

Khan Academy Free Response Tips

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<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-us-government-and-politics/resources-and-exam-preparation/resources-exam-prep/a/free-response-tips?modal=1>

The following strategies for answering the free-response questions on the 2018 AP US Government and Politics exam were developed by faculty consultants for College Board to help you on exam day.

You can find this list along with other information about the exam [here](#).

Practice

Answering essay questions generally requires a good deal of training and practice. Students too often begin to write immediately, creating a string of disconnected, poorly planned thoughts. You need to learn to attack questions methodically and to plan your answers before putting pencil to paper.

Examine the question

Carefully analyze the question, thinking through what is being asked, and identify the elements that must be addressed in the response. Each AP Exam asks different types of questions about each subject. For example, some questions may require you to consider the similarities between people or events, and then to think of the ways they are different.

Determine what's required to answer the question

Some questions may ask you to develop an argument with examples in support of or opposing a particular movement or policy. You may even be asked to construct a graph or visual representation explaining relationships in a given scenario. Be sure to carefully craft your answer in response to what is actually being asked in the question prompt.

Choose your evidence

After you have determined what is involved in answering the question, consider what evidence you can incorporate into your response. Review the evidence you learned during the year that relates to the question and then decide how it fits into the analysis. Does it demonstrate a similarity or a difference? Does it argue for or against a generalization that is being addressed? Whenever you offer evidence to illustrate contrast or similarity, clearly state your intent. Then, with additional information or analysis, elaborate on the ways in which these pieces of evidence are similar or different. If there is evidence that refutes a statement, explain why it argues against the statement. Your answer should reflect an understanding of the subtleties of the questions.

Develop a thesis

Begin writing only after you have thought through the evidence you plan to use, and have determined what your thesis statement will be. Once you have done this, you will be in a position to answer the question analytically instead of in a rambling narrative.

Support your thesis

Learn how to present your thesis statement: make your overarching statement or argument and then position your supporting evidence so that it is obviously directed to answering the question, as opposed to being a string of abstract generalizations. State your points as clearly as possible and explicitly connect them to the larger thesis. Do not leave it to the reader to infer what is meant or how something illustrates a point.

If you have done the analytical work required prior to writing, you should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the complexity of the question. You should state your thesis, introduce the elements that support the thesis, and demonstrate the logic that led you to link the elements in support of the thesis. By applying these ideas you will construct an excellent essay.

Get examples from past exams

While essay writing in general is a valuable exercise, you may wish to work specifically on free-response questions from previous AP Examinations. This will allow you to compare your own responses with those that have already been scored and evaluated. Free-response questions are available through the Advanced Placement Program® in numerous formats. One of the easiest ways to find sample essays is to go to the [AP Exam Practice page](#) for U.S. Government and Politics.