

## Tips for Handling In-Class Essays

In-class essays have the power to intimidate students because of the time restraint. Students sometimes feel trapped during the dreaded hour and a half to two hours, but this handout is here to help you take some control during this type of assignment. Let's dive in.

- Preparation for the exam can help reduce some anxiety. Before the essay exam, ask the instructor questions about her preferences and expectations. These include the type of writing materials and the amount of paragraphs the instructor may look for.
- Once you finally obtain the exam, take a breath and focus as best as possible on the prompt. Staying on topic is crucial, so take time to carefully read the directions. Once you've read them, take a small amount of time to create an outline that's best for you. It can be as simple as the thesis and three supporting reasons, or the supporting reasons could have small examples to elaborate upon in the essay. Just make sure the brainstorming process doesn't exceed ten minutes.
- When you're ready to officially write the paper, try to relax and breathe calmly. Instructors will look at your essay holistically which means they will look at your overall ability to respond appropriately to the assignment. This also means that you will still have to write a coherent essay that flows and stays on topic. They understand that you only have a limited amount of time, so they're not necessarily expecting eight-page research assignments free of spelling errors and whatnot.
- Start with a short introduction paragraph so that you can officially map out your essay's structure. Don't spend too much time worrying about a hook in this case. Get your main idea, supporting points, and relevant information down on paper. As you write, be aware of the time so that you can say all that you want to say.
- The counterargument appears to be a relatively new requirement in timed writing assignments, especially in the Writing Skills Test (WST). Instructors will now look for six paragraphs instead of five. Don't shy away from it though because it can help you strengthen your argument. The counterargument usually comes after all of your supporting points and fairly acknowledges the opposition on the topic. Begin the paragraph with the opposition's point of view in relation to your argument, but make sure to trump it with new ideas aside from the ones you listed in your previous paragraphs. This shows your credibility as a writer as you're fairly acknowledging the other side, and it also displays your critical thinking skills when you refute the counterargument. It's easier said than done and may require a bit of practice, but it's not all that scary.
- Last but not least, take some time to review your paper if you manage to finish early. Some writers may not have the luxury of proofreading prior to submission, so just be sure to constantly refer to your thesis as you write to ensure that you're following it and staying on



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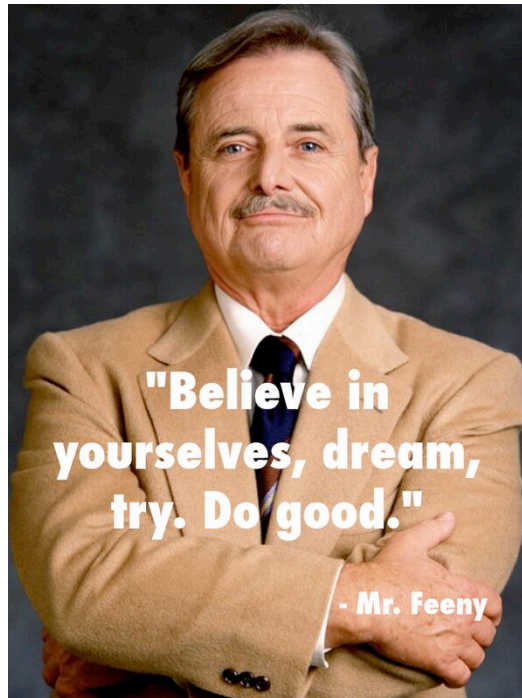
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topic. Grammar and spelling mistakes will sneak their way inside, but the main priority is to make your point in relation to the topic.

This all sounds like a lot take in, and you may have heard some of these tips before too. Most importantly, remember to have confidence in your ability to write. You've made it this far in your academic career for a reason, so remember that before and during the in-class essay. Not everybody is perfect at the mechanics of writing, but that doesn't stop us from formulating insightful thoughts and commentary. Go after your next in-class essay with confidence and determination. Good luck!



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**References** - The following work was referred to during the creation of this handout: [Chabot College's WRAC Online Website](#).



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