

sections like “All the following are . . . EXCEPT” or “Which of the following does NOT . . .” contain critical words. If you don’t pay attention to them, you will not respond correctly to the questions. If you tend to be very nervous during a major exam, it’s especially important to concentrate on the spoken and written directions.

Be careful about the sequence on answer sheets for multiple-choice tests. Even the most experienced test taker can make the critical mistake of getting responses out of sequence. If you’re not careful, you may mark an answer for question 5 when the answer was intended for question 6. This can happen easily when you skip a question. Put a mark in your test book (not on your answer sheet) when you bypass a question. Frequently check to be sure that the number of the question on your answer sheet corresponds to the number of the question in your exam booklet.

Use smart strategies to handle the time limits. Virtually all classroom and standardized tests have time limits. Skilled test takers make a quick estimate of the amount of time the various questions or sections of a test will require and stay aware of the time available throughout the test and concentrate on questions they can respond to best.

On the multiple-choice section of the AP Examinations, for example, you should note the number of questions and the time allotted to them. Move on to the next question if you can’t figure out the answer to the one you are working on. Use all the time available for the AP Examinations. If you finish the exam with time to spare, go back to questions you skipped or answers that you can supplement.

Know the probability for educated guessing. AP Examinations have a scoring adjustment to correct for random guessing. For questions with five answer choices, one-fourth of a point is subtracted for each wrong answer. So if you know absolutely nothing that helps you eliminate even one of the multiple-choice options, you probably won’t come out ahead by guessing at an answer. But if you are fairly sure that even one of the options is wrong, it may be worthwhile to answer the question. Of course, if you can eliminate two or three options as probably incorrect, your chances of gaining credit become even greater.

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### *Specific Strategies for the Free-Response Section*

When you are taking the free-response section of the AP English Examinations, be sure to understand what each essay question is asking you to do and then make sure that you answer the question that is asked. Do not write on a topic other than the assigned one.

Your essays will be evaluated on the completeness and the quality of your response to the question. The quality of your response includes both the quality of what you say and the skill with which you say it—the quality of your writing. The best answers will be both perceptive and well-written.

Here are some pointers concerning free-response questions:

- *Know your time limits. Remember that your time on the free-response questions is limited. Plan your answer carefully. Think about the major points that you want to make and the evidence you plan to include to support these statements.*
- *Before you start writing your essay, be sure that you understand the passage or poem (if there is one).*
- *Preparation works. Although the English teachers who score the free-response section will generally be sympathetic if you revise your first reading or understanding of a passage as you write your answer, more preparation early on could save you the need to revise your thinking in the middle of your response.*
- *Substance counts. You need to write enough to answer the question fully and to make your ideas convincing by supporting them with specific details. Long answers are not necessarily the best answers, but answers that are very sketchy or filled with unsupported generalizations usually do not receive the highest scores. In the time allowed for each question, AP English students are usually able to write several substantial paragraphs and to develop their critical analysis at some length.*
- *Take care with revisions. Because of the time limitation in the free-response section, you will not be able to write a rough draft and then recopy your answer. However, space is provided in the exam booklet and in the response booklet to make notes and/or to outline your answer. As you write your essay, you can cross out words and sentences and even insert a part or move it from one section to another.*
- *Try to save a little time for reviewing your essay so that you can edit or revise it slightly. Make sure that any changes you make are clearly marked and legible and that any parts you want to delete are carefully crossed out.*
- *Is it natural for you to be very nervous about the AP English Exam? Yes. It’s understandable to be anxious when you are about to do something on which others will judge your performance. For most people, knowledge is the great moderator of anxiety. The more you know in advance about a course or an exam, the less you will worry.*
- *Knowing about an exam means understanding what kinds of questions you will be asked, how the exam will be graded, how much time you’ll have to respond, and so on. Knowing that you are prepared in terms of the exam’s content is probably the most calming knowledge of all. Consistent study, frequent review, and diligent practice throughout the course will powerfully support you for daily classroom learning and for taking tests.*

## “What AP Readers Long to See”

*This list was compiled during the 1994 AP English Reading at Trinity University in San Antonio.*

