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AP ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The Ultimate Student's Guide to AP English Language and Composition

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO GET STARTED



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Introduction

AP English Language and Composition is considered one of the best APs to start a student's AP career. That being said, it is no walk in the park. Last year, only 10.6% of students earned a 5. To score high, you need to be able to flex your essay-writing and rhetorical analysis muscles, and also understand what the scorers are looking for. That's why we've created this comprehensive AP subject eBook.

Here you'll find detailed test breakdowns, as well as expert strategies for conquering the multiple choice and free response sections of the exam. We've also packed in plenty of study guides to help you maximize your test prep time, like our Ultimate List of AP English Language Tips.

It features information from the [Albert Blog](#). If you're looking for additional resources, be sure to regularly check the blog and subscribe to hear about our new posts. Even as we release this eBook, there are several great human geography guides nearing publication on the blog. We've also got content for all of your other APs, your college entrance exams, and even college course work.

E-mail us at hello@albert.io if you have any questions, suggestions, or comments!

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About Us

What is Albert?

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Why Educators Love Us

We asked teachers how their students did after using Albert.

Here is what they had to say:



My students had an 81.2% passing rate - the previous year was 76% (the highest rate in our county)! I am thrilled. I had 64 students total, with 6 receiving 5s, 19 scoring 4s, 27 receiving 3s, 10 scored 2s and 2 received 1s.

Susan M., JP Taravella High

70% of my students scored 3 or higher. This is up from last year, and is also well above the national average. Needless to say, I am very happy with my students' success. I used Albert more intentionally this year. In the beginning of the year, I wanted students simply to answer questions and practice. Once they had 150-200 questions answered, we looked for trends, strengths, and weaknesses and worked on addressing them. Students were tasked with increasing their answer accuracy no matter how many questions it took, then they set their own goals (some wanted to focus around tone; others needed practice with meaning as a whole).



Bill S., Lapeer High School



Last year 40% passed with 3s and 4s. This year 87% passed, most had 4s and 5s. We used the stimulus-based multiple choice questions throughout the year and as review for the exam. I think it helped tremendously.

Alice P., First Baptist Christian Academy

Why Students Love Us

We asked students how they did after using Albert.

Here is what they had to say:



I scored very well this year – four 5s and one 4. Albert helped me get used to the types of questions asked on the exam and overall my scores were better this year.

Robyn G., Chambersburg Area Senior High School

Last year was my first year taking an AP test, and unfortunately I did not do as well as I had hoped. The subject had not been my best, and that was definitely displayed on my performance. However this year, I made a much higher score on my AP test. The previous year had been AP World History and I had made a 2. For this year it was AP English Language, and I scored a 4. There was a definite jump in my score, because Albert pushed me to focus on my weaknesses and form them into strengths.



Charlotte R., Rome High



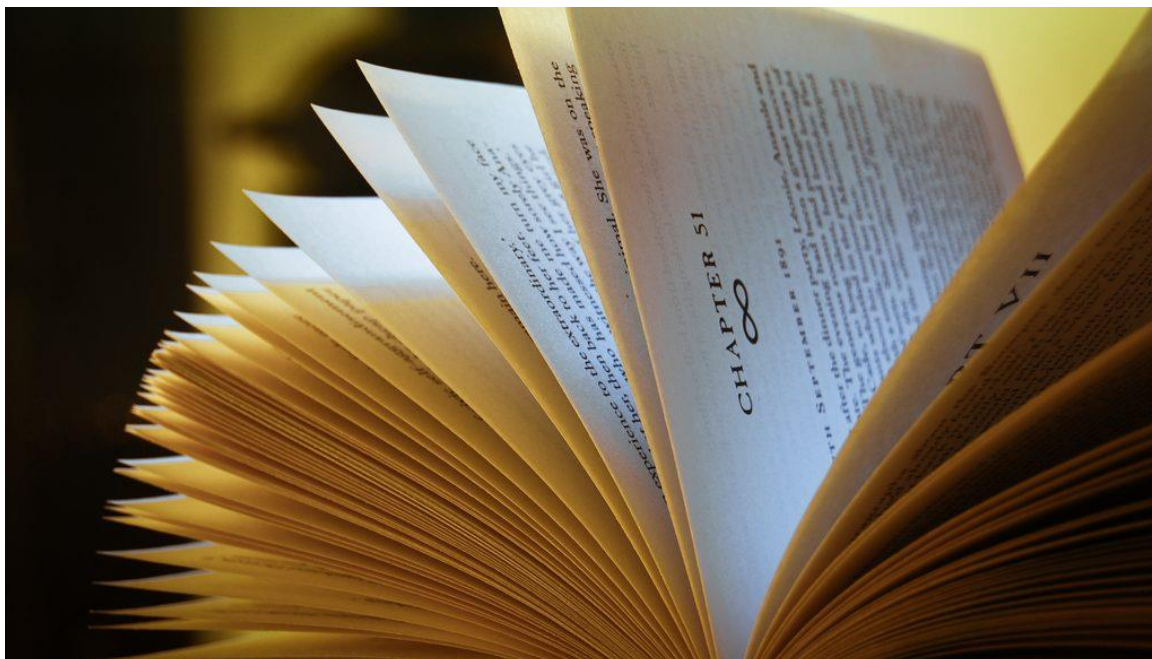
I scored a 4 on AP Biology, much higher than expected. Albert was an effective resource to guide me through AP Biology. Keeping up with it consistently all year as I learned the lesson in class was crucial to reinforcing my understanding and long-term memorization of Biology. After class each day, Albert helped to sink in the ideas that I was taught in the morning.

Lily O., Wake Forest High School



Part I:
How to Approach the
AP English Language
and Composition Exam

Is AP English Language Hard?



[Image Source: Flickr](#)

Did you know that you can take some of your time in high school to earn college credits? Well, it's true. Some of your efforts in high school can lead to college credit. How does it work? If you take the AP English Language and Composition class in high school and pass the corresponding exam, then you can earn credits towards your degree. Not only that, but you will be able to improve your English language skills too.

Is AP English Language Hard? Cont.

Through the AP English class, you will be able to strengthen your writing skills while expanding your vocabulary. You will also learn to read more critically. With a focus on nonfiction written works, you will explore subjects that you can relate to current events or other classwork. Covered materials will include an exploration of diverse styles from multiple time periods. A variety of authors will be examined to present you with a wider range of composition styles and writing techniques.

As you can see, AP English just builds on the foundation that you have built throughout your time in school. It is based on improving your current capabilities to reach a college level, especially when creating works of an analytical or argumentative style.

Course Overview

The [AP English Language and Composition](#) provides an in-depth study of particular nonfiction texts. The focus is placed on rhetorical analysis and aims to improve your writing skills in the areas of evidence-centered analytic or persuasive pieces.

Reading and writing assignments will be designed to work in conjunction. This allows the key concepts to be explored from both directions, with the student functioning as the reader and the writer throughout the course. Often, the course will include the analysis of current events which allows the students to explore the sentiment of the time and how argumentative writing functions today.

The examination of historical texts will also be reviewed to understand the core issues of the times. Critical analysis will allow you to examine the works based on their original context, as well as through the context of today.

Writing assignments will allow you to explore how you structure responses to issues or concepts. Exploration of formal writing styles will be included, as well as an introduction to various nonfiction genres. The impact of word choice when conveying a perspective will be examined including how individual selections increase or decrease the overall effectiveness of the piece.

Is AP English Language Hard? Cont.

Academic Challenges in AP English Language

Even though writing is a fundamental component of the course, AP English's difficulty resides in the reading level required. You will need to be able to employ critical thinking skills to answer fundamental questions regarding the composition of specified works. Further, you will have to be able to integrate the concepts behind these core questions into your written works.

While there are no prerequisites for participating in an AP English Language course, certain previous experience will make it less challenging. Having a background in rhetorical analysis and formal argument structures will serve as a foundation for the course. Often, these concepts are introduced before a student reaching high school, so you are likely to have the necessary understandings to perform well.

There are no prescribed texts for the course which mean that the texts AP English reviews are not standardized for all students. While you may focus on certain written works, those taking the course in a different school may work with other pieces of text. However, the CollegeBoard does recommend that teachers choose pieces that are designed to challenge their students' abilities. Additionally, the selected works should spark discussions regarding multiple potential points of view and their associated stances.

Based on the recommended six to eight hours of activity being dedicated to the subject on a weekly basis, you will likely have a substantial amount of homework. If you have a heavy course load, this could make the class more challenging due to the time expectations.

Is AP English Language Hard? Cont.

By the Numbers

All AP exams are based on a standard scoring system. The scores can range from one to five, with one being the lowest score and five being the highest score available. A minimum score of 3 is required to qualify for college credit at most accredited educational institutions.

The most recent [CollegeBoard report](#), based on data from the year 2013, shows the success rate of students who took the AP English Language and Composition exam as 57.6 percent. Here is the breakdown of the passing scores:

Score	Percentage
3	29
4	18.8
5	9.8

Based on the most common progression through English courses in high school, the majority of test-takers are in their junior year. This is the point in your education where you will have enough exposure to understand the more advanced concepts, allowing you a higher chance of success than in previous years. Some students attempt the test as sophomores and seniors, though this is less common.

Is AP English Language Hard? Cont.

Exam Structure

The CollegeBoard has standardized the [structure of the AP English exam](#). Section I is multiple choice and accounts for 45 percent of the total exam score. You are given one hour to complete this section and are presented with anywhere from 52 to 55 questions. Many of the questions are accompanied by excerpts from selected nonfiction works. This allows you to refer to the piece while responding to all related questions.

Section II focuses on your writing ability. There will be three free-response questions, also referred to as essay questions. You will be given two hours and 15 minutes to complete this section. 15 minutes of that time is a dedicated reading period. Your responses in this section will be considered to calculate 55 percent of your total exam score.

The writing section focuses on three key composition areas: synthesis, rhetorical analysis, and argument. You will be expected to read multiple passages and refer to the texts to form a single, cohesive argument for your thesis. You will also review nonfiction works to analyze how the author's word choice affected the overall meaning of the piece. Finally, you will be expected to craft a written argument, with supporting evidence, in response to a specified topic.

The trickiest part about the free-response section is that you must allocate your time appropriately between the three questions. Here is a technique that gives you the best chance of creating quality responses:

1. Read all of the questions at least once.
2. Don't necessarily answer them in the order they are presented.
3. Start with the piece that seems the easiest to you and work until it is completed.
4. Go to the second easiest piece and finish it.
5. Leave the most challenging piece until the end.

