

How to Write the DBQ Essay

I. Preparation done during the mandatory 15 minute reading period.

- A. Use a black or blue pen and a highlighter.
- B. CAREFULLY read the directions pertaining to the question. Follow them exactly!
- C. Read the question VERY CAREFULLY
 1. Think about the question
 2. What is the question asking you to do. Decide.
 3. Pay attention to the time frame of the question
 4. Briefly restate/rewrite the question in your own words.
- D. BEFORE YOU READ THE DOCUMENTS, List details and facts that pertain to the topic and time period. This is your outside information.
- E. Quickly read through your documents
 5. Underline points you want to remember
 6. Think about the various ways you can use that document
 7. Make notes to yourself beside each document
 8. Not the sophistication of each document. Is it just what someone thinks, or is it cold, hard fact?
 9. Pay attention to external information (what the document states) and internal information (who said it). Decide how you can use this in your essay.
- F. Read through the documents more slowly and add to your notes.
- G. Make a list of facts, information, ideas from the documents you want to use to support the assertions in your original outline.
- H. DO NOT paraphrase documents...analyze them!

II. Writing your essay

- A. In your first paragraph, include:
 - 1. A broad statement about the time period.
 - 2. A THESIS--YOU MUST HAVE A THESIS!!!
 - 3. It is the thing you tend to prove in your paper
 - 4 You can only prove it using historical facts--from your memory and from the documents
 - **5. Underline your thesis statement.**
 - 6. Specific set-up points
- B. In your body paragraphs, begin with topic sentences that enable you to give your analysis of the question.
 1. Use the documents and your outside information to support/prove your analysis.
 2. At the end of each body paragraph, link back to your thesis. Make a specific statement of how the information you have presented supports your thesis.
 3. Cite documents correctly, using parenthetical citation. Ex. (doc. A)
 4. Be certain to include outside information in your body paragraphs.

III. Things to remember

- A. Include information from the documents AND information NOT in the documents (outside information)
- B. Do not quote the documents unless you absolutely have to, paraphrasing is quicker and will more easily ensure that you understand what the document is stating.
- C. Citation of documents is important.
- D. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO USE ALL OF THE DOCUMENTS. THE RULE OF THUMB = 50% PLUS 1
- E. ANSWER THE QUESTION ASKED!
- F. RELAX!!! You are intelligent, well-prepared, and will succeed. Take your time!
- G. Common Weaknesses
 1. the Hay and Seed Catalog Approach- simply listing and summarizing the documents. DONT!
 2. Too much direct quotation
 3. Using information only from the documents
 4. "Garden of Eden" approach--going too far back in time with background. Pay attention to the time frame of the question.

DBQ Scoring Guideline AP Grading Scale ranges from 1-9. Maximum Points: 9

The 8-9 Essay:

- Contains a well-developed thesis that addresses all components of the question.
- Discusses and analyzes all components of the question effectively and with relatively equal treatment.
- Effectively uses a substantial number of documents
- Supports theses with substantial and relevant outside information
- Is clearly organized and well-written
- May contain only minor errors.

The 5-7 Essay:

- Contains a thesis that addresses the question.
- Discusses some components of the question, but in an uneven manner. May address only part of the question.
- Use some documents effectively
- Supports thesis with some outside information
- Shows evidence of acceptable organization and writing; language errors do not interfere with comprehension of the essay
- May contain errors that do not seriously detract from the quality of the essay.

The 2-4 Essay:

- Contains a limited, confused, and/or poorly developed thesis
- Deals with the question in a general manner; simplistic explanation or answers only part of the question
- Quotes or briefly cites some documents
- Contains little outside information or information that is generally inaccurate or irrelevant
- Has problems in organization
- May contain major errors.

The 0-1 Essay:

- Contains no thesis or a thesis which does not address the question
- Exhibits inadequate or inaccurate understanding of the question
- Contains little or no understanding of the documents or ignores them completely
- Is so poorly written or organized that it inhibits understanding
- Contains numerous errors, both major and minor

DBQs are worth 30 points in the essay category. See below for a translation of the AP 1-9 scale.

9=30	5=25	1=18	This does not represent writing at an AP level.
8=28	4=24	0=0	This is inappropriate for an AP course.
7=27	3=23		
6=26	2=20		