

KAPLAN: Top AP Strategies for Success

Although the subject matter is different for each test, the APs are standardized and therefore, there are standard ways of approaching the tests that can help you maximize your score.

Mark Up Your AP Test Booklet

You may be used to having teachers tell you not to write in your books. But during AP tests, it's to your advantage to mark up your test booklet. Label diagrams, cross out wrong answer choices, and write down key information, acronyms, and mnemonic devices in the margins.

Answer the Easy Questions First on the AP Exams

On the multiple-choice sections, easy questions are worth just as many points as hard questions. Your goal is to answer as many questions correctly as possible—whether they're easy or hard. And if you run out of time, you'll want to be sure you've gotten to all the questions that could earn you points.

The trick, then, is to make two passes through the question set. The first time through, answer all the questions you find easy. Circle the harder questions in your test booklet so you can come back to them later. Early in the exam, you're better off acing three or four easy questions than you are struggling through a tough one. The second time through is the time for that.

Guess Intelligently on the APs—And With Caution

Don't guess randomly: it could have a negative effect on your score. You lose one-fourth of a point for each wrong answer, but no points for a blank answer.

So if you know virtually nothing about a topic and would be guessing from all 5 answer choices, leave the question blank. But if you can rule out a few answer choices as being clearly wrong, it's in your best interest to guess. For each answer choice you can clearly eliminate as wrong, you improve your odds of guessing correctly.

Be Careful With Your AP Answer Grid

Naturally, your score will be based on the answers that appear on your answer grid. So be careful! Even if you've aced every question, you'll be out of luck if you've marked your answers incorrectly on the grid. Keep track of the spaces in relation to the questions—particularly if you skip around. Also, if you do change an answer, be sure to erase your previous answer cleanly. Stray pencil marks can be misinterpreted by the scoring machines; so keep your answer sheet clean!

Top Strategies for AP Free-Response Questions

- Read the questions twice, then organize your answer based on the structure of the question.
- Keep track of time—you don't want to craft a perfect answer for one question only to find you have no time left to answer the others.
- Answer questions directly and explicitly.
- Be careful with the factual statements you make—most of the time, small factual errors won't hurt your score, but in some cases they can be fatal.
- Prepare a quick outline and a list of key terms.