

Preparing for Essay Tests & Identifications

Identification Questions

1. College history professors often like to ask “identifications,” which are essentially a short essay on the item to be identified.
2. The professor will normally give you a list of the identifications that might appear on a test.
3. To prepare for the identifications, draw a chart and answer each of the following information about each identification.
4. When writing an identification on the test, you will not receive full credit for the answer if you do not clearly identify the *significance* of the item being identified.

Example of a student-created chart used to study for identifications

Identification	Who?	What?	When?	Significance
Executive Order 9066	FDR	Presidential order sending Japanese in the US into internment camps	Start of WW2, Dec 1941/Jan 1942	FDR used his wartime powers to intern Japanese & Japanese Americans in camps. Purpose was to protect the country against sabotage & other wartime acts by Japanese. No similar actions taken against Italians or Germans in US. Upheld by Supreme Court in <i>Korematsu v US</i> .

Essay Questions (Also applies to identification answers)

1. Understand what the question asks, then answer the question.
2. Answer in full sentences using good writing techniques, grammar, and spelling.
3. Be specific & get to the point. Don't use generalities or try to “shotgun” (Write everything you can remember and hope to hit what the professor is looking for) an answer.
4. Don't use pronouns such as “it” and “they.”
5. Don't use personal pronouns (I, we, us).
6. Write clearly. An unreadable test with every answer correct is still a zero.
7. Don't assume the grader knows anything. Explain what you mean in an answer. Don't ask the grader to assume you understand things that you haven't explained.
8. Don't use abbreviations. An essay isn't a computer or a text message.
9. Be sure to have a framework to your writing. Each essay answer should have an introduction, middle, and conclusion.
10. Don't just restate or elaborate the question for your answer. It won't fly very far.
11. Remember, an essay test is a chance to show your professor what you know. In general, it is better to be too long than too short. But don't “talk around” an answer hoping to get some points. Filling several sheets of paper with information that doesn't answer the question only angers your grader.