

TOP TEN TIPS FOR TIMED WRITINGS



- 1. UNDERSTAND THE PROMPT AND STAY ON TOPIC:** Before you begin planning your essay, make sure that you understand the prompt on which you are going to write. Try to pick the topic that you can identify with best, and remember to stay focused on that topic. Do not write about a topic other than the one specified in the prompt.

- 2. KEEP TRACK OF TIME:** Since you will have only 50 minutes to write your essay, you must manage your time wisely. Here is a suggested way to divide your time during the essay:
 - a. **7-10 minutes to brainstorm ideas**
 - b. **30 – 35 minutes to draft your essay**
 - c. **10 minutes to carefully proofread**

- 3. ORGANIZE YOUR IDEAS:** As stated above, it is a good idea to spend at least seven – ten minutes planning your essay. It would be helpful if you could write out your thesis and jot down good, specific examples to support that thesis. Think about how you can best arrange your main points and supporting details. Since you cannot start a new essay halfway through the class period, it is essential that you take time in the beginning to create an effective plan. This plan will not only help you while you draft, but also help you stay on topic.

- 4. USE SPECIFIC DETAILS TO SUPPORT YOUR THESIS:** Not providing specific details to support the thesis of your essay will lower your score – sometimes significantly! Begin each paragraph with a good topic sentence and provide specific details, such as anecdotes (personal stories), facts, examples, quotations, and illustrations/descriptions, to keep your reader engaged and to help him/her better understand your reasoning.

- 5. USE APPROPRIATE TRANSITIONS TO CONNECT IDEAS:** Transitional words and phrases help your reader move smoothly from one idea to the next. Remember to use logical transitions to connect your ideas within and between paragraphs.

- 6. DON'T SPEND TOO MUCH TIME ON YOUR INTRODUCTION AND YOUR CONCLUSION:** While having a catchy introduction can positively influence your reader, the main thing to remember is that your introduction should introduce your topic and state your thesis. The conclusion should wrap up the essay in some way. Try to avoid an abrupt ending. Remember that the conclusion is the last part of the essay the grader will read – the final impression he or she has of your essay.

- 7. AVOIDING GRAMMAR ERRORS:** Everyone makes an occasional error while writing a first draft. However, errors that interfere with the reader's understanding of your essay and repeated errors that distract the reader will both cause your score to suffer. An essay that confuses the reader will not likely pass.

- 8. MAKE SURE YOUR ESSAY IS NEAT AND EASY TO READ:** If you are handwriting your essay, make sure your handwriting is neat and not difficult to read. If you are typing your essay, make sure you use a standard font (like Times New Roman) and a standard font size. (12-point font is recommended.) If your essay is sloppy, then it will be more difficult for the reader to understand and enjoy.

- 9. LEAVE TIME TO PROOFREAD:** Try to save 10 minutes to proofread your essay for errors. Taking the time to proofread your essay for verb tense, missing words, and proper punctuation could make a difference in your score. You should also use this time to check for clarity, organization, and specific examples.

- 10. PRACTICE AT HOME OR IN THE LEARNING COMMONS:** Writing a practice essay is a great way to figure out how to organize your time during the exam. You will also become accustomed to the process of writing an impromptu essay. Ask your instructor or come by the Learning Commons for sample topics and feedback.