

Tips for Writing Under Pressure (Timed Writing)

Often on exams or in other pressure situations that require writing, it seems that students throw all of the writing process steps out the window, as if the writing process only counts for essays.

DO NOT MAKE THIS MISTAKE.

Whatever the situation (and whatever the course – yes, even that math class) that requires writing under a time limit, you still use the writing process. It's just adjusted a bit to meet the situation.

In this appeal process, take the following steps:

1. Preview the task. Read the directions carefully (and probably at least twice). This helps you budget your time.
2. Read the provided reading. In the margin of the test, or on separate paper if taking online, jot down ideas and notes of what you know right then needs to be included in that essay question. (Prewriting)
3. Do not begin writing yet. Re-read the directions and make sure you know what you are asked to do. Re-read the reading or sections as needed.

Consider what a summary requires – concise, accurate, comprehensive, and objective

Consider how you will respond – agree, disagree, mixed feelings – and the reasons why

4. Now you begin tackling the writing task, but before you start writing, go through the notes you have in the margin or separate paper, add anything else that has come to mind, and number them in the order you want to discuss them. (Organizing)
5. Write your draft. (Drafting)
6. Read through it, adding anything you forgot and fixing any errors you see. (Revising and Editing)

As you can see, the prewriting and organizing part of the writing process are much more condensed and informal. That doesn't mean that they are less important or less helpful.

Even in an exam or smaller writing assignment completed in-class, you need an organized essay response with paragraphs and the ideas in a specific order. Then your professor knows that you not only know the different components but that you understand how they all fit together.

In general, always err on saying too much than not enough. Make sure you have said everything you know and have fully explained your ideas. A couple of sentences is not going to do it.

Most importantly, though, USE the process in ALL writing scenarios you face in your college career, not just for this appeal process or your writing classes.