Here's the deal. This technique helps you build confidence by starting with the area in which you are most comfortable.

Is AP English Language Hard? Cont.

Additionally, you will likely finish this one quickly in comparison to the others. The second piece may be more challenging, but you are more apt to leave a quality answer than with the third section. Since the most difficult part is the last, you can use all of your remaining time to work on that essay. You may even have more time than you would have initially assumed if you finished the other two pieces faster than you anticipated.

Content

The AP English review will focus on nonfiction works written in a variety of styles. The featured texts can include works across multiple eras as well as a wide selection of topics. The focus will be on critical thinking in regards to how certain features of the texts affect the tone and effectiveness of the work.

The reading and writing assignments are designed to advance your vocabulary and writing skills. It will promote a college-level understanding of the use of language in analytical and research-based works with or without an argumentative tone.

Group discussion may be encouraged to examine works from multiple points-of-view. Further, you may be given assignments designed to challenge another person's point-of-view on a subject, similar to staging a debate.

Skills Required

If you want to flourish in AP English, you will need a suitable reading and writing level for the associated work. Often, this includes an advanced vocabulary and a solid understanding of the structures of selected written works.

Analytical and critical thinking skills are also essential, as well as the ability to back arguments with facts. Knowledge of current events can be helpful in crafting arguments based on current sentiment.

Is AP English Language Hard? Cont.

Is AP English Language Worth it?

One of the benefits of taking AP English courses is that you will be better prepared for the demands of college. Not only will you be introduced to college-level concepts, but you will have the opportunity to build upon them.

Were you hoping for more? Well, here is the best part. By completing the AP English Language and Composition course, you will be prepared to take the corresponding AP exam. If you score a 3 or better on the exam, you can qualify for college credit. Not only does this help you reach your goals of earning a degree, it can also save you time and money.

How does it save time? It saves time because it means you will not have to attend that class to graduate. In most cases, introductory English language and composition courses are required for all students. This is true whether you are majoring in English or Zoology. By passing the exam, it is one less class you have to take to earn your degree.

How does it save money? You don't have to pay for classes you don't need to attend. Instead, you get credit in the class based on your score, and it goes on your official transcript. This means the credits also transfer if you change schools down the road. Taking an AP exam is much cheaper than paying for a college course so that you can keep the difference.

If you have an interest in language and writing in general, you will be able to explore new concepts to expand your understanding of the subject. You will be able to improve the quality of your writing and learn to read more critically. You may even find yourself more adept at creating evidence-backed arguments and better prepared for persuasive writing.

Is AP English Language Hard? Cont.

Now, for those who are focusing on English as a major, taking AP English courses can help you create a more solid foundation before you head to college. For those who major in anything else, you may find research papers easier to write. The analytical writing techniques can be applied to the majority of written assignments in college, regardless of the subject. High-quality papers lead to higher quality grades. And who doesn't want good grades?

If that wasn't enough, you might also get to explore various current events as topics. You will be able to put your analytical skills to work while reviewing the concerns that face us today. This can help you further your understanding of challenges across the country, and across the globe.

During your studies, you will also be introduced to historical topics through a selection of nonfiction texts. This can help provide a deeper understanding of the sentiment of the time, and provide context for past events. It may even help you excel in your history classes.

Even if you think AP English Language and Composition sounds difficult, it can certainly be worth the effort. You may be able to earn college credit, saving you time and money when you pursue your degree, and can learn skills that can help you in all of your future coursework. That sounds like a good deal to me.

Is AP English Language Hard? Cont.

Next Steps

If taking the AP English Language class sounds like the right move to you, you will want to sign up for the class. You can speak with your administrator or guidance counselor to see if you can attend the class. Even though the CollegeBoard lists no prerequisites that do not mean your school does not have minimum standards to qualify.

While most schools offer the class, smaller institutions may not have the ability to do so. This can be due to a lack in the number of available teachers as well as low interest in the subject among students. If that is the case, speak with administrators and English teachers to see if a self-study course may be appropriate. They may be able to create a custom AP English study guide to help you properly direct your efforts.

In cases where taking a course is not an option, you can still take the exam. While this may be a challenging approach, you can work on your own to cover the material. Additionally, [scoring guidelines for free-response questions](#) are available. This allows you to write practice essays and review them in the same way the exams are scored. Not only can this help you become comfortable with the format, but it also allows you to train yourself to draft responses with the highest score in mind.

After all of this, doesn't it sound like the AP English Language course is the right move? You can advance your writing skills in a way that can benefit all of your future coursework and earn college credits before leaving high school. Not only that, but you can save yourself money by lowering the total amount of tuition it will take to graduate. Doesn't that sound like a great deal? I think it does, and so do thousands of other students every year. Don't hold yourself back when you can be earning college credit now. Schedule your class today.

9 Things You Need to Remember about the AP English Language and Composition Exam



[Image Source: Wikimedia Commons](#)

As with any test, the AP English Language and Composition exam has certain quirks that you need to be prepared for before you walk in the door. In the heat of the moment, it's easy to forget things that really are essential, so we've compiled a list of things for you to keep in mind when taking the AP English test. Read carefully, and feel free to ask any questions in the comments, or tell us what you think should be added to this list.

9 Things You Need to Remember about the AP English Language and Composition Exam Cont.

1. Graders are Looking for Precise Diction.

We've never liked the phrase "\$10 words" – surely we're not the only ones? If you feel pressured to include outlandish, 'scholarly' words in your essay, just relax. According to the [AP English Language and Composition Rubric](#), to get a nine, an essay should demonstrate that a student is "particularly impressive in their control of language." The key word here is control – what the graders want from you is precise diction. If that means you pull out a fifteen syllable word, fine, but if it doesn't fit exactly where you put it, you'll look silly.

2. Have a Strategy in Place for Roman Numeral Questions.

Roman numeral questions are very common on the AP Language exam. These questions will list three to four elements and ask you to decide which of them an author uses a certain way. The following example can be found in the [AP Language and Composition Course Description](#), which is a great source for free practice material:

The speaker gives explicit symbolic significance to which of the following?

- I. The "Jasmin" (line 4)
 - II. The "Myrtle" (line 4)
 - III. The "star" (line 7)
 - IV. The "Sea" (line 11)
- (a) I and II only
 - (b) III and IV only
 - (c) I, II, and III only
 - (d) I, II, and IV only
 - (e) I, II, III, and IV"

9 Things You Need to Remember about the AP English Language and Composition Exam Cont.

When approaching these questions, first find a numeral you know should not be in the list. If you know that the Sea is not given symbolic significance, you can immediately eliminate (b), (d), and (e). From there, it is as simple as deciding whether or not the star is given symbolic significance. You never even have to think about the Jasmin or Myrtle, saving you time and simplifying the question.

3. You Will be Graded Heavily on your Thesis.

The most important part of any of your essays is your thesis. A weak thesis is an automatically lower score. Whatever method you chose, be sure to incorporate a main idea, supports, and a tie-in to a universal idea. Once you've done that, make sure your writing lives up to the claims you made in your thesis, and don't forget a conclusion!

4. The Golden Rule of the Synthesis Essay.

As with the document based questions of the history world, the golden rule for how many sources to include in your synthesis essay is one half plus one. So, if you have six sources, use four. If you can incorporate even more – so long as you stay focused on your main goal – you will be better off. The graders want to see how well you can incorporate research into your argument, so show them. Don't be afraid to refer to a source that disagrees with you. Counterarguments increase your credibility.

5. Two Words: Rhetorical Strategies.

You know all of those pesky rhetorical devices your teacher is drilling into your head? If you're ever stuck for what to study, pull up a list of those and make sure you know how to spot them, as well as how to use them.

9 Things You Need to Remember about the AP English Language and Composition Exam Cont.

Take for example the following question, pulled from the [AP English Language and Composition Course Description](#):

“In the sentence beginning “There were times” (lines 58–63), the speaker employs all of the following except

- (a) concrete diction*
- (b) parallel syntax*
- (c) simile*
- (d) understatement*
- (e) onomatopoeia”*

This type of question is very common, and it forces you to go back to the passage listed and look for all five of those devices. If you can do this quickly and correctly, you will improve your score. Understanding the effects of rhetorical devices also helps you to elevate your own writing by using them in your essays.

6. You Will be Expected to Have Outside Sources.

In your AP English Language and Composition review, take a moment to think about what you know well enough to apply to different situations. You will need the mental list you create when tackling the argumentative essay.

If you have a book by a canon author that you know that well, you’re in luck. If not, think about what else you’re knowledgeable about. Can you list every Supreme Court Case in the last century? Do you have every song by the Beatles memorized? Have you aced every AP Bio test this semester? Create a small list of what you know best, think about the different ways you could analyze each item, and chances are you’ll be able to some of it on the test.

9 Things You Need to Remember about the AP English Language and Composition Exam Cont.

7. You Will be Tested on Footnotes and Citations.

When reading through your multiple choice passages, mark any footnote and citation. Before you continue, think about what purpose it serves. The AP Language exam never fails to include questions about footnotes and citations that many students struggle with because they were not expecting them. If you notice them as you read, however, you will be more prepared to answer these questions.

8. Go Beyond the Obvious in your Analysis.

One of the things graders look for in a high-scoring analysis essay is well-developed, meaningful analysis. Take, for example, the [student responses](#) 2A and 2C released for the AP English Language and Composition 2014 analysis essay.

The prompt, which can be found [here](#), asked students to analyze what methods Abigail Adams used in a letter to her son, John Quincy Adams, in order to advise him. The student who wrote 2A was given a score of 8, while 2C was given a 3.

For our purposes, we will be looking at how each student analyzed the guilt that Adams employed to manipulate her son. Both samples touch on this subject, but the complexity of 2A does so more fully than 2C.

One way you can incorporate the complexity of 2A into your essays is to use multiple textual examples for each point you make. This student listed off metaphors, allusions, backhanded compliments, and a motherly tone as ways Adams inspired guilt. Another way you can do this is to explain the author's exact intended effect. The first student clearly stated that John was intended to feel guilty, "for not capitalizing on his beliefs," while the second states that he was intended to think "he has to do something." The vague nature of this statement weakened 2C's argument, while the specificity of 2A strengthened its argument.

