



This exercise sheet accompanies my video: “How to Do Well in Examinations”. In the video, I show how to write concisely, contextualize cases, and really think before you write.

PART A: Try cutting the unnecessary verbiage in the following sentences, leaving only lean meat behind.

1. Can computers think? In terms of clarifying what is meant by ‘think’, in this essay I will consider what various scholars have said about what ‘thinking’ comprises and will consider four possible ways of describing something as ‘thinking’, to wit, thinking in terms of emotions, images, abstract concepts, and raw intelligence.
2. The American state is a relatively young and intricate formulation of institutions, agencies and establishments among its different branches (judicial, executive, and judicial) which are crucial and that have progressively evolved and sufficed the operation of the US since the Declaration of Independence in 1776.
3. To answer the question of why the Mongol empire disintegrated during the late thirteenth century, it is important to first understand what is meant in this case by disintegration (such as changing loyalties, factionalism and civil war) because there are many different ways for us to try to understand this question as several scholars have noted.

PART B: For each of the sentences below, say whether you would (a) include it in your examination script in its *current* form, (b) include it in your examination script in *modified* form, or (c) *cut* the sentence entirely. If you choose (b), say how you would improve it. If you choose (a) or (c), explain why.

4. In order to answer this question we need to define our key terminology and consider any assumptions underlying the question.

5. For decades, neocolonialism has been the subject of much study by scholars.
6. By asking what price the US pays for its exceptionalism, this question assumes that the US is indeed exceptional.
7. Is the presidency the illusion of choice? The question though concise leads to a series of ongoing questions highlighting its ambiguity. This in turn intensifies the difficulty of answering the question, where do I begin?
8. I argue that a misplaced focus on comparing the American state to European states has led to inaccurate claims of apparent weakness. Not only was the American state *not* weak from its birth, but it has only grown in strength.
9. Throughout history, there has been strong and continuous debate about how the landscape is shaped by human activity.

PART C: Take on the timed examination challenge! Spend 15 mins planning and 15 mins writing a handwritten exam-style introduction on a question of your choice. Alternatively, practice your technique with this question: 'Why is [insert your university's name here] the best place to study?'