1. Read the prompt. It hurts to give a low score to someone who misread the prompt but wrote a good essay.
2. Do everything the prompt asks. Most writers focus on a few strategies and never fully answer the question.
3. Think before you write. Which strategies are used and how do they answer the prompt?
4. Plan your response. It is not easy for the reader to pick over an essay attempting to decipher sentences. A little organization will help you avoid extensive editing.
5. Make a strong first impression. Build your opening response. Don't parrot the prompt word for word. The reader knows it from memory.
6. Begin your response immediately. Do not take a circuitous route with generalizations.
7. Be thorough and specific. Do not simply “point out” strategies. Explain how they are used, give examples, and show how they establish what the question is asking. No long quotes!
8. Use clear transitions that help the reader follow the ideas in your essays. Keep your paragraphs organized; do not digress.
9. Resist putting in a “canned” quotation or critic's comment if it does not fit. You will get a response from your reader but it will not be the one you want.
10. Write to express, not to impress. Keep vocabulary and syntax within your zone of competence. Students who inflate their writing often inadvertently entertain, but seldom explain.
11. Demonstrate that you understand style. Show the reader how the author has developed the selection to create the desired effect. This indicates that you understand the intricacies of the creative process. *what/why*
12. Maintain an economy of language, saying much with few words. The best student writers see much, but say it quite succinctly. Often ideas are embedded rather than listed.
13. Let your writing dance with ideas and insights. You can receive a 6 or a 7 with a lockstep approach, but the essays that earn 8's and 9's expand to a wider perspective.
14. Write legibly. If a reader cannot read half the words, you will not get a fair reading—even if your essay is passed on to a reader with keener eyesight.
15. Let your work stand on its own merits. Avoid penning “pity me” notes to the reader (“I was up all night.” “I have a cold,” etc.).

Advanced Placement English Literature & Composition

THE 'TRIPLE EIGHT'  
ATTACKING THE AP EXAM ESSAY QUESTIONS

Diagnostic test idea

Questions 1 & 2 *Poetry + Prose*  
*Analyze prompt*

1. Find & mark verbs in the imperative and all conjunctions.
2. Identify all parts of the task.
3. Read the passage attentively and mark it up.
4. Watch for patterns of organization, repetition, echoing, or precedence.
5. Identify speaker, the audience, the setting, and the occasion.
6. Mark shifts in point of view, tone, or the like; mark any significant punctuation/pointing.
7. In poetry, note if a rhyme scheme or the arrangement on the page helps reveal organization.
8. Identify the main purpose & tone.

Question 3 *The Open Question p. 33*

1. *Literally, same* Cover list of suggested works.
2. Ignore any opening quotations or other material that comes before the first imperative verb in the prompt.
3. *Analyze prompt* Find and mark all verbs in the imperative.
4. Identify all parts of the task, including any that might be implied rather than explicit. Pay careful attention to any numbers in the prompt.
5. Go back and read the opening of the prompt.
6. Decide on a work to use
7. Decide on an appropriate "meaning of the work as a whole."
8. [Optional] Uncover and read the suggested titles to see if there is a better choice.

nothing that hasn't been read in last 18 months  
→ novel on top of the brain  
→ last exposure was to novel, not movie or sparknotes

ALL Questions  
*1, 2, and 3*

No title necessary

1. Write down a plan.  
Do not let the prompt dictate your organization.
2. Leave a space for an introduction. - *come back + write if you have time at end*  
*↳ no penalty for not having an intro*
3. Remember your audience.
4. Write legibly in ink.
5. Refer often to the text but avoid direct quotations of more than four words *unless you're specifically writing about diction*
6. Avoid plot summary and paraphrase.
7. Follow all detail from the text with your commentary; use the ratio of two pieces of your commentary to every one of detail from the text.
8. Avoid 'name calling,' the identification of literary elements without explaining why the writer is using them.

*↳ never "what" without "why" -*

*so use the verb "personifies" - because" instead of the noun "personification"*

\* You can't use the author's last name too much  
↳ this helps avoid summary and forces analysis

## A D V A N C E D P L A C E M E N T E N G L I S H

## Advanced Placement English Test Terms

# Related Terms

The following words and phrases have appeared in recent AP literature exam essay topics. While not a comprehensive list of every word or phrase you might encounter, it can help you understand what you are being asked to do for a topic.

Style:	Stylistic devices Rhetorical devices Stylistic/rhetorical techniques
Tone:	Attitude Speaker's attitude
Diction:	Word choice Language Figurative language Figures of speech
Detail:	Imagery Sensory language Facts
Point of view:	Focus Narrative focus
Organization:	Structure Narrative techniques Pattern
Syntax:	Sentence structure Phrasing
Devices:	Figures of speech Syntax Diction-

\* you can have 15 seconds to panic - then pull yourself together!

\* Let go of the multiple choice before starting your essays  
↳ This is a cruel test meant to break your will and see how you do under absolute stress and discouragement - DON'T LET THE TURKEYS GET YOU DOWN!

ap-english listserv, Georgina Lorenzi [GLORENZI@bak.rr.com]

\* This test is all about how/what the writer does to achieve/create an effect/purpose  
↳ not watching a puppet show → explaining the puppeteers techniques