

Mount 101 Tips for Short Answer Test and Exam Questions

A short answer question asks you to relate what you know back to the themes of the course. Short answer questions will typically be written in paragraph form (i.e., full sentences), but they will be shorter than an essay. Pay attention to **direction words** that are telling you what you need to do when answering the question.

Identify the Direction Word

Read through the question to see what you are being asked to do and how you should do it. Look for words like analyze, discuss, compare, define, and elaborate. [Use these words](#) to direct your action.

Get to the Point

Use the first sentence to answer the question. You'll expand and explain things in the next few sentences. Think of your answer like a mystery in reverse. Provide your conclusion, show the evidence, and then explain why the evidence matters.

Provide Evidence

Expand on your topic sentence and provide evidence from the lectures and readings to support your argument. When writing this part, you should take note of how much a question is worth. Don't just write one sentence if the answer is worth 10 points.

Write a Summary Sentence

Use your final sentence to wrap things up. This sentence should explain how everything fits together and answers the question. This is an important part because it's where you show why your answer is correct.

Review Your Answer

Read through your answer to see if you answered the question. Add more evidence or further explanation if necessary.

Adapted from: Queen's University Student Academic Success Services. (Retrieved August 2019). *Exam Type: Short Answer*. Retrieved from: <http://sass.queensu.ca/exam-prep/types-of-exam/>

