

Tips for Writing the Free Response Section

- Make a note of the start time at the top of the question page. Add 90 minutes to define the “decision time” (see below) and another 15 minutes to define the stop time. Remember, you have 105 minutes to answer all seven free response questions. Pace yourself accordingly.
- Be sure to **read each question carefully**.
- Read all the questions once before you decide which question to answer first. You need not answer the questions in order.
- Fight off fear and apprehension. It is not likely that you are going to know everything! Remember, scoring well is a numbers game. You can make up for not knowing how to do one question by scoring well on another.
- Reread the question that seems easiest to you. Determine what is asked and answer the question directly and specifically.
- With numerical problems, show your work clearly and logically. You need not show any arithmetic, but the grader is looking for a logical progression of your ideas. Circle any numerical final answer.
- In written responses, be **clear and concise**.
- Write in **complete sentences**. Do not assume the reader knows what you are trying to say. Avoid one-word answers.
- Do not be afraid to state the obvious. What is obvious to you might be exactly what the grader is seeking.
- **Avoid pronouns**, especially the words, “it, that, they” even if your writing seems redundant.
- Underline and define key terms to make them stand out, if appropriate, but do not overdo it.
- **Write what you know and stop!** Two sentences often fully express an answer to any one part of a question. These are not essay questions. They are more like short answer questions, requiring clear and concise answers with justifications. The grader does not want to see any more than what is specifically asked for.
- Do not hesitate to use an example, a piece of data, a picture, a diagram, or an equation to illustrate your answer, if appropriate.
- **Review your writing.** Have you used chemical terminology correctly? Does your answer make sense to you? Will your answer make sense to the grader?
- **Does your answer specifically answer the question that is asked?**
- Keep in mind that partial credit is often given, so try put something down for every part.

- If you are not clear about an answer, rewrite the question in your own words. Often this practice will jump-start your thinking and allow you to arrive at the answer. What you write, even if it only partially answers the question, might score partial credit.
- **Decision time:** When your watch shows that there are 15 minutes left, make a decision about how you can finish the question(s) that will score the most points. **Be sure to stop when time is called.**
- Use neat penmanship
- Organize your answers from left to right and top to bottom on the page, Start all responses on the left side of the page (not in the middle!)
- Write your answers on the lined paper sections.
- When a student needs to turn a page to complete the response, the student might write "next page" at the bottom, or draw a forward arrow at the bottom of the page.
 - If you need to change your answer, make it very clear which answer the reader should read. Cross out the parts you don't want read with a line straight through them.
 - Make sure you answer **all parts** of the question.
 - If a student messes up a response that was supposed to be in a box, they should X out the box and draw a new box and answer in that. It's not canon, but I can't imagine the student not getting the point because it wasn't in the original box. We give points for good chemistry.
 -
 - By the way, they do need to show work for finding moles from grams.