9 Things You Need to Remember about the AP English Language and Composition Exam Cont.

9. When in Doubt, Fill it Out!

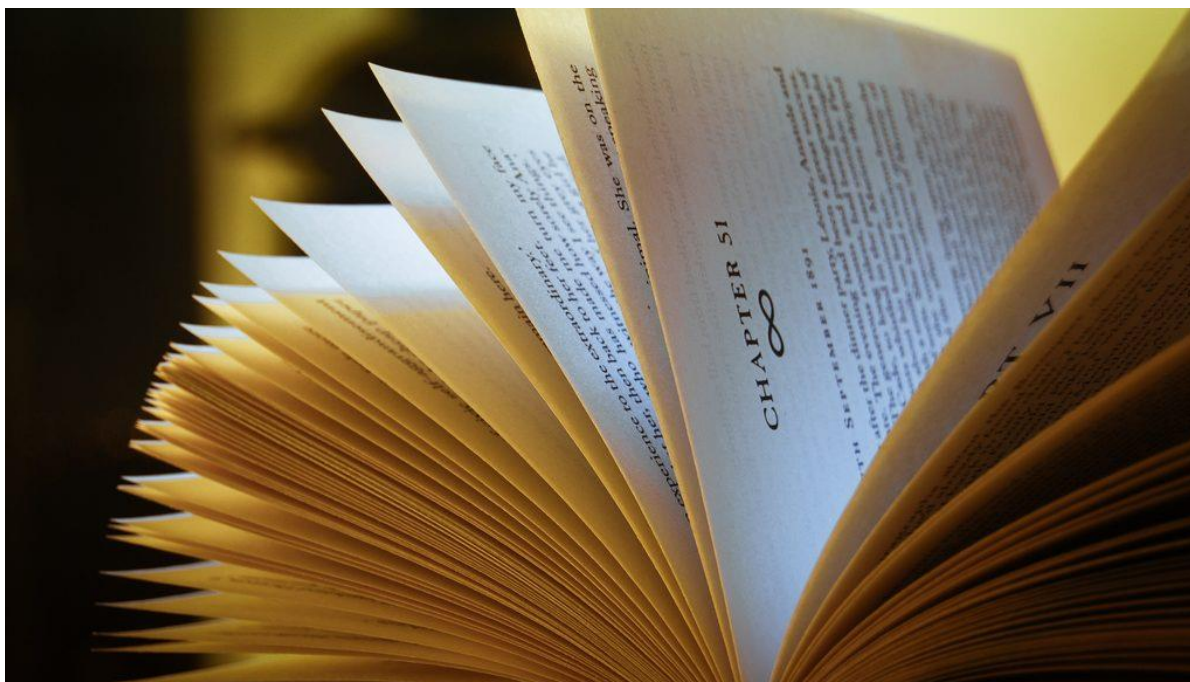
You are going to have one hour to complete 52-55 questions. Unlike the SAT, the AP English Language and Composition exam will not dock you for missed questions. The best thing you can do if you don't understand a question is eliminate the answers you know are wrong, and guess from there.

There will be 4 to 5 reading passages on the test that all of your questions will be based on. If you are having trouble getting through a passage, skip it and come back if you have time. For AP English, it's important to focus most of your time on the passages that you best understand, maximizing the questions you get right.

Conclusion:

The best way to review for the AP English Language and Composition test is to familiarize yourself with the format and study up on the details you know they will ask for. If you keep these nine points in mind as you prepare and as you take the test, you're in a good place to pass with flying colors. Again, if you have any questions or anything to add, feel free to tell us in the comments!

11 AP English Language Test Taking Strategies



[Image Source: Flickr](#)

The AP English Language exam contains three essays and a multiple choice section. While some would say that it is impossible to prepare completely for this exam, there are easy-to-implement strategies that can raise your score. Listed below are eleven valuable test taking strategies for both the essays and the multiple choice questions.

11 AP English Language Test Taking Strategies Cont.

The AP English Language Free Response Questions

1. Understand Before Undertaking

Always read and fully understand the text before you begin your essay or you chose an answer. During the free response questions the students often rush through reading of the texts given in order to quickly formulate an answer or thesis. This results predominantly in a superficial reading, or even a misreading, of the text. For this reason, it is important to take the fifteen minutes given in order to fully read, comprehend, and process the deeper meanings within the text.

2. Quality Over Quantity

In the AP English Language exam's free response questions (FRQs), it is vital to support your argument. A strategy to do this is to incorporate supporting details; however, this strategy is specifically to choose supporting details that you can elaborate on. Too many details that are not as supportive to your argument will actually hurt that argument.

For example, if you over quote in your essay, then the question must be asked: does this student know what they are talking about or are they just piecing together others' opinions?

Instead, the best strategy is to pick out three supporting details that you can focus on and develop. This will show the AP English Language exam readers that you know how to appropriately utilize your information and can develop that argument. Since there are three essays that you have to argue your point for, this tip could vastly improve your score.

11 AP English Language Test Taking Strategies Cont.

3. Write Outlines

Yes, the AP English Language exam is timed, but this strategy of writing outlines can save you time in the long run. An outline for the essay forces you to make a plan that organizes your thoughts and gives your essay a natural progression. By utilizing this technique, your essays will have better flow, unity, and more uniformity than a student making it up as he or she goes.

So while every minute of the AP English Language exam is precious, setting aside five to ten minutes to outline will help you formulate your ideas and churn out a great group of essays.

4. Do Not Summarize the Sources

During the synthesis essay of the AP English Language exam it is important to use the sources in front of you for material. This does not mean that you should simply summarize the texts in your essay. This strategy is all about utilizing short quotations and paraphrasing. The reader does not need the entire text summarized; the reader has already read the supporting texts.

By summarizing the texts, or giving unnecessary context, the reader will have trouble finding your argument, making your essay less clear overall. So be sure to explain why the source is important to your argument, but do not summarize.

5. A Quick Introduction

As the free response questions are timed, a great strategy to use is to have quick introductions that get right to the thesis, or argument. This will minimize unclear introductions that will confuse the reader. Get right to your point and start supporting it. This is especially useful if you have trouble beginning an essay of any kind. By writing down your thesis and quickly getting to the point, then you do not have to spend lots of time choosing exactly how you should construct it. Here simplicity is king.

11 AP English Language Test Taking Strategies Cont.

6. Write the Introduction Last

If you are still struggling with writing the introduction, then you can leave a few lines blank at the top of your essay and jump right into the body. This will allow you to write your essay without stopping to change your introduction, because sometimes your ideas may change as you write the paper. When you return to those blank lines at the top you just have to quickly introduce everything you just wrote and jot down your thesis.

By waiting until you have constructed the body of your essay, you understand your essay much better than at the beginning. There is, however, some danger in doing this. If you do not keep track of your time, then you may end up with a paper without an introduction. This may not be that big of a deal unless you have not written your thesis statement anywhere else in the paper, because your argument should be stated clearly.

7. Do Not Define Terms for the Reader

Your readers are highly trained examiners that know what rhetorical devices are. Because of this, you do not need to define the terms that you are using, no matter how abstract or complicated they are.

A strategy to follow with terms you use in the AP English Language essays is to use the term, explain how that term is used by the author, and explain why it is important. By doing this you respect your reader's knowledge base and bring a more sophisticated, analytical look at the texts or prompt.

8. Avoid Clichés

We are all guilty of using clichés, but they do not belong in your AP English Language exam. When crafting your essay, or revising at the last minute, comb your writing for overused, tired phrases. They make your argument seem tired as well.

11 AP English Language Test Taking Strategies Cont.

If you have a habit of using clichés, then a great strategy for you is to change a cliché to make it fresh and tailor it to the argument. This will give clarity to your point, and it will make your paper stand out. Be sure to avoid strange alterations of clichés that do not relate to your paper. These will lose points.

Strategies for the AP English Language Multiple Choice Section

The multiple choice section is 52-54 questions that make up 45% of your overall score. There are strategies that will greatly increase your ability to excel on multiple choice exams; however, the best strategy is to practice frequently. Taking practice tests months before the AP English Language exam will get your brain ready and help you to train yourself how to think.

9. The Art of Guessing

The AP English Language exam is not an easy exam; therefore, there will be a few questions that you will have no idea how to answer. Because the AP English exam does not take away points for a missed answer, you are advised to guess. A strategy to guess well is to eliminate any choices that seem completely wrong.

Usually there will be two choices that look possible and two that do not, so narrow it down to those two. With these two choices in mind, read the passage again. This will focus your mind on comparing the two choices and help you reach a conclusion. Although, do not debate with yourself for too long. This is a timed test after all!

10. Managing Time

In any timed test, time management is important. In the AP English Language exam, you must be careful and cognizant of where you stand in your booklet and in time. A great way to do this is to look up at the clock after every five questions that you answer.

11 AP English Language Test Taking Strategies Cont.

This will keep you on track and allow yourself to keep a steady pace. You will need to continually change your pace as you work in order to overcome the longer questions that contain prose, but if you do not zone out or get stuck on a question, then you will do great.

11. Read the Questions First, Not the Answers

An age old-trick is to read the multiple choice questions and answers before you do the reading. This can be helpful in some instances, but the AP English Language exam has answers that are made to trick you. Because of this, you will want to read the questions first to focus your thinking, but do not read the answers until you have read the text.

This allows your thinking to be unpolluted by the choices, and you do not convince yourself that an incorrect answer is correct.

Key Takeaways

So on test day be sure to keep calm and follow these strategies. You have prepared well and you will do great, especially if you keep in mind that the AP English Language exam is graded depending on how your peers do as well. Therefore, by reading this article you already have a leg up on them! Just remember to read critically, quote when needed and not more, use your outline, stop yourself from summarizing the sources, write a quick introduction last, avoid clichés as well as defining terms for the reader, eliminate answer choices, manage your time well, and always read the questions first. If you do all of these, then you will do fine.

References:

[College Board Course Details and Information](#)
[AP Central Exam Tips](#)



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Part II: Conquering the Multiple Choice Section

AP English Language Multiple Choice Strategies



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The multiple choice section of the AP English Language and Composition Exam, which counts for 45% of your overall score on this AP Exam, consists of 52-54 questions centered around 5-7 passages (between 5 and 15 multiple choice questions per passage). Although multiple choice questions intimidate some students and seem very easy to others, every student should practice a good deal for the AP English Language multiple choice section, because knowing the material and the types of questions the examiners will ask will improve your score more than anything else you can do. That being said, here are some strategies to keep in mind whenever practicing and when finally taking the test!

AP English Language Multiple Choice Strategies Cont.

