

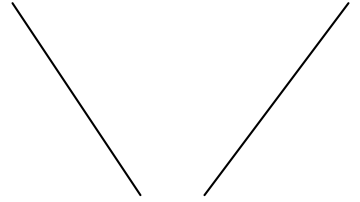
Writing a DBQ or FRQ – AP American History

Opening Paragraph (5-7 sentences)

Background/introduction to topic

Controlling Sentence – outline your essay; can be combined with your thesis

Thesis Statement – must be arguable; must be last sentence of your opening



Body Paragraph(s) - DBQ

Topic/Point sentence – what is this paragraph about; must match up with your controlling sentence

Document

- Validity / Invalidity statement
- Historical Specificity (evidence) & Analysis X 2 or 3



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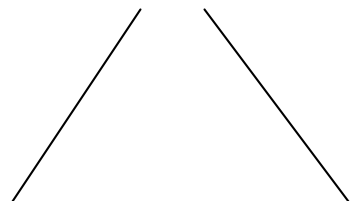
Concluding sentence – tie back to thesis; blend into next paragraph

Body Paragraph(s) - FRQ

Topic/Point sentence – what is this paragraph about; must match up with your controlling sentence

Historical Specificity (Evidence) / Analysis X 2 or 3

Concluding sentence – tie back to thesis; blend into next paragraph



Concluding Paragraph (5-7 sentences)

Summarize your analysis

Restate your thesis in a different way

Keys to Good Writing

1. Write a provocative & compelling thesis that forces people to argue & take a stand. Never offer a factual statement as a thesis.
2. Pay attention to the nouns you use in your thematic controlling statement. The nouns invariably set the theme for your paragraph.
3. Write history in narrative past tense – was, were, invaded, wrote, began...
4. Analyze history in analytical present tense – demonstrates, indicates, means, shows, suggests
5. Write in first person plural – we
6. Write in active voice, not in passive voice – “Germany invaded Poland in September 1939”, not “Poland was invaded in 1939”
7. When possible, death to all pronouns – he, she, it, they ...
8. Historical specificity (Evidence) answers the questions – who, what, where, when – factual
9. Historical analysis answers the question – why – showing meaning

Specificity/Evidence

Specific Name – for example, Francois Hanriot led the sans colottes insurgent National Guard in Paris.

Specific Event – for example, Francois Hanriot led the san coulottes insurgent National Guard in Paris during the Jacobin coup d’etat overthrowing the Girondin government.

Specific Date – for example, On June 2, 1793 Francois Hanriot led the Parisian sans culottes in a coup d’etat to overthrow the moderate Girondin government.

Analysis words:

although
allowing for
as a result of
because
consequently
due to
following

hence
however
if+speculation
in order to
meaning
resulting in
since

thereby
therefore
though
thus
which
while
yet

Question’s Context Clues for Writing

Various – at least 3 body paragraphs

Compare/Contrast – at least 2 body paragraphs

When writing a DBQ – never, ever, ever ...

Offer a factual statement as a thesis – A factual statement might be a controlling statement, but a factual statement, by definition, can never be a thesis. For example, do not write, “France suffered a major revolution in 1789.” This statement is factual & fits the definition of a controlling statement. A thesis is always embedded with controversy & forces people to take a position. A thesis is provocative & provokes people to argue a point.

Forget to cite your documents –For example, write, “Even Louis XV was aware of the impending disaster (Doc 2.) & the king’s observation of 1774 reveals a gloomy sense of national doom & unavoidable catastrophe.”

Cluster documents together - For example never cite documents all together, such as (Docs. 2, 5, 7, & 9.) Document clusters represent lazy scholarship & leaves the reader with the impression that you lack the desire to individually analyze & interpret each document on an individual basis.

Use direct quotes – The purpose of the DBQ is for you to take on the role of a historian. You are no longer a history student. Quoting documents word for word leaves the reader with the impression that you have no idea what you are doing. Quoting documents demonstrates no original analysis, insight or creative interpretation. Quoting documents shows the reader you have absolutely no idea what the documents means & sends the message that you either do not understand the documents or that you are too lazy to take the time to interpret the documents’ intent.

Use phrases like, “Document 17 says...” – or “it says in Document 15 that...” or “In Document 7 it says that...” In a DBQ use proper historical citation, integrating the name of the source & the author into the body of your writing. For instance, instead of writing, “It says in Document 12 that the horrible poverty in France’s most visible social problem...” write, “According to Author Young, author of Travels in France in 1778, 1788, & 1789...”

Reword, rephrase & restate the text of the documents – The purpose of a DBQ is for you to engage in critical thinking & original analysis of historical documents. When you simply restate the documents you leave the reader with the impression that all you can do is summarize & regurgitate historical narrative. The style of a DBQ is one of deep & provocative historical analysis, demonstrating original thinking, not gray & boring historical narrative. We all can read. We all have the documents in front of us. Create, don’t reword: think, don’t restate: write, don’t copy. Find your own original historical voice.

