Read the question carefully
You must first understand the question in order to identify what information is required to answer it. Watch out for questions that have multiple parts; like “explain theory X and give an example of how it’s used today”.

Don’t overdo it
Don’t read too much into the question; you don’t want to spend time writing out an answer to a question that wasn’t asked.

Plan your answers before you start
Not as detailed as you would if it was for an essay exam question, but be sure to take a minute to think about how you’re going to organize your thoughts.

Think it through
Start with general statements that answer the question as directly as possible. Then, if asked provide examples to support your response to show that you understand the course material.

When you’re studying – think about and write out possible questions
By anticipating possible questions, you are studying the course material at a higher level – you’ll be able to make connections between concepts, and summarize information more effectively.
Remember the basics

Remember that short answer exams are used to test basic knowledge of key facts and terms. Therefore the number of sentences in your response should be equivalent to the number of marks allocated to that exam question – unless otherwise specified.

Write in your own words!

And keep your sentences concise. Start by writing in complete sentence form, but if you are running short on time, switch to point form (unless it is stated that you cannot in the exam instructions).

Be strategic

Manage your time by dividing the number of marks on the exam to figure out how much time you should spend on each question. For example, if the exam is worth 100 marks and you have 3 hours (180 minutes) – then you should spend approximately 1.8 minutes on each mark; or 9 minutes on a question worth 5 marks.

Use your extra time for review

Correct simple spelling mistakes and elaborate on answers. Do this only if you have extra time at the end.

Answer the easiest questions first

Don’t spend time staring at the exam booklet trying to recall certain information, move on to the next question. You may find that as you go through the exam, you will be able to recall more information.