**How to Write an FRQ**

**How to Answer**

* **List/Identify**. Listing or identifying is a task that requires no more than a simple enumeration of some factors or characteristics. A list does not require any casual explanations. For example, a student might be asked to list or identify three characteristics presidents consider when making appointments. Such a list, which could be bulleted or numbered, might include party, race, gender, etc.
* **Define**. A definition requires a student to provide a meaning for a word or concept. Examples may help to demonstrate understanding of the definition. Students may be instructed to note the term’s significance as part of the definition.
* **Describe**. A description involves providing a depiction or portrayal or a phenomenon or its most significant characteristics. Descriptions most often address “what” questions. For example, if students are asked to describe reasons for the decline in voter turnout, they must do more than simply list facts – they must actually describe the reasons. Students may explain that the expansion of suffrage led to a decline in overall voter turnout because once voting was made available to more individuals, the overall percentage of those voting declined.
* **Discuss**. Discussions generally requires that students explore relationships between different concepts or phenomena. Identifying, describing, and explaining could be required tasks involved in writing a satisfactory discussion.
* **Explain**. An explanation involves the exploration of possible casual relationships. When providing explanations, students should identify and discuss logical connections or causal patterns that exist between or among various political phenomena.
* **Compare/Contrast**. This task requires students to make specific links between two or more concepts.
* **Evaluate/Assess.** An evaluation or assessment involves considering how well something meets a certain standard and as such generally requires a thesis. It is important to identify the criteria used in the evaluation. If no criteria are explicitly given in the question, students should take care to clearly identify the ones that they choose to employ. Specific examples may be applied to the criteria to support the student’s thesis. Evaluation or assessment requires explicit connections between the thesis or argument and the supporting evidence.
* **Analyze.** This task usually requires separating a phenomenon into its component parts or characteristics as a way of understanding the whole. An analysis should yield explicit conclusions that are explained or supported by specific evidence or well-reasoned arguments.

**Do’s**

1. The first thing that you should do is to carefully **read the question**. Before writing an answer, the second thing you should do is **read the question**, and the third thing you should do is **read the question**. Be sure that you answer the question that is asked and only that question, and that you answer **all** parts of it. If you are given a choice of parts to answer, **choose** carefully. Don’t answer all parts in that case… You MUST pick one side OR the other.
2. Briefly outline the answer to avoid confusion and disorganization. Pay close attention to the verbs used in the directions and be sure to follow those directions. Thinking ahead helps to avoid scratch outs, skipping around, and rambling.
3. Define and/or explain the terms you use. Say something about each of the important terms you use. The AP Exam will not ask for a list of buzzworks. Use high-level vocabulary but use it in context.
4. Answer the question parts in **the order called for**, and use the question’s labels (“a,” “b,”, etc.) to identify the different parts of your answer just like they are labeled in the question. It is best no to skip around within the question.
5. CHARTS – If there is a chart or graph in the FRQ, ALWAYS incorporate DATA from the chart INTO your answer!!
6. Write clearly and neatly. It is foolish to antagonize or confuse the reader with lousy penmanship.
7. Go into detail that is on the subject and to the point. Be sure to include the obvious. Nothing is insinuated! Most points are given for the basics anyway. **Answer the question thoroughly**.
8. If you cannot remember a word exactly, take a shot at it – get as close as you can. Even if you don’t remember the name for a concept, describe the concept.
9. Use a ball point pen with dark black ink. If your ink “bleeds” through to the other side of the paper, don’t write on the back of that page – go to the next page. That will make it easier for the reader.
10. Understand that the AP exam is written to be hard. Over the last four years, the national average for the essay question will be less than 15 points out of a possible 40. That is an average of less than 4 points out of a possible 10 on each essay. It is very likely that you will not know everything. This is expected, but you will know something about each essay. So relax and do the best you can. Write thorough answers.

**Don’ts**

1. Don’t waste time on background information or a long introduction unless the question calls for historical development or historical significance. **Answer the question** – don’t rewrite it!
2. Don’t ramble – get to the point, and don’t shoot the bull – say what you know and go on to the next question. You can always come back if you remember something.
3. Don’t use a pencil, and don’t use a pen with an ink color other than black. Don’t use a felt-tip pen because the ink seeps through the page and makes both sides of the paper heard to read. Don’t scratch out excessively. One or two lines through the unwanted word(s) should be sufficient, and don’t write more than a very few words in the margin.
4. Don’t panic or get angry because you are unfamiliar with the question. You probably have read or heard something about the subject – be calm and think. Write on other questions and come back. If a question has several parts and you have no clue about one or two parts, don’t quit!! Write whatever you know about the other parts of the question,. Every single essay point helps your grade.
5. Don’t worry about spelling every word perfectly or using exact grammar. These are not a part of the standards of the graders use. It is important for you to know, however, very poor spelling, lousy grammar, and unreadable handwriting can hurt your chances.
6. If you are given a choice of several topics to write about (“describe 3 of the following 5 topics”), understand that only the first ones you mention will count. You must make choices and stick with them. If you decide that one of your first choices was a bad, then cross out that part of the answer so the reader can easily tell which part(s) you wish for him/her to read for points.
7. Don’t leave questions blank. Make an effort on every question! Don’t Quit!!