1. Decide Well in Advance Whether to Read the Questions or the Passages First.

When practicing questions like those you will see in the AP English Language multiple choice section, whether in class or at home, try reading all the questions associated with a particular passage before reading the passage itself. Some students find this very helpful in clarifying the meaning of the passage and in that it tells them in advance what they need to look for. However, other students find it disorienting or distracting.

There is no right or wrong way to take the test; you need to find what makes you most comfortable and produces the best results. Take a few AP-style tests during which you read the passages first and then read the questions first while taking the next few. Think about your feelings during each test and/or compare the scores from the two groups. Get this done well before you take the exam so you can keep practicing with your preferred strategy and use it during the test.

2. DON'T Feel Obligated to Do the Test in Order.

There is no rule saying that you have to start with the first question and end with the last, and the questions and passages that make up the AP English Language multiple choice section do not get progressively easier or harder. Rather, easy, medium, and hard questions are sprinkled randomly throughout, and the difficulty each student will have with each passage often has more to do with his or her reading preferences and styles than with any measurable “difficulty level.”

All questions for all passages count the same, though, so it's often best to scan through the test, skimming passages and/or questions, before setting pencil to paper – that way, you can start with the easiest questions or the passages that interest you most and get them out of the way before those that will take more time. This will boost your confidence (as you see correct answers piling up) and keep you from missing out on easy points because of time constraints.

AP English Language Multiple Choice Strategies Cont.

If you don't feel you have time to scan, at least mark questions you think will take a while as you come across them, then skip them and come back later. Again, all the questions are worth the same number of points, and because there are up to 54 questions to be answered in an hour, you have only a little over a minute for each question. Don't let one doozy cause you to miss out on three or four easy questions' worth of points!

3. Use Everything at Your Disposal.

This tip applies both to practicing and to the test, but in different ways.

When studying for the AP English Language multiple choice section, use websites and blogs like this one, AP prep guides (especially ones with sample questions), and any other study help you can think of. Try out every new strategy you find, even if it feels silly, for at least a few questions to see if it works for you.

When taking the AP English Language Exam, use context clues from the passages to help you with more difficult questions – this means reading the whole sentence a question is concerned with, and even the sentence around it, to help make things clearer. Sometimes, even other questions will contain hints or jog your memory!

4. Don't Guess Wildly, but Think Critically to Give Yourself the Best Chance.

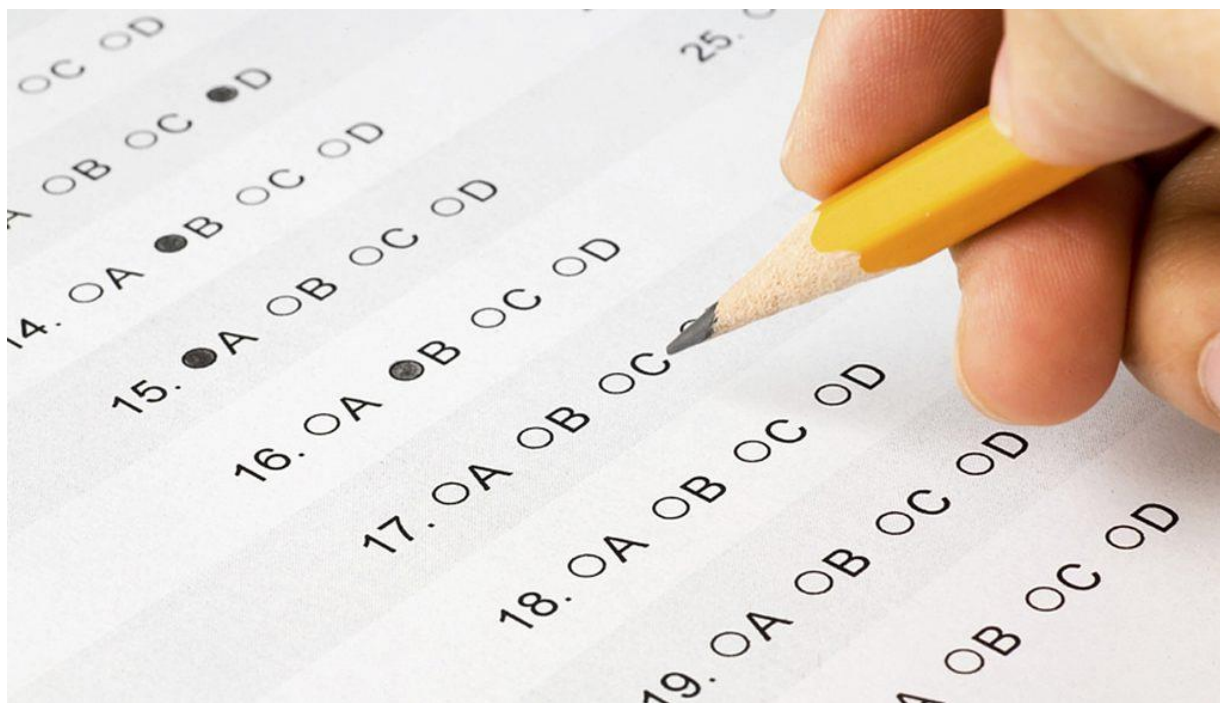
We all know how the process of elimination works – this strategy works very well here. Using what you've learned this year and your context clues, you will probably be able to eliminate at least a few choices from each of the tough questions. If you can't get a question down to two decent choices, skip it and don't come back until the end, when you will have more time to think – maybe leave it entirely blank, as the test is scored on the number of correct answers, not the number of questions you try to answer. However, if you have a 50/50 chance, guessing is perfectly okay – you stand to gain plenty, and the risk is less serious now that there is no additional penalty for guessing.

AP English Language Multiple Choice Strategies Cont.

5. Breathe Easy.

Nervousness often gets in the way on major tests, even for fairly confident students. Don't let it get you down! This test, though it is important, will not permanently decide your path in life. Besides, if you keep practicing and using every resource you have at your disposal, you can do really well – and rationalize yourself out of your fears. Don't just practice putting down answers; practice feeling your way through the test and staying calm too. Good luck!

5 Ways to Improve Your AP English Language and Composition Multiple Choice Score



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Multiple choice: whether you love it or hate it, it's a reality that you have to deal with on the AP English Language and Composition test. For some, the multiple choice section is the easiest, but for others, we would rather write our own answer than have to pick one of five. Don't worry, we feel you there, but these five tips are helpful in tackling multiple choice.

5 Ways to Improve Your AP English Language and Composition Multiple Choice Score Cont.

1. Know the Categories.

The AP English Language and Composition multiple choice is split into five categories: questions about rhetoric, the author's meaning and purpose, the main idea, organization and structure, and rhetorical modes.

Knowing the categories can help you in two ways. Firstly, it will cut down the time you would otherwise spend trying to comprehend each question. It can also help you approach the test in a systematic way, knocking out the questions you know will be easy first. All you have to do is figure out which of the AP Language multiple choice categories you are best at answering.

A great way to know which questions fall into which categories is to study a list of questions stems, such as [this one](#). You will also want to study with real questions, so that you get used to categorizing them as you go. We have a variety of questions that you can use in your AP English practice [here](#).

2. Do Whatever It Takes to Understand the Passages.

When you take the AP English Language and Composition multiple choice, each question will correspond to a passage. There will be four to five passages, and understanding them is vital to understanding the questions.

Find what it takes for you to be engaged in the passage. Try underlining words, or mouthing them as you read. Actively look for the main idea, and circle any rhetorical devices that pop out at you. Doing this will prep your mind for the questions to come, and it will keep you from being distracted or bored while you read.

5 Ways to Improve Your AP English Language and Composition Multiple Choice Score Cont.

3. Don't Read the Questions First!

Now, we realize that some people rely on reading the questions before the passage, and for that reason we're not going to say that this is a hard and fast rule. We are, however, going to advise against it on the AP Language exam.

Here's the thing: the way the AP English Language and Composition multiple choice section is structured, the most important thing for you to do is to understand what the author is saying and how they say it. Typically, previewing the questions benefits you by allowing you to focus on what the questions ask, but for this test you need to understand the passage as a whole before you attack the questions because most of them deal heavily with the overall theme of the work. You can always go back and find the details, but if you miss the main idea, you miss everything.

Again, we're not going to say that everyone is going to have better results without reading the questions first, but at least try it on a couple practice AP English Language multiple choice tests and see if the method works for you.

4. Know Your Citations.

Every year, the AP English Language and Composition exam includes questions over citations that many students miss because they are unfamiliar with the format. We encourage you to learn MLA, APA, and Chicago Style citations well enough to be able to analyze them.

5 Ways to Improve Your AP English Language and Composition Multiple Choice Score Cont.

Take for example this question, available in the [AP Language and Composition Course Description](#).

“52. The purpose of footnote 4 is to inform the reader that the quotation in line 49

- (a) has been attributed to three different designers*
- (b) was first cited in 1918*
- (c) was the inspiration for an exhibit at The Brooklyn Museum*
- (d) is in an article in The Machine Age in America 1918–1941 written by Harry N. Abrams, Inc.*
- (e) appears in a book written by Wilson, Pilgrim, and Tashjian and published in 1986”*

The footnote in question is as follows:

“Richard Guy Wilson, Dianne H. Pilgrim, Dickran Tashjian, The Machine Age in America 1918–1941 (New York: The Brooklyn Museum in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1986), p. 85.”

If you are unfamiliar with citations it may be difficult to decipher this question, but a basic knowledge of Chicago Style makes it obvious that the answer must be E. [The Purdue Online Writing Lab](#) is a great tool to learn about citations.

5. Be on the Lookout for Decoys and Made up Words.

It is not rare to be caught between two answers on the AP Language and Composition multiple choice that both seem correct. If you encounter that problem, chances are one of the answers is a decoy. Decoys are written so that they are almost correct, but for one small error.

5 Ways to Improve Your AP English Language and Composition Multiple Choice Score Cont.

One sign that an answer may be a decoy is an absolute statement. After all, there are exceptions to almost every rule. If the answer uses words such as always, never, or every, it is unlikely to be correct. If you can think of a single case that proves an answer wrong, then the entire answer is wrong. Furthermore, if there are two answers that are almost identical, but one is more specific than the other, it is probably the correct answer.

When it comes to questions about rhetoric, remember that sometimes the AP English writers will make up words to throw students off. If you have been paying attention in class and studying diligently, you can probably assume that a term you've never heard of is made up.

Conclusion:

When you're taking the AP English Language and Composition multiple choice, it's easy to be overwhelmed. If you keep these tips in mind, both in your practice and in the actual test, you'll thank yourself when scores come back. Are there any tips you don't see here that you recommend to others? If so, leave them in the comments!



