

at the question, you start answering it in a way which brings the question and the knowledge together (see Figure 12.3).

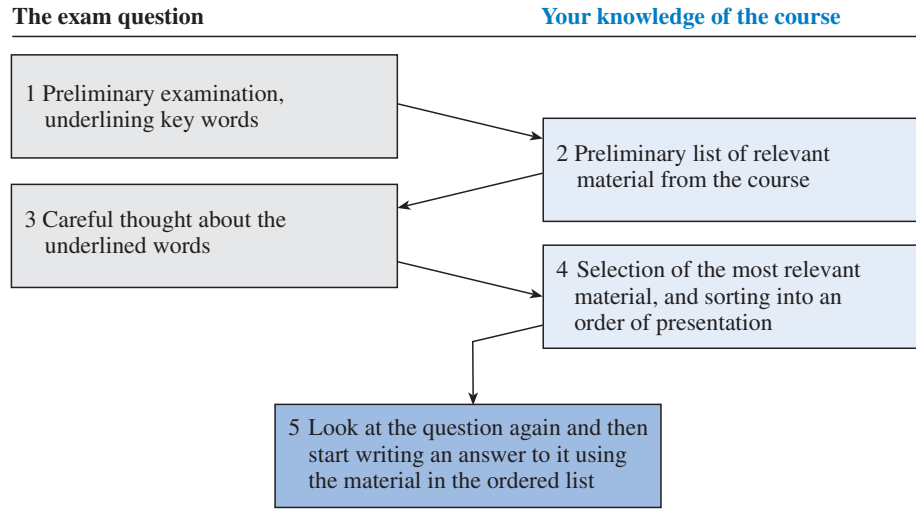


Figure 12.3 Five steps in preparing an answer to an exam question

12.6.8 Taking time to plan your answer

See Chapter 12
Section 12.3, What
to avoid

But will you have time to spare for all of these preparations? It takes a lot of nerve to spend precious exam time preparing your answers. Bearing in mind the comments of examiners on ‘undisciplined’ answers earlier in this chapter it is time well spent, but how long should you spend? You will have to judge this for yourself, but between five and ten minutes is a reasonable target. If you don’t sketch out a plan, you will run the risk of ‘going blank’ in the middle of an answer. Writing tends to absorb the whole of your attention, so when you get to the end of a paragraph you can find that the next point has gone. Your argument jerks to a halt and you are too keyed up to retrace your plans. At this point you will waste far more time than writing a plan would have done. And your answer will be poor into the bargain.

“ After my previous exam I realised how important sketching answer plans is. Today I spent time on mind maps etc. Much better first essay, passable second, third fair too. Just wish I’d practised handwriting. I’m so used to cutting and pasting text on the computer. ”

12.6.9 Sticking to the point

In your enthusiasm to show your knowledge of the course, don’t forget to keep to the question. Exam markers are searching for points which relate directly to the question; they are not pleased by having to wade through paragraphs of unsorted and uncensored material. You begin to *lose* marks