

How to Write An “A” Essay Exam in History (not just History 1003):

1. **Read the entire question!** Yes! The same advice you were given in grade school still applies. If you don't understand the question, ask.

2. **Watch your time.** It makes no sense to spend half your time on a question worth only 10 points.

3. Take a couple of minutes to **plan your answer**. Don't do an elaborate outline, but do plan your major points. Jot these down and keep this plan in front of you so you don't go chasing rabbits.

4. Don't spend time on fancy introductions. Just **state your thesis**--what it is your essay is going to demonstrate--and get on with it. And don't waste your time with White-out. Cross out anything you want to delete and move on.

6. **For every general statement, provide at least one specific example.**

E.g.

The Century of Crisis saw many religious wars. = General Statement

For example, Lutherans and Catholics fought each other throughout the German states in the 1530s. = Specific Example. Answer the key questions: Who, When, Where, What?

7. **For every specific you provide, be sure to state why it is significant.**

E.g.

Lutherans and Catholics fought each other throughout the German states in the 1530s.

= Specific Example

This sort of religious warfare contributed to the chaos that characterized the Century of Crisis. = Statement of Significance. Answer the key questions: How, Why, So What?

8. **Use paragraphs.** Each paragraph should be a separate point in your argument, in your answer to the question.

9. **Answer the question.** Random info won't count for anything.

10. **Use all your time.** If you walk out before the allotted 50 minutes is over, you are pretty much guaranteeing you will not get an A. Reread what you've written. Do you have any generalizations that need examples? Add them. Have you forgotten to specify the time period? Add it. Is your explanation unclear? Clarify.