TWELVE STEPS FOR TAKING AN ESSAY EXAM

1. Be prepared: Try to get a good night’s sleep; make sure you have a blue book or paper, use erasable ink; bring an eraser.

2. Read the question carefully.

3. Underline key words: identify, discuss, compare/contrast, etc.

4. Take a few minutes to organize your thought, to brainstorm—use the back of your book, or a piece of scratch paper.

5. Begin your answer with a restatement of the question.

6. Be sure your introductory paragraph contains your thesis statement and the points you intend to develop.

7. Make sure each paragraph has a topic sentence that relates to your thesis and tells the reader what you will be writing about.

8. Be sure to support you topic sentence with specific examples, details, facts, etc.

9. Use transitions between paragraphs.

10. **Do Not** introduce new information in your conclusion.

11. Do use your conclusion to sum up or restate your thesis.

12. If you are running out of time, outline remaining points. If you finish early, proofread for errors and clarity.
### Introductory Paragraph

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>The introduction attracts the reader’s interest. The thesis sentence states the main idea in the paper. The Plan of development is a list of the points that support the thesis. The points are represented in the order in which they will be developed in the paper.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis sentence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan of development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points 1, 2, 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### First Supporting Paragraph

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic sentence (point 1)</th>
<th>The topic sentence advances the first supporting point for the thesis, and the specific evidence in the rest of the paragraph develops that first point.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific evidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Second Supporting Paragraph

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic sentence (point 2)</th>
<th>The topic sentence advances the second supporting point of the thesis, and the specific evidence in the rest of the paragraph develops the second point.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific evidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Third Supporting Paragraph

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic sentence (point 3)</th>
<th>The topic sentence advances the third supporting point for the thesis, and the specific evidence in the rest of the paragraph develops that third point.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific evidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Concluding Paragraph

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary, conclusion, or both</th>
<th>A summary is a brief restatement of the thesis and its main points. A conclusion is a final thought or two stemming from the subject of the paper.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>