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Part III: Acing the Free Response Questions

Understanding the AP English Language Synthesis Rubric



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What is the AP English Language Synthesis Essay?

The AP English Language synthesis essay reveals that in fifty-five minutes you can create a cohesive paper with a stance that incorporates at least three sources. You must be able to both understand the material given by reading critically as well as crafting a supported argument from the sources.

Understanding the AP English Language Synthesis Rubric Cont.

The AP English Language synthesis rubric is a nine point system which determines your score on the synthesis essay. A nine is the highest score and a zero is the lowest score. Four elements of the synthesis essay make up this numbered score. These elements are the writer’s ability to take a position, his or her effectiveness in synthesizing, the effectiveness of the writer’s argument, and his or her command of the language, or prose.

The Writer’s Ability to Take a Position

When writing the synthesis essay you are expected to take a position, or a stance, on a topic. This means that you must read the given sources and formulate your opinion based on the information. By doing this you will form a thesis statement and show that you can prove a point.

A great example of taking a stance is from one student sample in 2005. This, as well as the other essays that will be examined, are from a prompt that asked the students how the media has affected the presidency and democracy in the United States. The students must utilize at least three sources in their arguments. Please feel free to read the full essays [here](#) for better understanding. This student claims, “The media’s impact on American society has done little to increase voter population and by doing so, has created a new sort of identity for the president himself.” This student is giving his or her opinion based on the prompt and presenting it in a thesis statement. This statement outlines the rest of the essay as well, making this a vital part of the [AP English Language synthesis essay rubric](#). A student that does not take a position will not score well on the synthesis essay. One example of a poorly taken stance is the student that says, “TV has multiple effects on the president.” Here the student is not being specific enough. How the president was affected needs to be addressed. This is not an arguable statement; therefore, there is no stance taken here. By doing this, the highest score that you will be able to earn is a 2.

Understanding the AP English Language Synthesis Rubric Cont.

The Synthesizing

The AP English Language synthesis essay rubric also includes your ability to synthesize the information that you are given. The student must bring together at least three sources and his or her argument in order to receive a high score. These sources must not be merely summarized, but they must also be analyzed and utilized as a point of support within your argument.

One student example of great synthesizing is this [essay](#) sample where the student writes, “Lyndon B. Johnson, one of the first televised presidents, was a “great believer in the public opinion polls’ (source E). Although, throughout history this has hardly been the case.” This student takes a quotation from one source, names the source, and relates it back to his or her argument. This is effective in showing the examiners that the student knows how to properly synthesize his or her arguments.

This student effectively brings together his or her ideas and the ideas expressed in the source by taking small quotes and paraphrasing. This shows sophistication in writing, which will earn you a higher score.

Without this sophistication of integrating sources effectively, you cannot expect to get any higher than a 3 on the synthesis essay. A student who does this synthesis poorly is one that says, “The evidence suggests that while television may have initially made people interested in politics, the effect is wearing off.” The student does not cite this source, showing a lack in proficiency. This student will not score well.

Understanding the AP English Language Synthesis Rubric Cont.

The Effectiveness of the Argument

The third component of the synthesis essay rubric covers the effectiveness of the student's argument. There are multiple ways that you can have an effective argument; however, ones that the College Board focuses on are use of rhetorical devices. Some examples of rhetorical devices that are most recommended are ethos and logos. Through these elements that roughly translate into ethics and logic, the student can elevate his or her [scores](#).

An example of ethos, or ethics, is the student properly citing the sources to build his or her credibility. [One student](#) that did this well wrote, "In 1968 Lyndon B. Johnson spoke about the nation's progress in Vietnam (source E)". This means that..." The student utilized another source and properly cited where he or she got it. This builds on the effectiveness of the argument that is trying to be made.

An example of logos is a student that utilizes inductive or deductive reasoning in order to draw conclusions from the sources. This will strengthen the argument by increasing the support and linking sources logically together. This shows great synthesis as well as the ability to fortify an argument.

When a student does not support his or her argument well, this will cause the student to receive a score of a four. This is because sufficient support is needed for any claim to be made. Without a foundation to hold up the argument, your claim is useless.

Understanding the AP English Language Synthesis Rubric Cont.

Command of the Language

The last portion of the AP English Language synthesis rubric is the writer's command over the language. This refers to the student's ability to convey proficiency and persuasion with the language.

A great example of displaying proficiency is having grammar that is understandable to the reader. Utilizing proper grammar allows the student to appear more intelligent and dedicated to the exam. Grammar and mechanics are important, because if there are a multitude of glaring errors that distract from the argument, then the highest score possible is a two. It would be horrible to have an amazing argument and essay but receive a 2 because of grammar and mechanics.

An example of a [student paper](#) with errors that would lead to receiving a 2 is, "Demcrasy is important for presidants. Need demcrasy for better life." These two sentences make some sense, but the fragment and the spelling mistakes are glaring and annoying to read. This will make exam graders label this essay with a 2.

Utilizing the language for persuasive purposes will enhance your argument as well, leading to a higher score. An example of a technique that can be used is parallelism. Parallel structure is utilizing the rhythmic structure of words to be more persuasive. An example of parallel structure is, "Democracy is there to protect, to persuade, and to find truth." The writer has an advanced handle on the language, and when examiners see this they will reward the student with an extra point.

Understanding the AP English Language Synthesis Rubric Cont.

How to Cover Your Bases

In order to make sure that you have every element of the AP English Language synthesis essay covered, you want to be sure that you make an outline before writing. This will allow you to think ahead and be sure that you have all of the components needed.

Crafting your thesis is the next step. Your argument must be strong and supported with plenty of details from the sources. It is also important to note that considerable scrutiny is given to how you use the sources to make your argument more credible and logical. This thesis should state your argument as well as referring to the three points that you will make in the body. Here is a great place to use parallel structure.

The synthesis essay has a large emphasis on utilizing sources. Therefore, you will need to quickly and critically read and mark portions that support your argument. Find quotations from three different sources to use in each body paragraph in order to fulfill the rubric.

While there may not be an excess of time once you finish your essay, you are encouraged to go back and read over the essay for any glaring errors. Doing this will keep you from losing points because you were unclear. If you know that you will not have enough time to reread, then be sure to revise as you go. Allowing revision time is important, but the argument and supporting that argument is your first priority.

Reference for AP English Language Sample Essays

http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/repository/studentsamples_51480.pdf

Reference for AP English Language Synthesis Essay Rubric

http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/repository/samplescoringguidelin_51461.pdf

How to Ace the AP English Language and Composition Synthesis Essay



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The newest section of the AP English Language and Composition Exam, the synthesis essay, is one of three essays you will be completing during the examination's 2-hour free-response period. However, you'll also have a 15-minute reading and planning period just for this essay, and if you use this time to plan effectively, you can't go wrong.

How to Ace the AP English Language and Composition Synthesis Essay Cont.

Before we get into specific advice on how to handle the AP English Language and Composition synthesis essay, you need to know what this part of the test really is. It is very similar to the argumentative essay you will also write as part of this exam, except that you are provided with a wealth of source material from which to draw some support for your ideas.

While this in some ways makes the AP English Language and Composition synthesis essay easier than the argument essay (because you can use quotations, point to authoritative sources for support, etc.), there is an extra element of complexity, and the AP readers want to see how well you can sort through your source material and put it to good use – which makes planning all that much more important. This brings us to our first tip...

1. Use Your 15-Minute Planning Period Wisely.

The main purpose of this 15-minute period is to give you time to read the source materials. This essay will present you with several sources providing different information about or opinions on a certain topic. Make sure you don't just skim them, but read them closely – make notes, underline key sections you may want to quote later, etc.

You should also begin outlining your essay and considering your opinion on the subject; have this opinion in mind before you start writing the essay, as you will use it to construct your thesis.

You've already learned how to structure persuasive essays in this class and in other classes you have taken; put that knowledge to good use now, and have your main points set out before you start writing. Try to have a thesis statement written by the time you start the essay – your thesis should establish your opinion and the general reasons you feel this way; the rest of your essay will go on to justify and exemplify these reasons. Also write down some of the main points upon which you will base subsequent paragraphs and mark quotes or sections of the sources you can use in each of these paragraphs.

How to Ace the AP English Language and Composition Synthesis Essay Cont.

2. Evaluate Your Sources.

Every source you can use for the AP Language and Composition synthesis essay will have a small box above it explaining where it comes from and who said it – to see exactly what this looks like, check out the free synthesis essay sample questions at AP Central. There are also public sample questions available there for the rest of the AP English and Composition Exam.

Keep all information about your sources in mind when you're quoting them or using them to support your arguments. What journal an article appeared in can say a great deal about its potential biases. For example, consider a question on the environmental impacts of corporate practices – an environmental journal is obviously going to be biased in favor of more environmental regulation, while a report from a company spokesperson will probably gloss over some of the negative impacts of his company. Think critically.

3. Keep Your Tone Consistent.

There is no hard-and-fast advice about what tone you should take – some students try to inject a little humor into their essays while others prefer to be as serious as possible, some are extremely critical and others more accepting. However, the one thing you really have to do while writing the AP Language and Composition synthesis essay (or any other essay) is keep your tone consistent. Jot some tone-related ideas down as you outline during the 15-minute reading period, and keep in mind everything you've learned about tone and other aspects of rhetoric so far this year.

4. Use Rhetorical Technique to Your Advantage!

The various rhetorical practices you've been learning about all year can be put to good use here. This class and this test aren't just about recognizing and analyzing these techniques when others use them, but about preparing you for college and your career by teaching you how to use them effectively yourself. However, this isn't just about writing a beautiful essay, so read on to Tip # 5!

