Eastern Mennonite University
Academic Success Center

Steps in Answering
The Essay Question on a Test

A. Read and Understand the Essay Question

1. Decide exactly what instructor expects you to do
2. Underline important words to make sure you understand entire question

B. Choose the Correct Essay Pattern

1. Student must understand key terms used in the question.
2. Sometimes it is necessary for the student to discover what type of essay is required.
   For example:
   a. What is continental drift? (This question suggests defining the term.)
   b. Follow the development of Mozart’s musical style. (This question suggests tracing the course of development through time, space, event by event, etc.)

C. Writing the Topic Sentence

1. Compose a topic sentence that contains the key words of the question. For example:
   Topic Sentence: Savings banks and commercial banks differ in three ways.
2. The answer should repeat the key words. This is one way to ensure that the answer addresses itself to the question.

Reminder: To do well on essay tests, you must be able to organize and present in writing what you know. Practice does pay off.

-source unknown