Glossary of Command Terms

Account for – Asks to explain a particular event or outcome. Writers are expected to present a reasoned case for the existence of something. For example: How do you account for the length & stability of government of either Leopold Senghor in Senegal or Felix Houphouet-Biogny in the Ivory Coast.

Analyze – Asks writers to respond with a closely argued & detailed examination of a perspective or a development. A clearly written analysis will indicate the relevant interrelationship between key variables. Any relevant assumptions involved & also include a critical view of the significance of the account as presented. If this key is augmented by “the extent to which,” then the writer should be clear that judgment is also sought. For example: Analyze the social impact of developments in (a) transport & (b) health care since 1945.

Assess – Asks writers to measure & judge the merits & quality of an argument or concept. Writers must clearly identify & explain the evidence for the assessment they make. For example: Assess John F. Kennedy’s handling of the Cold War problems during his presidency. OR Using the sources & your own knowledge, assess the extent to which Mao was effective in “eliminating classes & realizing universal harmony in China up to 1953.

Compare/Compare & Contrast – Asks writers to describe two situations & present the similarities & differences between them. On its own, a description of the two situations does not meet the requirements of this key word/phrase. For example: Compare the effects of the changes in family structure since 1945 in one developed & one developing nation. OR Compare & contrast the circumstances that gave rise to the regimes of Juan Peron & Fidel Castro in Latin America.

Define – Asks writers to give a clear & precise account of a given word or term. For example: Define the aims of two international economic organizations & analyze their success in improving economic conditions.

Describe – Asks writers to give a portrayal of a given situation. It is a neutral request to present a detailed picture of a given situation, event, pattern, process or outcome, although it may be followed by a further opportunity for discussion & analysis. For example: Describe the content & discuss the relative importance of the Camp David Accords to the Middle East peace process.

Discuss / Consider – Asks writers to consider a statement or to offer a considered review or balanced discussion of a particular topic. If the question is presented in the form of a quotation, the specific purpose is to stimulate a discussion on each of its parts. The question is asking for the writer’s opinion, these should be presented clearly & supported with as much evidence & sound argument as possible. For example: Discuss the view that the United Nations General Assembly has become a forum for propaganda rather than constructive debate, but nevertheless acts as a useful safety valve. OR Consider the significance of the 1837 rebellions in Upper & Lower Canada for the development of Canada to 1967.

Evaluate – Asks writers to make an appraisal of the argument or concept under investigation or discussion. Writers should weigh the nature of the evidence available & identify & discuss the convincing aspects of the argument, as well as its limitations & implications. For example: “German policy after January 1917 forced the US to declare war.” Evaluate the validity of this statement.

Examine – Asks writers to investigate an argument or concept & present their own analysis. Writers should approach the question in a critical & detailed way which uncovers the assumptions & interrelationships of the issue. For example: Examine the role of the Treaty Port system in the development of China’s relations with foreign powers between 1842 & 1870.

Explain – Asks writers to describe clearly, make intelligible & give reasons for a concept, process, relationship or development. For example: Explain the circumstance in which NATO & the Warsaw Pact were formed. What contribution did each make to the intensification of the Cold War? OR Explain the causes or failure of two guerrilla wars, each chosen from a different region.

How – On its own this is a straightforward invitation to present an account of a given situation or development. Often a second part will be added to an essay question to encourage analysis. Adding a second word such as “successfully”, “effective”, or “accurate” turns a how question into one that requires a judgment. The writer is now expected to provide his/her detailed reasons for that judgment. For example: How & why did Indo-China achieve independence from France after the Second World War? OR How successful has the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) been in achieving its aims? OR How far do you agree that the absence of the USA from the League of Nations was the major factor in the failure of that organization to preserve world peace?

Identify – Asks writers to recognize one or more component parts or processes. A second part will be added to such an essay question requiring explanation & analysis. For example: With reference to three examples, identify & explain the different reactions of African peoples to European attempts at annexation of their territory.

Outline – Asks writers to write a brief summary of the major aspects of the issue, principle, approach or argument stated in the question. For example: Outline the ways in which two industrialized countries, each from a different region, attempted to solve the problems arising out of the Great Depression.

To what extent – Asks writers to evaluate the success of one argument or concept over another. Writers should present a conclusion, supported by arguments. For example: To what extent can nationalism rather than religion be considered the cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict?

Why – This short key word invites writers to present reasons for the existence of something. Thus, the brevity of this command rather disguises a powerful requirement to present a detailed, reasoned argument. In effect it is similar to the invitation “account for.” For example: Why have African Americans been attracted to the teaching of Islam? OR Why, since independence, have Asian countries achieved greater economic success than those in Africa? Refer to at least two countries in each region.