

## Timed Writing & Essay Exams

Throughout your college career, you will be asked to write essays in examination situations. English 290 wants to prepare you for this experience. Towards the end of term, you will be given practice with timed writing. You will go on to write a timed essay for your portfolio. Most of you will write your timed essay during your group meeting; however, those of you who have been granted special accommodations to compensate for a learning or physical disability may make an appointment to conduct your timed writing through DSPS.

It is quite natural to be nervous about timed writing situations. Your LIA is committed to helping you through this process and providing guidance. In addition, you may find the following tips helpful.

### Tips for Writing a Timed Essay

1. Read the essay question carefully. Circle words you're not sure of and look them up in a dictionary.
2. Decide what type of essay you are being asked for: *narrative*, *expository*, *persuasive*, or a combination of these.
3. Create a strong sentence for the main idea of your essay—this is the thesis statement, which should be in the first paragraph of your essay.
4. Brainstorm: list or cluster to gather ideas
5. Order your points and add details
6. Write the essay.
  - a. each point, or cluster of points, should be a new paragraph.
  - b. keep your sentences active, and avoid run-ons at all costs. It is better to write many simple sentences than to risk run-ons. When in doubt, stop.
  - c. Write legibly, and double-space. Don't let sloppiness count against you.
7. Read over your essay once you have written it. Check for correct spelling, verb tenses, capitals and punctuation. Also make sure that each sentence has a subject and at least one verb. Neatly make any corrections that are necessary.
8. Give your essay a unique title that gives us a sense of your topic.

## Practice In-Class Writing

### Suggestions:

- Always think of your reader first!
- Ask yourself: *How do I write for the audience? Who is my reader? What do all readers want? --Detail Give them a lot of detail!*
- Make sure you answer the entire In-class Essay Question. For example...

**1) Describe one of the most frightening, important or fun-filled day of your life. Include concrete details to clearly convey the events of this day to your reader. Be sure to discuss WHY you have chosen to write about this particular day.**

*Think:* Important Day (only one day).

Details (visualize).

*Show:* day from morning to night.

Include feelings.

Why did I write about that day? Tell.

**2) Some people are neat and organized, others are sloppy and disorganized, and still others are a little bit of both. When you think about how you dress, what your bedroom looks like, or how you balance your finances and complete school assignments, which category do you fall into and why? Include details/stories to illustrate your style.**

*Think:* Sloppy or organized?

Which am I? Choose one.

*Show with details* (clothes, bedroom floor, checkbook, assignments, inside car...)

*Show with a story?*

Why this way? *Reflect.*

Check to make sure that you have answered all parts of the question. Cross out areas that you have answered and circle sections that you missed.

- Always include a conclusion. Even if time is running out, write a conclusion in 5 minutes. Create just one or two sentences to tie your ideas together.
- Leave time to spell check or look words up in the dictionary.
- Revise for remaining time.
- Smile. Breathe. Relax.