



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

Writing Skills Improvement Program

Tips for Timed Exams

Taking exams is stressful, and managing the time can be challenging. As you prepare for the exam, plan your time wisely. Breaking down the allotted time into writing chunks can help you. For example, if you have a 45-minute exam, try the following:

Plan: 10 minutes

Read the prompt. Then read it again. Pay attention to the verbs to help you understand what the reader wants (describe, analyze, summarize, etc.). Write a simple outline and keywords to keep you on track.

Write: 25 minutes

Follow your outline and develop your content. Focus on strong topic sentences, solid examples, and clear discussion.

Review: 10 minutes

Check for big issues first. Did you answer the prompt? Did you include enough evidence? Then, proofread for fixable errors (spelling, punctuation, sentence clarity).

If you know you're going to have a timed writing exam, practice in advance. Look for sample prompts, set a timer, and write! Practice helps diffuse test anxiety and increase fluidity.

