

AP Exam-Taking Tips

1. The Day of the Exam

- a. Make sure to get sleep the night before and eat something before the test. It is a LONG test. Staying up trying to study as the sun appears on the eastern horizon will not help you!
- b. Do not stress!

2. Basic test-taking strategies

- a. Do not second guess yourself; trust your first instinct regarding answers, especially on the multiple choice questions
- b. Do not rush through the exam so can go over your original answers; if there are a couple of answers you need to review, then do so, but keep it to a minimum.
- c. Look at each question one at a time. Focus on each individual question and only that question. This exam is a marathon, not a sprint. Take each question as it is, answer that question, and then move on. *ONE QUESTION AT A TIME*. Get into a comfortable rhythm that you can sustain for the entire exam.

3. Preparation

- a. Break historical events into specific categories just as a way to organize your studying (this is where the “isms” can apply)
 - i. Economic trends over time
 - ii. Political trends over time
 - iii. Diplomatic trends over time
 - iv. Geographic trends over time
 - v. Demographic trends over time
 - vi. Religious trends over time
 - vii. Cultural and social trends (race, class, gender) over time
 - viii. Artistic trends over time (literature, architecture, painting, sculpting, for example)
 - ix. Technological trends over time
 - x. Connect key people, events, and specific things to the trends listed above
- b. Make a timeline where you can insert the IMPORTANT events. Divide the time line into 20 to 25 year segments. The key is to understand the transition from one era to another and proper chronological sequencing. This will help you understand contextualization, identify key historical turning points, and embrace

cause and effect. DO NOT TRY TO MEMORIZE DATES. (you can also do an on-line search of already made timelines)

- c. Make a plan for when and what you will study. Do not try to study everything every time. Break it down into smaller pieces.
- d. It is recommended that you talk to each other as you prepare. The more you can articulate your thoughts, the better. The key is to be able to get your thoughts to help you answer specific questions. This takes practice.
- e. Use the text book for reference purposes only. If you need to review specific topics, then do so. However, please do not try to read, or re-read, a year's worth of reading assignments in a few short weeks. Instead, think about utilizing the following:
 - i. Your notes / posted on the webpage
 - ii. AP Review books
 - iii. Albert tests
 - iv. DO NOT USE things like QUIZLET, etc. That will only encourage you to try and memorize and that will not help you on the exam.
- f. Always be trying to make connections between the BIG IDEAS AND CONCEPTS and the SPECIFIC EVIDENCE / EXAMPLES which reflect those ideas and concepts. Ask me if you are not sure about this.
- g. Overall knowledge and skill are more important than just having information. It is impossible to prepare for specific questions; instead, the goal is to develop a broad understanding supported by specific evidence and examples.

4. Essay (DBQ) Information

- a. Make sure you utilize an informed and meaningful pre-write. This is where the actual essay takes shape. WRITE things down during the pre-write period. MAP OUT YOUR ANSWER.
- b. Make sure your intro paragraph has the four components:
 - i. Setting (1 sentence)
 - ii. Bridge (1 sentence)
 - iii. Partitions (categories of your evidence: 1 sentence for each partition)
 - iv. Thesis / Conclusion (1 sentence)
- c. Keep your actual sentences short and simple. The goal is to discuss complex ideas in an easy to understand format. Impress the reader of your essay with your ideas that are clearly and concisely presented. Give your knowledge of history a chance to not be covered up by an ineffective, convoluted writing style.

- d. Make sure you identify bias in at least several of the documents (TALK TO ME IF YOU ARE STILL NOT SURE WHAT THIS MEANS OR HOW TO DO IT)
- e. Do not quote the documents; instead, use the ideas / information in the documents to help you answer the question.
- f. Make sure you specifically reference each document. (AGAIN, TALK TO ME IF YOU ARE STILL NOT SURE WHAT THIS MEANS OR HOW TO DO IT)
- g. Bring in outside information. You will already know a great deal about the topic and the time period of the essay.
- h. It is better to have a complete decent essay than an incomplete brilliant essay. As always, make sure you manage your time!
- i. Do not stress over trying to make your essay perfect. Perfection is not required. Just answer the question in a straightforward way using specific evidence and examples to support larger points.
- j. Be consistent in terms of having the intro reflect what the full essay is about, and the topic sentence reflect what the individual paragraph is about. Do not try to do too much in a single paragraph.
- k. Because your essay is about history, write your essay in the past tense. You should end each body paragraph with a mini-conclusion that ties the paragraph back to the thesis. It can serve as a transition sentence into the next paragraph or stand alone.
- l. Make sure you understand what the prompt is asking, what the prompt requires you to do, and the time frame of the prompt. Be aware of dates. They are there to guide your thinking and approach.

The AP Exam is but a single day in your life. Apply a great deal of time and effort in your preparation, do your very best, but keep it all in perspective