

How to Conquer the Timed Essay Test!

Five Thinking Mistakes You DON'T Want to Make (and what to DO instead!)



“Just skim the question. Don’t waste time reading it. Save time wherever you can!”

NO! Do this:

Take the time to read the question carefully (even if your neighbors are already type-type-typing as fast as they can). This is your calm before the storm: Circle key words and think about how you might restate those words in your essay.

“Start writing as fast as you can, even if you have no idea what your so-called ‘thesis statement’ and ‘supporting details’ are going to be. You’ll figure it out eventually!”

NO! Do this:

Think of it as an episode of *The Amazing Race*. You need a game plan or you’ll undoubtedly get lost along the way. That’s why it’s worth the time to make an outline before you begin. It doesn’t have to be fancy—just a few bullet points can help pull you through to the finish line.

“Stop looking at the clock. It’ll just make you nervous.”

NO! Do this:

While a time check might give you the queasies, so will the “pencils down” announcement when you’re only halfway through your essay. Keep a loose plan for your time in mind, e.g., 5 minutes for your introduction, 30 minutes for the argument, 10 minutes for the conclusion and 5 minutes for proofreading.

“Keep it general. You don’t want to sound too opinionated.”

NO! Do this:

As long as you have a strong topic sentence and provide evidence to support it, you’re golden. In fact, teachers generally LOVE ideas they’ve never heard before, so if you’ve got a different outlook and supporting evidence, go for it!

“If you finish early, pat yourself on the back and leave. You’ve got this!”

NO! Do this:

While it’s super-tempting to get that test out of your hands, taking the time to proofread your essay for grammar, missing words and proper punctuation could help your essay score. Keep in mind that it’s not a race to the hallway! Slow down and do your best.