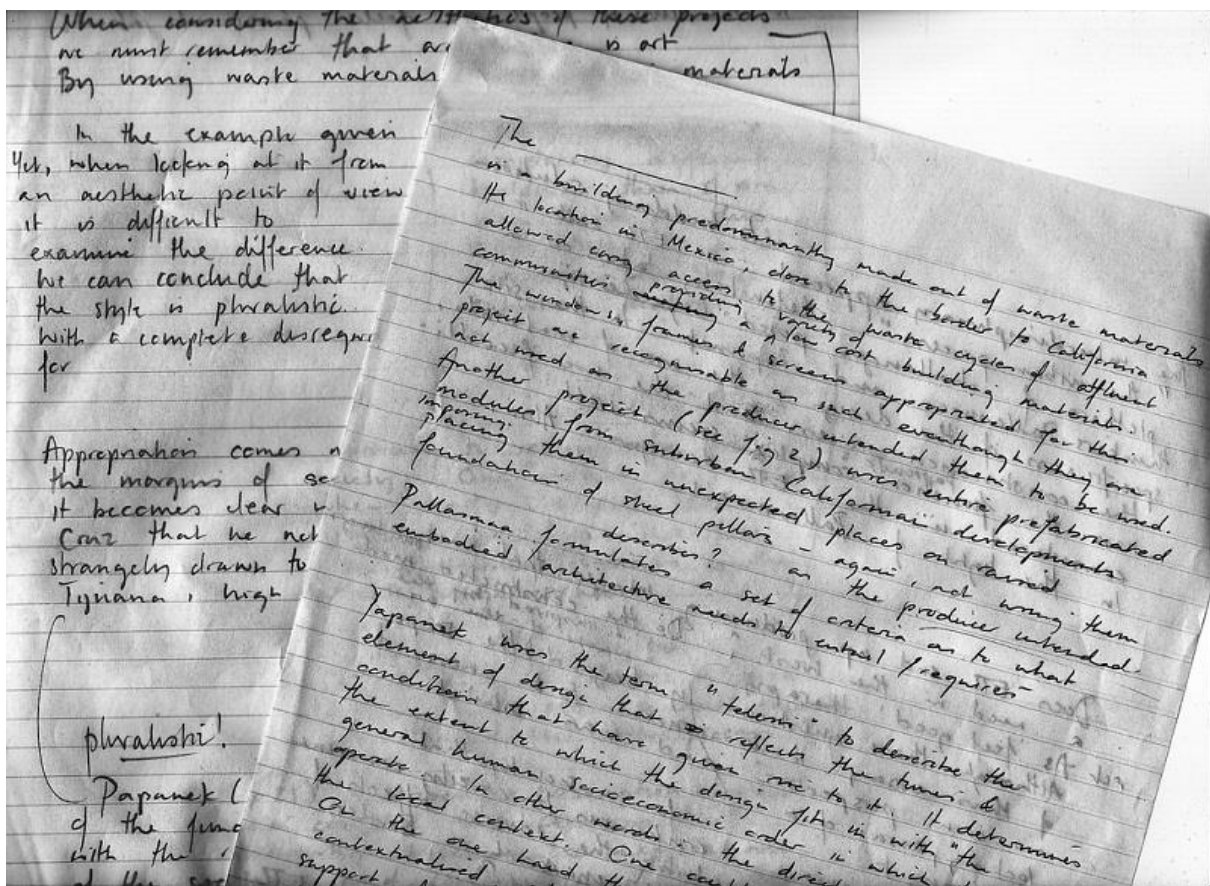
How to Ace the AP English Language and Composition Synthesis Essay Cont.

5. Your Argument Must be Well-Crafted.

The AP English Language and Composition Exam synthesis essay does not have right or wrong answers; rather, it asks you for your opinion. The AP Examiner cannot take points off because she disagrees with you. However, you must show logical basis for your opinion, drawing on both the sources AND your own knowledge and experience.

To do this, make sure you have a clear and complete thesis. Make sure the ideas expressed in the beginning of each paragraph or section support the thesis, and that you in turn show how those ideas are supported by a source or through your own knowledge and experience. Don't generalize or write anything down that you can't support.

3 AP English Language Rhetorical Essay Strategies



[Image Source: Flickr](#)

The AP English Language rhetorical essay can be nightmare inducing for some AP students, but there is no need for fear. In this exam review we will lay out helpful strategies to get you through the rhetorical essays in no time.

3 AP English Language Rhetorical Essay Strategies Cont.

Rhetorical Strategy #1: Dissecting the Prompt

The first rhetorical essay strategy is to dissect the prompt. Understanding what the rhetorical essay wants from you is essential. It is important for you to read the prompt carefully for every essay, but critical reading is even more essential to the rhetorical essay. Your rhetorical prompt that you will be given for the AP English Language exam will contain two elements. The first element is the concrete task that the prompt is asking of you, which is always to analyze the passage that follows. The second part of the prompt is a more abstract task that is not directly asked for in the prompt, but it is implied. By completely understanding both parts of the prompt, you will be able to give a complete essay that will get you to a higher score.

One example of a prompt from an AP English Language rhetorical essay is this one from the [2008 exam](#). The prompt reads:

*“In the following passage from *The Great Influenza*, an account of the 1918 flu epidemic, author John M. Barry writes about scientists and their research. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Barry uses rhetorical strategies.”*

Here you can see the concrete task that the examiners are asking. They want you to analyze the passage for rhetorical strategies; however, you must figure out what you are analyzing the passage for. That is the more abstract concept that you need to dissect the prompt to find. In the case of Barry’s passage you will need to analyze how he uses rhetorical strategies in order to portray scientific research. We know this, because if you look at the prompt, it specifically states what Barry did in his work, which was to write about science and research. That is your abstract task.

3 AP English Language Rhetorical Essay Strategies Cont.

Once you have found your concrete task and your abstract task, a great strategy is to write it down to keep you focused throughout your essay. Using the example above this would look like the following:

Analyze how Barry uses rhetorical strategies in order to portray scientific research.

That sentence is what you must follow when writing your essay, and if you successfully keep to this task, then you will move closer to that high score.

Rhetorical Essay Strategy #2: Stick to the Format

This next rhetorical essay strategy is the key to great organization and structure that will put your test anxiety to bed. There is a simple paragraph structure for the body paragraphs of the AP English Language rhetorical essay that will allow you to think, write, and score higher, faster. You need to begin each body paragraph with an assertion or claim. That is the point that you are trying to make clear to your audience what you will be proving. A great example of this is from the 2006 AP English Language rhetorical essay. Below is student 2B's opening sentence for her first body paragraph.

“The diction of the passage fully relays Hazlitt’s position about money ([student 2B](#)).”

You can see how the student directly asserts what he or she will be proving in this statement. The next step in constructing your body paragraph is to give one to two pieces of textual evidence. Be sure to state why these quotations relate back to your claim, otherwise they will be deemed irrelevant by the examiners. An example of this is the next sentence in student 2B's body paragraph about diction. Here, the student brings in elements from the text to support his or her claim about Hazlitt using diction.

“‘Rejected’, ‘contempt’, ‘disparaged’, ‘scrutinized’, ‘irksome’, ‘deprived’, ‘assailed’, ‘chagrin’; the endless repetition of such discouragement shows just how emphatically Hazlitt money is requisite for happy life (student 2B).”

3 AP English Language Rhetorical Essay Strategies Cont.

The final part of this strategy for conquering the body paragraphs of your rhetorical essays is to end those body paragraphs with a thorough analysis. This is the aspect of the exam where you can put your way of looking at the text into your essay.

An example of this is at the end of student 2B's body paragraph where he or she states,

“The irony of the last sentences is negative, conveying the utter hopelessness of one without money. Though one may have none in life, pitiless men will continue to mock one's circumstances even after death! (student 2B)”

This analysis of the text adds to the textual examples above and continues to bring in new logic from the student.

When this format of a body paragraph is followed, then it is extremely effective. The essay becomes clear, assertive, and easy to follow for the examiners. Follow this rhetorical essay strategy and you are even closer to getting that 5 on the exam.

Rhetorical Essay Strategy #3: LORA

As you are looking at your AP English Language rhetorical essay prompt and passage it is important to remember the mnemonic device, LORA. LORA stands for Language, Organization, and Rhetorical Appeals. These elements will help you form your argument.

When you read through your passage you want to think about how the author is utilizing language. Is he or she using figurative language effectively? Is there imagery within the passage? Does the diction of the passage make it more rhetorically persuasive? You should not use all of these, but picking one and analyzing it clearly in one paragraph will keep you focused on how the author uses rhetoric, which is the main task of this essay.

3 AP English Language Rhetorical Essay Strategies Cont.

An example of this was in the [2006](#) AP English Language rhetorical essay. Student 2A begins his or her first body paragraph with, “One of Hazlitt’s most effective methods of promoting the importance of money is his strong diction (student 2A).” This student begins his or her essay with focusing on diction as how the language is used. He or she then goes on to explain why diction betters Hazlitt’s argument, which is exactly what you must do for your own rhetorical essay.

The organization of the author is the next part of your answer to the prompt. You want to look at how the author organized his or her ideas within the passage to support his or her own argument. By pointing out the organization, or structure, of the work and how it adds to the overall persuasiveness, you will bring two of the three most important elements of rhetoric together in your essay.

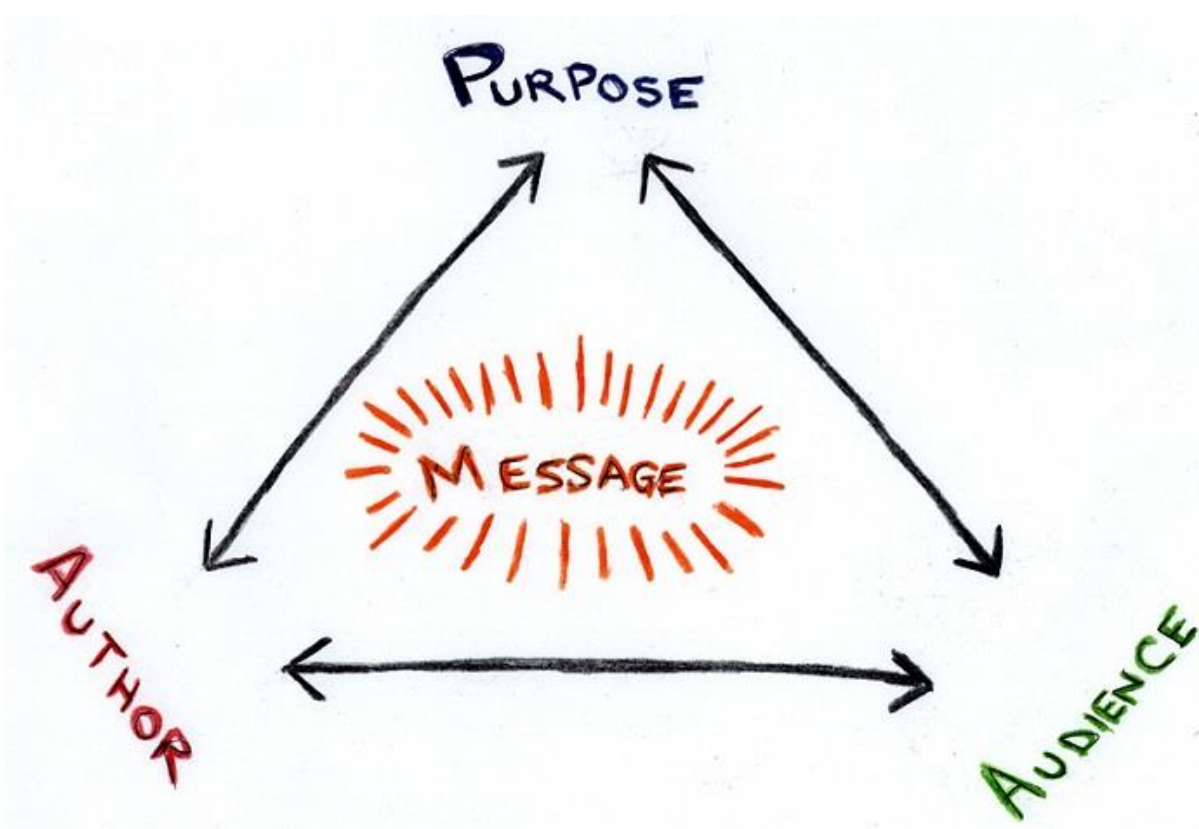
After organization you need to look at the rhetoric appeals. You may know them by the names logos, pathos, and ethos. It is suggested that you cover as many of these as possible; however, if time does not permit or if the passage uses one more than the other, then you should focus on one appeal.

