



Answering short answer questions: video tutorial

<http://www.screencast.com/t/WzhUF4ljL1C>

Transcript

Introduction: Welcome to this tutorial on Answering Short Answer Questions from the University of Reading Study Advice team. The tutorial is designed for you to go through at your own pace and you can pause it at any time.

Slide 1: So you have short answer questions in your exams – on the one hand you may be thinking great, at least I don't have to write whole essays for these kind of questions, but on the other hand you might also be thinking, the challenge is I've got a lot of different small questions to cover, so I have to use my time well.

Short answer questions test your application of knowledge to specific problems – they often ask for explanations and examples to illustrate this.

Slide 2: So as these questions involve application of knowledge one of the best revision strategies for short answer questions is practice, practice, and practice. Especially if your exam questions will involve calculations or use of formulae. It is hard to remember how to do the stages of calculations or apply knowledge when it is in the abstract, but if you can put it in context by using it to answer specific questions, your knowledge becomes more real and grounded and easier to remember.

Life often gets in the way of good intentions to do practice questions, so another good strategy is to ring-fence and protect some time each day or each week for regular practice.

For more on effective revision strategies click on this link to a short video tutorial. Also if you have formulae to remember you may find some of the rote learning strategies in this other short video on multiple choice questions helpful as well.

Slide 3: Unlike essay questions in which you write a single answer straight through, short answer questions mean you have to pay attention to the marks and parts of each question strategically. The number of marks each question is worth gives an indication of the proportion of time you should spend and the rough length of the answer. So this question worth 5 marks suggests the answer would be shorter and take less time than

this worth 15 marks. Short answer questions also often come in parts and can build up so later parts may ask you to explain or expand on the earlier answers.

Slide 4: Short answer questions also may ask for a combination of things in an answer or for examples to illustrate your points, so it is important that you read the question carefully and make sure you cover everything they are looking for. Underlining key words may help with this. For example in this question you would lose marks if you only focussed on 'internal' climate forcing mechanisms. You would also lose marks if you only listed the internal and external mechanisms without explaining how each of these affects the Earth's climate.

Slide 5: If you have questions that are longer and worth a lot of marks such as these, approach them like mini-essays. It is tempting to rush straight in, but a short plan can help you order your thoughts and ensure you don't miss any vital points. You want to be writing concisely and short simple sentences are best but you do need to have a well-ordered answer, not just a muddle of points as they first come to you. So a clear structure with a very short introductory sentence, your main points and a short concluding sentence will help your examiner see that you have a coherent approach.

Slide 6: In short answer questions you can pick up marks for partial answers, so don't panic if you can't do all of the stages of a question fully or if you get stuck. Do the parts that you can and show clear working out so the examiners can give you some credit for this even if you don't complete it or if you get the wrong answer in the end. In this example even if you couldn't complete these two calculations, you could still use your knowledge of the principles of company expansion to pick up marks in this final, more-essay like, section of the question.

So stay calm, do what you can, and pick up marks as you go.