

Tips for AP Exam Long Response

Use the 10 minute reading period to:

1. Read all four questions to decide the order in which you'll answer them.
2. Make an outline. It is much faster to scratch out a quick outline and then make quick additions to it rather than making changes to large written paragraphs.
3. As you read the question, underline all verbs as reminders of what you need to do. This will help you avoid leaving out parts of the question.

When you're writing your response:

4. As you write your response new ideas may come to you. Stop to jot these down on your outline and then go back to your writing. If you change your mind on something, simply cross it out rather than scribbling it out completely.
5. Be careful to answer all parts of the question but be sure to answer **ONLY** the question. When you read the question, make sure you don't just see what you expect to see. Don't waste time adding material which is irrelevant to the question - the reader is unable to give you credit for it. Writing lots of stuff in the hope of getting lucky wastes valuable time. Don't waste time re-writing the question. If you answer each part of the question separately and have them clearly labeled, there is less chance a point will be missed. Organize your answers as clearly and neatly as possible. You might want to label your answers according to the sub-part, such as (a), (b), (c), *etc.* This will assist you in organizing your thoughts, as well as helping to ensure that you answer all the parts of the free-response question.
6. If the question asks for two examples, give two and no more. The reader will only consider the first two. It is very rarely helpful to use a shotgun approach.
7. Do not spend too much time on one part of the question. You don't want to spend too much time on one question and then not have enough time to at least attempt a response to all of them. Remember the internal maxima.
8. Be specific. The reader is not your teacher who knows you and can make assumptions about what you know or don't know or about your writing style.
9. Don't overlook the obvious. Sometimes simple facts are worth points. Sometimes even a definition can earn a point.
10. If you're unsure which of two options is correct, do not play the game of saying both because if you earn a point and then contradict yourself, you'll lose the point.
11. Do not confuse or "switch" terms. For example, use 'more rapidly' and 'less rapidly' rather than 'more rapidly' and 'slower.'
12. Write legibly. The reader has probably read hundreds of responses when s/he gets to yours.

You don't want to frustrate him. Use a ballpoint pen with blue or black ink - no felt tip pens or weird ink colors (Emma).

13. Diagrams and pictures are helpful when they support your response but they won't cut it on their own. Also outlines and lists are not acceptable.

14. Readers are not looking for specific words or phrases. Don't underline or highlight what you feel are the "key" words that are worth points. You might guess wrong and it just makes your response harder to read.

15. Even if you think you know nothing about the question – you do! Always write something. Come back to the question and give it some thought - you may get a point or two.

16. Each question has a designated place in the "pink booklet" for the response. Put the response on the right page rather than running them together to "save paper." This also avoids your response to a question being missed.

After you've written your response

17. When you think you have completely answered it, go back and reread the question, paying close attention to words you underlined, to be sure.

18. Go back to the ideas you jotted down on your outline to make sure you've included all of them.

What the heck do they mean by . . .

Claim	State, assert or maintain that something is true
Evidence	Data from scientific observations or investigations
Reasoning	Justification for how evidence supports a claim
Scientific explanation	Addresses a question, includes a claim, evidence and reasoning
Model	Tools for learning about the things they are meant to resemble or represent (could be a diagram, image, illustration, graph)
Define	Give a meaning for a word or phrase
Describe	Give a picture of something in words
Justify	Give a good reason for something; show it to be right
Predict	State or estimate what will happen in the future
Effect	A consequence that could be positive or negative

Support	Back up your answer with data or evidence
Analyze	Break into parts and tell about the parts
Evaluate	To describe the good and/or bad of something; to judge
Differentiate or distinguish	Show the differences between two or more things
Compare	Point out similarities
Contrast	Point out differences
Explain	Tell how to do, give the meaning of or reasons for something.
Identify	Name, list or give an example
Summarize	Tell the main idea, giving the beginning, middle and end

Graphing Tips

- Mind your scale, labels and units on both axes. Always put the independent variable on the X-axis and the dependent variable on the Y-axis.
- Include a descriptive title above the graph.
- If the instruction is to **plot** rather than graph the data points, no line needs to be drawn. If a line is drawn, do not extend the line beyond the last point plotted (unless asked to make a prediction) or connect the line from the origin (unless there is a time zero reading.)
- If more than one line is to be drawn on the same graph, label each line clearly.
- In general, “plot” to mean just putting data points on the graph, while “graph” means to draw a line or curve.