

# AT THE EXAM

## LET THE EXAM WORK FOR YOU!

- A. Listen to all of the instructor's instructions carefully. Do not look at the exam unless the instructor calls your attention to something specific.
- B. As soon as the time begins, write down any formulas, focus hints, definitions, mnemonics, or key words you fear you'll forget.
- C. Do not begin as soon as you get your exam! Read over the entire exam first for many reasons.
  - 1. To see time allotments and/or point values to get as many ideas as you can for attack strategies
  - 2. To get an overview of the entire exam to determine further strategies.
  - 3. Your mind works on answers to upcoming questions unconsciously while you are working on others.
  - 4. As you read through, check to see if any questions answer or confirm your thinking about others.
- D. **THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT TIP IN THIS PACKET!** Choose first to work on questions to which you absolutely know the answers and are comfortable with the material in order to allow you to lower your anxiety level, relax, and to find your rhythm. This will allow your mind to work at peak capacity. As long as you label your answers clearly, your teacher will not mind.
- E. Next, work on questions for which you know the answers and which are worth the most points. Remember – it does no good to get bogged down and frustrated over a two-point grammar question for 15 minutes when you still have a 60-point essay to do. Skip over trouble spots and go back to them at the end if you have time. Always get the points you know first!
- F. Choose which areas you need to return to by your confidence in your knowledge and by the possible points to be derived from each.
- G. Don't go off on tangents, especially on essay questions.
  - 1. Check your answers periodically to make sure you are answering the question asked.
  - 2. Incorporate the actual words or phrases used in the question into your answers to help maintain your focus.

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- H. To write a good essay, the more time you spend on writing notes or outlining before you actually take to putting your answers to paper, the more direct your answer will be. Teachers look for clarity of thought and economy of expression. Many study programs recommend up to 50% of the time spent on any essay question be focused on understanding the question, and any specific hints the instructor provides to help you frame your answer. Pay attention to key words in the instructions like “list,” “describe,” “compare and contrast,” and “outline.” They each are asking for very different writing patterns.
- I. Your opening statement, or the concluding sentence of your first paragraph summarizes the point you will be making. It is your “thesis.” What follows should support or prove your statement. The first sentence of almost every paragraph states the point the paragraph is trying to make. The first sentence in your conclusion should restate the opening “thesis,” and put the argument you have just made into the larger context of the world at large. It answers the question, “So what?”
  2. Penmanship is important if word processing is not offered. Research has shown that the same essay written neatly is graded one full letter grade higher than the same answer written sloppily. If your writing is more legible when you print, do so by all means.
- I. If you have time at the end of the test/exam, use it to go back over your work. Read the questions again and then check your answers to make sure that you have answered the question asked, and that your work is accurate and complete.