One example of using pathos in an essay is from student 2A from the 2006 prompt. “Hazlitt plays on the audience’s heartstrings for more than enough time to convince them of the importance of having money (student 2A).” While it would have been better for the student to directly say that this is pathos, he or she does thoroughly explain the appeal to the passions, or pathos.

Key Takeaways

When taking the AP English Language rhetoric essay you just need to remember these three rhetorical essay strategies: dissect the prompt, follow the format, and always include LORA. If you can follow them, then you are already on your way to a 5 on the AP English Language exam.

Understanding the Rhetorical Triangle for AP English Language



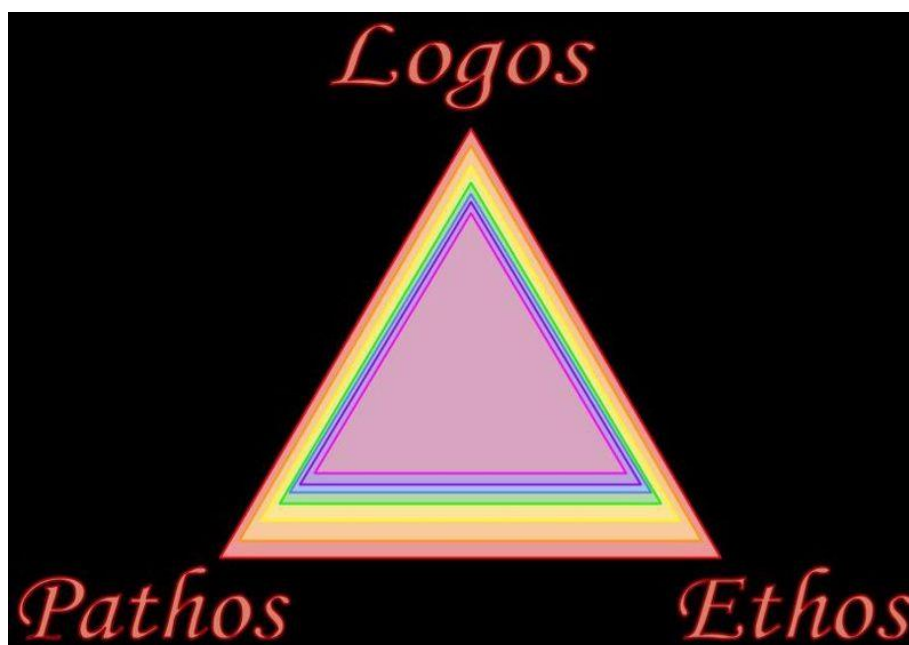
[Image Source: Flickr](#)

If you've been studying for the AP Language exam, you may have noticed the term 'rhetorical triangle' being thrown around. While the rhetorical triangle isn't something you're likely to be tested over directly, knowing what the rhetorical triangle is and how to apply it is fundamental to scoring well on the AP English Language exam.

Understanding the Rhetorical Triangle for AP English Language Cont.

What is the Rhetorical Triangle?

In essence, the rhetorical triangle is really just a method to organize the three elements of rhetoric, as outlined by Aristotle. These elements – ethos, pathos, and logos – are arranged on a triangle, with Logos at the top, and Ethos and Pathos at the bottom corners. These elements play a crucial role in any argument you write or analyze.



[Image Source: Wikimedia Commons](#)

Ethos

When establishing your argument, it's important to let the reader know why they should trust you, or why they should trust your sources. This is known as ethos, an appeal to credibility. Dr. Pepper, a renowned rhetorical expert, appeals to ethos perfectly when saying: "Trust me, I'm a doctor."

Understanding the Rhetorical Triangle for AP English Language Cont.

Now, it's really easy to create a sense of authority when you've had ample experience in the field you're writing about, but it's a lot more difficult when you're given a random prompt and 40 minutes to respond. Don't worry though, no one expects you to be an expert.

If you're writing the AP Language synthesis essay, you can simply borrow some ethos from your sources by citing their credentials along with their argument. For the other essays, you may not be able to present yourself as an expert, but you can show the reader that you have thoroughly considered the opposing viewpoint with a counterargument. This gives the reader more confidence in your argument, thus bolstering your credibility. It's a simple trick to make any essay much better.

Pathos

Pathos, an appeal to emotions, is typically the easiest corner of the rhetorical triangle to use and the easiest to spot. You have to be careful, though: the grader will appreciate an emotional connection to your piece, but they don't want a sob story without any substance. There's a fine line between the two, and it's a line you must tread carefully for an effective argument.

Let's take, for example, the commercials – famous or infamous, depending on your viewpoint – for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. We all know that animal abuse exists, but it doesn't hit home until the poor creatures are pouting at you with Sarah McLachlan in the background, tugging at your heartstrings. These commercials certainly are unforgettable, but they've inspired a lot of backlash from people who feel that they are empty and manipulative. An oversaturation of pathos can harden a reader's heart and make them feel used, which isn't exactly your intended effect.

Pathos, then, should be used sparingly in your AP English Language essay. If your argument is strong, but detached, you should consider adding pathos, but if it is already weak you will only hurt yourself with an impassioned but uninformed tirade.

Understanding the Rhetorical Triangle for AP English Language Cont.

Logos

According to Aristotle, logos is the most important part of an argument, and therefore should be your selling point. Generally speaking, this is a good rule to follow on the AP English Language and Composition exam. You can play around with the proportions of your rhetorical triangle, but try to make heavy Logos your default.

So what is logos, then, that makes it so important? Logos is an appeal to logic, which you want to think of as the base of your essay. If your argument doesn't make logical sense, then what's the point of writing it? Logos should affect everything, from the order in which you structure your body paragraphs to the finer detail work. Facts, statistics, and logical reasoning are all ways to incorporate logos into your essay.

So, why a Triangle?

The image of a triangle is not absolutely necessary to the elements of rhetoric – Aristotle never mentioned one in his treaties – but it is a great way to remember how they relate to one another, particularly for visual learners. Remember, ethos and pathos are the base of the triangle, but logos is alone at the top, the center of attention.

If you've taken a geometry course, you probably remember that the sides and angles of a triangle have a special relationship and are dependent on one another. Don't worry, you don't need to pull out your notes on sine, cosine, and tangent! The rhetorical triangle isn't that exact. But it is important to pay attention to the proportions of logos to ethos, ethos to pathos, and pathos to logos in your essay. You may have a logical argument, but if it is too detached or presented without any sense of authority, it will ultimately fall flat.

Understanding the Rhetorical Triangle for AP English Language Cont.

The AP Language Analysis Essay and the Rhetorical Triangle

Now that you know how to write with the rhetorical triangle, it's just another step to apply it to the AP English analysis essay. Technically, you don't really have to use it at all, but doing so will add maturity to your writing that could significantly impact your score. Additionally, it can work as a quick fix if you find yourself lost.

Ideally, you will want to incorporate ethos, pathos, and logos, as well as the relationship they bear to each other and to the entire argument, as a recurring theme in your essay, but not as one of your three rhetorical devices. If you can focus on how the author uses metaphor, then explain why this use of metaphor impacts the reader emotionally and creates a logical argument, you will be much better off than if you just discuss the author's use of pathos and logos.

That being said, if you're having trouble finding rhetorical devices on the AP English Language prompt, remember that the rhetorical triangle, like diction and syntax, can be applied to any excerpt. How logical was the author's main argument, and what effect was the anecdote about the starving child supposed to have on the reader's emotions? When they spoke about their time at Harvard, was that just to set the scene or were they subtly giving the impression that they are someone worth listening to? Ask yourselves these questions and analyzing the author's use of ethos, pathos, and logos can be just as effective as analyzing the use of any other rhetorical device.

Using the Rhetorical Triangle to its Full Effect

The beauty of the AP Language essays is that while learning how to analyze rhetoric, you are also learning how to effectively write your own. Once you've learned the strengths and pitfalls of the rhetorical triangle, you can use your own judgment as to how much of each element would be appropriate in your essay. The simple balancing of ethos, pathos, and logos is enough to give all of your AP English Language essays a strong foundation. Follow the rhetorical triangle and you're on your way to passing the Lang test with flying colors!

Understanding the AP English Language Argument Rubric



[Image Source: Wikimedia Commons](#)

The AP English Language exam contains three essays, two of which are the argument essays. The argument essays come with a prompt that contains a passage. The student must then analyze and immediately craft an appropriate argument that answers the prompt.

Understanding the AP English Language Argument Rubric Cont.

This essay is different than the synthesis essay in that there is only one prompt that the student must analyze; however, the passage is much longer than the smaller sources found in the synthesis essay. In order to succeed on the AP English Language argument essay the student must support his or her argument proficiently. This can be done by referencing the passage, adding his or her experiences, utilizing logic, and maintaining readable grammar and mechanics.

It is important, however, to note that the examiners know that you only have two hours and fifteen minutes to write three essays. Because of this, the essays do not have to be pristine, but they need to be firm in their argument, and more importantly, well-developed.

