

## **EPE Study Tips**

### For Elements of an Academic Essay

1. Read the prompt carefully. (You'll choose 1 out of 6 prompts to respond to.) Be sure that your essay's approach and focus responds directly to the prompt, and pay attention to the language used. **Hint:** look for key words that will help you determine your essay's purpose; prompts may ask you to: describe, evaluate, compare and contrast, persuade, explain, etc.
2. Spend approximately 5 minutes preparing to write your essay before you begin. Engaging in a bit of pre-writing will save you time in the long run and enable you to write a better essay. You can do your pre-writing on the inside cover of your blue book. **Hint:** types of pre-writing include: webbing/clustering, outlining, free-writing, listing, answering W questions (who, what, where, when, why, and how), and otherwise brainstorming.
3. Be sure that your essay contains a thesis. Your thesis should be at the beginning of your essay, in your introduction. It should clearly respond to one of the prompts, and it should convey a point ABOUT a topic, not just name a topic. **Hint:** you can use parts of the prompt to get you started in regards to how you might structure your thesis statement.
4. Each body paragraph should contain a topic sentence. Topic sentences should be at the very beginning of body paragraphs and convey the main points of those paragraphs. **Hint:** topic sentences are like mini-thesis statements; in other words, a thesis is for your entire essay what a topic sentence is for an entire paragraph.
5. Your essay should include plenty of examples. Be sure all examples are ones relevant to the prompt and to your argument. Try to include as much concrete detail as possible. **Hint:** concrete details engage one of the five senses (taste, touch, sight, smell, or sound). **Hint 2:** while it's not a requirement by any means, a good rule of thumb for the number of examples each body paragraph should contain is 3 examples per paragraph; however, this can vary from essay to essay and from paragraph to paragraph, so please don't get hung up on that number.
6. Some of your most original thought will be presented in your commentary throughout the essay. You should comment on each example you include and on each body paragraph as a whole. **Hint:** when you comment on examples, try to answer the question how does this example illustrate your point OR why is this example so important. **Hint 2:** in your end-of-body-paragraph commentary, explain how the body paragraph as a whole relates back to your thesis.
7. End your essay with a conclusion. **Hint:** one way to approach this paragraph is to answer the question, "so what?" In other words, why is this topic important outside of a classroom, off of a college campus?
8. You should organize your essay in a coherent and logical manner. Providing transitions to show the relationships among ideas is key. **Hint:** there is no required number of body

paragraphs for this essay; divide your material up in a way that makes sense based on the prompt you've chosen; you should have at least 2 body paragraphs, and any more than 4 is likely too many for this essay.

9. Your essay should contain only a minimum amount of major grammar and style errors. These errors include: subject-verb disagreement, sentence fragments, fused/run-on sentences, comma splices, pronouns, colons and semicolons, commas, and homonyms and spelling errors. You should also keep personal pronouns to a minimum.
10. Finally, you'll want to spend at least 5 minutes proofing and revising your essay if the time limit allows. **Hint:** skipping lines in your blue book while drafting will give you some room to make any corrections that are needed in the revising stage.

The English Department will provide blue books. Things to bring with you to the exam:

- Something to write with
- Your student ID
- Receipt from the Business Office
- Dictionary or thesaurus (optional)