

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 answer:

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.
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.
6. If the question asks for 4 examples, give 4 and no more. The reader will only consider the first 4. It is very rarely helpful to use a shotgun approach.
6. Do not spend too much time on one part of the question. Remember the internal maxima.
7. 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.
8. When you use a term in your answer, it is a good idea to include the definition of the term in brackets. Sometimes the definition will be worth a point.
9. Don't overlook the obvious. Sometimes simple facts are worth points.
10. Do not contradict yourself in the same sentence. If you receive credit for a statement and then contradict it, you will 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 essays when 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.
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 answer harder to read.
15. Even if you think you know nothing about the question, 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 answer. Put the answer on the right page rather than running them together to "save paper." This also avoids your answer to a question being missed.

After you've written your response

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

17. 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 . . .

If you are asked to:	Your response should:
Compare	Show similarities between objects, ideas, phenomena, etc. Point out similarities, to examine 2 or more objects and consider the likenesses
Contrast	Show dissimilarities between two objects, ideas, phenomena, etc. Point out differences, to examine 2 or more objects and consider the differences
Define	Provide the accepted definition for a word. The response should be given as a complete sentence. Give a meaning for a word or phrase
Describe	Provide a list of features that characterize objects, ideas, phenomena, etc. To give a picture or account of in words
Discuss	Select a particular viewpoint and support your position with facts, examples, observations, reasoning, and descriptions. To consider from various points of view - Give both positive and negative effects - To "disrupt" or "change" can be both ways...up & down...+ and -
Effect	Give positive and negative effects What happens as a result of the change? What no longer happens? What increases? What decreases?
Explain	Provide a series of well-developed and logical statements which give the reason for or cause of an event or events. Tell how to do, tell the meaning of, or why...give reasons for Say why or how something happens. The answer should give reasons, not just a description.
Identify	Name, list, give an example
List	Provide a simple series of words, sentences, or phrases as requested. Enhance clarity by labeling each word, sentence, or phrase with sequential numbers or letters.
State	In a logical progression, record the facts related to the question. You are not required to provide proof or illustrations.
Trace	Describe the sequence of the process or the evolutionary development of the concept.

Remember the 3 E's

- **Explain**
- **Elaborate**
- **Example**

Graphing Tips

- Label both axes (independent variable on the X-axis and dependent variable on the Y-axis)
- Include units on both axes

- Provide 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 multiple lines are drawn on the same graph, label each line clearly.

Never extend curves for graphs beyond the provided data (unless you are asked to predict or extrapolate).

If you need to put multiple curves on the same graph, make sure that the different curves are clearly labeled. An arrow from a label to each curve is probably easier than coming up with different dot or dash styles.

Secret code: The AP graders interpret “plot” to mean just putting data points on the graph, while “graph” means to draw a line or curve. This may be the only context where these words have this precise interpretation, but it is useful to know the dialect of English that is specific to AP exams.