1. Practice, practice, practice under similar conditions.
2. Make sure you know the details of the exam (How long will you have? Can you use notes? Does your professor prefer pen or pencil? Should you have a blue book? Should you skip lines in the blue book? Should the blue book be large or small? Should you write on the back?).
3. Relax, eat well, go to the restroom, and be prepared.
4. Wear comfortable clothes, bring a bottle of water, and wear a watch.
5. Have your materials ready to go – get to class a little bit early.
6. Pay attention to where you sit. It matters!
7. Be wary of relying too much on notes if they are allowed.
8. Read the prompt carefully. Circle VERBS such as describe, analyze, and compare. These words tell you what to do. Underline nouns such as paragraph, sentence, and essay. These give you details on the expectations.
9. Choices – choose one and go with it! Don't go back and change your mind later.
10. Outline and plan – you owe it to yourself to do this!
11. Write as neatly as you can. Your instructor can't accurately grade something they can't read.
12. Use an effective opening that grabs the reader's attention, overviews the topic, and has a strong and effective thesis statement. Use your outline to write this! Remember your thesis should "answer" the prompt given by your instructor.
13. If you are given the topics prior to the exam, craft a thesis statement ahead of time. You can memorize this and it serves as an outline to the larger paper.
14. Back up your points with specific information, examples, or quotations from your readings and notes; in other words, use details. Be precise and show important details that demonstrate your knowledge. Use quotes or paraphrases appropriately when referring to a particular reading.
15. Plan to write an appropriate number of body paragraphs for the amount of time allotted. Each paragraph should use transitional words and cover a specific part of your topic. Don't forget topic sentences to move your reader through the essay.

16. Use your outline or thesis statement to keep yourself on track!
17. Omit extraneous material – readers can quickly spot answers that have been padded with irrelevancies. Write a good, concise answer rather than a long, ineffective one.
18. Emphasize your original insights. Make sure your essay is as long as it needs to be to fully answer the prompt and meet the requirements of the assignment.
19. Mastery of grammar, proper punctuation, and correct spelling make a good impression.
20. When concluding, restate your central idea, but don't simply re-list points that you made. Comment more broadly on the significance of your conclusions.
21. Proofread your essay for errors such as misspellings, incomplete words and sentences, and incorrect punctuation. Always allow for a few minutes at the end of your sessions for this final step. By skipping lines as you wrote the initial essay, you can easily cross out errors and use the carrot symbol (^) to signify additions or changes in the blank lines you left behind.
22. If you are using a blue/green book, do not pull pages out of it. If you pull one page out, another page will fall out as well. A large X over a “mistake” page notifies your instructor to not grade that page.
23. Use your full allotment of time. Check your time periodically so that you know if you should speed up a bit.
24. Consider asking the teacher before the exam to provide fifteen and five minute warnings during the exam period for the benefit of the class.
25. Rest, rejoice, and reflect. What have you learned? Will you do better next time?