

Preparation for essay exams is an active preparation strategy that involves three effective steps:

- ✓ Predicting possible essay questions ✍
- ✓ Planning out the answers 📄
- ✓ Learning the answers 📖

☞ 1. Predict questions

Students should predict broad and challenging questions that cover all important topics dealt with in the subject.

What kinds of questions appear in essay exams?

Essay questions often ask students to: describe, explain, compare, contrast, and justify.

Why is prediction important?

Predicting questions:

- helps students focus on important topics,
- increases the chance that a prepared question appears in the exam,
- improves understanding of course material.

☞ 2. Plan the answers

Instead of memorising full essays, students should prepare organized outlines.

a. Gather Information

- Write the predicted question at the top of the page.
- Search lecture notes and textbooks for useful information.
- Jot down all the points using a two columns format
- Write short meaningful phrases instead of long sentences.

Example How to take written notes?

Before taking notes	Read the material Highlight important ideas Get a general understanding before writing
Organising the material	Add heading & sub-headings Move details under the correct categories
.....	

b. Organise your points

Arrange ideas logically, for this organisation makes ideas clearer and easier to remember.

- Identify the main points
- Identify their related supporting details

This organisation makes ideas clearer and easier to remember.

c. Outline your answer

List your meaningful phrases into an alphanumerical outline.

Sample Outline

I. Before Taking Notes

- A. Read the material
- B. Highlight important ideas
- C. Get a general understanding before writing

II. Organising the Material

- A. Add headings and sub-headings
- B. Move details under the correct categories

☞ 3. Practice the answer

After preparing outlines, students should practice recalling them.

Effective Practice Techniques

- Use the questions as a cue to recall the main points. .
- Use headings as memory cues.
- Rewrite the outline from memory.
- Practice every day before the exam.

Memory Aids 😊

Students may use:

- acronyms,
- mnemonics,
- acrostics.

These techniques improve recall during exams.

☞ 4. Write the answers

Writing full essays is optional but helpful.

Benefits of Writing Practice Essays

- improves organisation,
- helps students start introductions more easily,
- develops connections between ideas,
- increases confidence.

Memory Aids for Learning Acronyms, mnemonics, and acrostics

An Acronym example

P P L
P = Predict questions
P = Plan out answers
L = learn them

A Mnemonic example

“Plan, Pick, Pack, Practice, Perform”

- Plan → think of possible essay questions
- Pick → select key ideas from notes
- Pack → organize ideas into an outline
- Practice → rehearse answers regularly
- Perform → write confidently in the exam

An acrostic example:

E X A M

- E = Examine possible questions
- X = eXtract key information
- A = Arrange ideas in an outline
- M = Memorize and practice