

APUSH – DBQ Essay Tips

General steps:

1. Read prompt.
 - a. Circle the task at hand. (There could be more than one).
 - b. Underline the historical subject/content.
 - c. Box out the time period given. (You may need to provide this piece).
2. Spill out brain.
 - a. Quickly write down all concepts, events, people that you recall based on the prompt. This is good to clear your mind and save some outside information for the essay.
3. Shotgun analysis of documents.
 - a. Using HIPPO, spend 15 to 20 minutes going through the documents. Underline, circle and annotate at least two items that are part of HIPPO for each document.
4. Write your thesis and outline.
 - a. Your thesis statement should address all parts of the prompt, provide time period and acknowledge that there is an opposing viewpoint.
 - i. Remember “although, however, despite”
 - b. Your body paragraphs’ topics should be in your thesis.
 - c. Your thesis may be more than one sentence and should **always** be the first part of your essay.
5. Write essay.
 - a. Avoid direct quotations → Paraphrase (write in your own words)
 - b. Refer to documents to show analysis
 - i. You can use parenthetical citation → (Doc 1)
 - c. Make sure to **explain** your analysis
 - i. Analysis should support your topics and thesis
 - d. To help the grader find your Contextualization and Analysis points, identify in your essay where they can be found. Some examples:
 - i. ~~Contextualization~~ The increasing development of sectionalism during the 1850s was largely driven over the issue of slavery but was also greatly affected by the growing economic differences between the North and South, the ineffectiveness of popular sovereignty, and the development of new political parties.
 - ii. ~~Complex Understanding~~ Lincoln’s unprecedented expansion of executive powers during the Civil War shares similarities to FDR’s actions taken during the New Deal era.
 - e. Follow KISS principle → Keep It Simple Silly
 - i. Verbose writing receives no additional points and can cause confusion

General format:

- Thesis statement
 - o Do not provide a long introduction.
 - o Contextualization (using outside information not found in the documents) = what was happening at this period of time that is relevant to the focus of the prompt.
 - Knowing important years (turning points) and trends/processes are very helpful.
- Body paragraphs (at least three)
 - o Group the documents according to the topics for your body paragraphs.
 - o Start with the topics that support your position as stated in your thesis.
 - o Save your brief discussion of the opposing viewpoint for one of your later body paragraphs.
- End your essay with “*complex understanding*” point on rubric (three options → pick one)
 - o Connect prompt to different time period, area, theme.
 - Themes = SPRITE
 - Social, Political, Religious, Intellectual, Technological and/or Economic
 - o Address, and explain, opposing viewpoint from your argument.
 - o Address, and explain, continuity and change over time or cause and effect.