Referencing the Passage

You are given a passage and a prompt at the start of the argument essay that you as the writer must adhere to. Do not attempt to go off-topic, because the highest score that an off-topic argument essay can earn on the [rubric](#) is a 1. This argument must be supported as you write, and one of the best ways to do this is to reference the passage that you are given. This passage is your concrete proof for your argument, so utilize it. It is one of your greatest tools. An argument essay that has support from its passage allows the student to show that they can utilize sophisticated methods of supporting their arguments.

An example of a student that argues well to support his or her claim is seen below. The student is arguing that college is worth the money.

The largest motivator behind going or not going to college seems to be money. It is commonly accepted that a college education results in better financial situations later in life. It is certainly true that college grads earn, on average, 20,000 dollars more per year than those with only a high school diploma. (source F). It is also true that college grads are less likely to be unemployed. (source D)

Understanding the AP English Language Argument Rubric Cont.

This argument is done so well, because he or she references the text and analyzes it. By doing so, the student gains further depth to the argument and this student's [full essay](#) (1A) would receive a score of an 8.

An example of an argument that does not reference the text is the following:

Primarily, a college education is worth the cost because you will never find yourself working in a fast food restaurant such as McDonald's or Burger King. However, many people do not have a choice to work at fast food restaurants because they can't afford college and their parents can't afford it.

This argument, while developed, is not as convincing as the student that references the text correctly and clearly. Because of this, this student's [full essay](#) (1C) would receive a lower score of 4.

Knowledge or Personal Experiences

Unlike the synthesis essay, the argument essays allow the student to insert any relevant knowledge or personal experiences that he or she has. This serves the purpose of bringing even more depth to the argument, and allows the student to show what they know.

The key to adding knowledge, and especially personal experience, is to only use relevant details. The College Board does not need to know about how fun your trip to the beach was, but if a small part of the experience relates to the prompt, then use it. Relating your argument to a relevant event can show the examiners that you can apply a concept, which may bump your score up a point.

Understanding the AP English Language Argument Rubric Cont.

An example of knowledge used in an AP English Language argumentative essay is [Student 1A](#) that was referenced above. Student 1A does a great job implementing his or her knowledge by saying the following:

Coincidentally personal growth also plays a large role in the perceived quality of life. Taking this into consideration makes college more than a machine designed to increase an individual's level of monetary success.

This student is using his or her knowledge here, showing how it is not only money that affects someone later in life, but the experiences that the person has in college. This is effective, showing why he or she received an 8.

Utilizing Logic and Details

Supporting details and logical arguments are a key point in the AP English Language argument essay [rubric](#), because lending more support to your argument allows the examiners to buy into that argument. When the examiners see your point so nicely developed, then you will jump up to higher scores such as 7s, 8s, or 9s depending on how much support there is and your eloquence.

[Student 1A](#) is an example of utilizing logic to support his or her argument. The student says the following:

Putting aside the idea of money seems counterintuitive when considering the worth of an education, but it is necessary. There is more to life. A large part of college is also personal growth.

This appeal to logic is used as a transition as the student brings a realistic approach to the prompt. The examiners will see this as a masterful use of adding details to the argument without losing track of the argument itself. Also, the examiners see that the student can stand on his own without the sources, although he or she utilizes them later on.

Understanding the AP English Language Argument Rubric Cont.

A student that does not utilize logic well is [Student 1B](#). This student is heavily dependent on quotations from the sources, and this causes the student's credibility to falter. The reader questions if the student is able to form his or her own ideas in a logical manner, leading to a drop in the student's score. Being unable to form a logical structure to lay your argument on will result in a lower score of a 4 or a 5.

Use of Language

The use of language, while not the most influential part of the essay, does have an effect on the overall score. By use of language we mean the degree that the student utilizes grammar, spelling, and mechanics as well as figurative language that adds a persuasive element.

If the student uses the language well, then this will reveal to the examiner that the student can use writing as a tool to persuade. This is important in the AP English Language argument essay, because inserting parallel structure or a perfectly placed analogy will impress your examiner.

Your grammar may not be the most pressing matter in the argument essay; however, if your grammar or mechanics are so poor that you are unclear in your argument, then the highest score that you can receive on the AP English Language argument essay rubric is a 2.

Understanding the AP English Language Argument Rubric Cont.

Key Takeaways from the AP English Language Argument Essay Rubric

In order to cover all of your bases in the AP English Language exam argument essay you will want to be sure to practice months before the exam. Preparation is everything. A useful tip is to have the AP English Language argument rubric in front of you as you write your first few attempts at a practice essay. This will keep your argument essay focused.

The most important part of the argument essay is to support your thesis, or the claim that you make to fulfill the prompt. If you reference the passage that you are given, add your own knowledge or personal experiences, be as detailed and logical as possible, and utilize language well, then your score will rise toward that sought-after 9.



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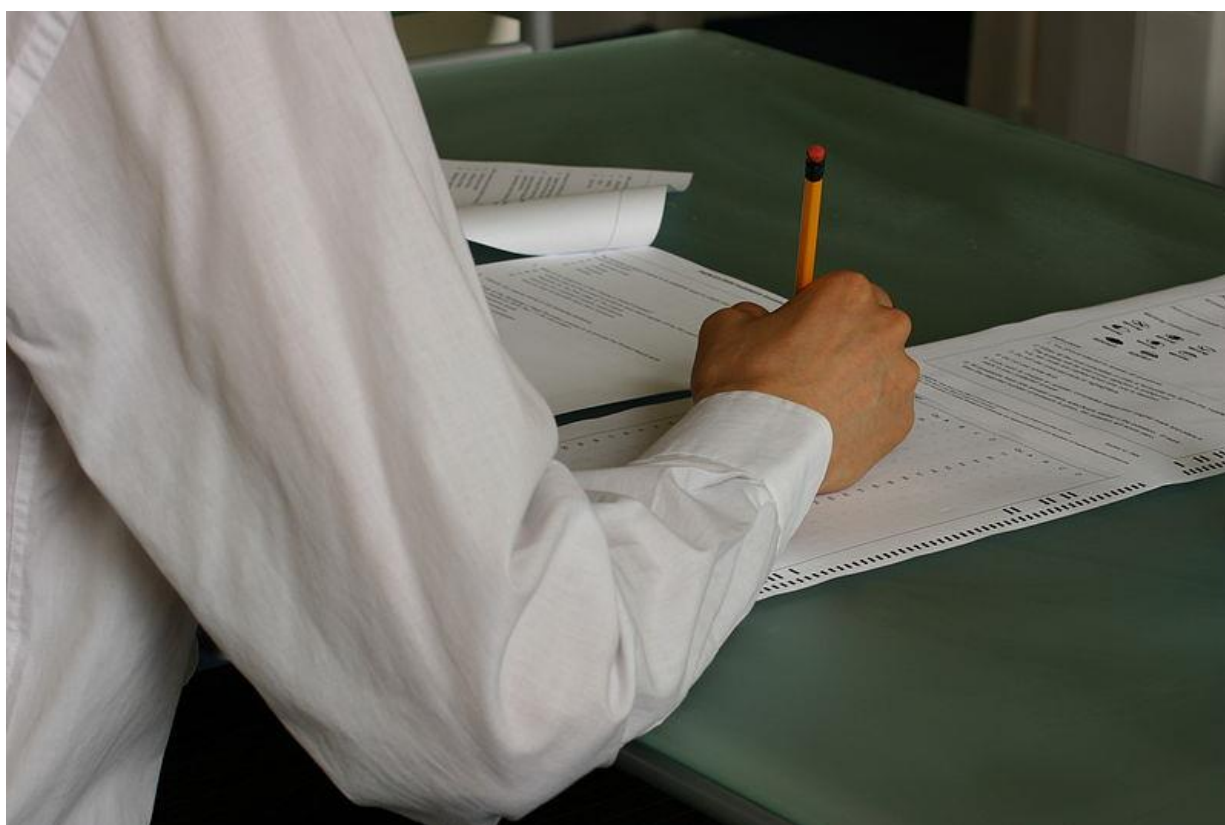
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[Start Practicing](#)



Part IV: Study Tips and Tricks

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition



[Image Source: Wikimedia Commons](#)

As a high school student, taking an English course is just a fact of life. In fact, it is one of the few areas that you will have to take all four years in most school districts. While this can be frustrating for anyone who doesn't enjoy their English classes, you do get a unique opportunity.

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition Cont.

Through hard work, and by taking the correct courses, you can get college credit while you are in high school. Yes, it's true.

The AP English Language and Composition course allows high school students to pursue college-level coursework. At the end of the course, you should be prepared to take the AP English Language exam. Students who pass the AP English Language exam will be awarded college credits that are recognized by most accredited college and universities.

And, what does that mean for you? It means you will not have to take as much English when you pursue your college degree. If that sounds like a good deal to you, then keep reading.

How to Study for AP English Language: What's on the AP English Language Exam

Creating an effective AP English Language study plan requires you to understand how the exam works. Additionally, knowing what kinds of information will be covered makes sure that you are studying the correct material. To help keep you on track, the College Board has standardized the test format. The content of the exam is also designed to reflect what you should learn when doing the course. However, the exact questions presented during the exam will vary from test to test.

AP English Language and Composition Format

The [exam format](#) is the same regardless of where you take it. You will have a total of 3 hours and 15 minutes to complete the exam, which is divided into two sections. Section one is multiple choice and consists of 52 to 55 questions. Some questions will be preceded by selections from non-fiction texts, with the corresponding questions referring to the excerpts' content. You will have one hour to complete this section. Your score for the multiple-choice questions will account for 45 percent of your overall exam score.

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition Cont.

Section two is referred to as the free-response section. Unlike the multiple-choice questions that have set answers, the free-response questions will require a written response in the form of an essay. There are three free-response questions during the exam, with one question focusing on each of these key areas:

- Synthesis
- Rhetorical Analysis
- Argument

The questions test your skills in the area of composition. The question on synthesis will require you to create an argument with at least three cited sources. The rhetorical analysis involves examining the language of a written piece and analyzing how the author's choices affected the meaning and purpose of the work. Finally, the argument question will have you create an argument, based on evidence, in response to a given topic.

While the free-response section sounds challenging, it is important to remember that your coursework is designed to give you the skills necessary to answer the questions successfully. You will have 2 hours and 15 minutes for this section. These questions will account for 55 percent of your overall exam score.

By successfully completing the exam, you will be awarded college credit that can be transferred to most accredited institutions.

Understanding the Learning Objectives in AP English Language

The learning objectives for the course can function as an effective AP English Language study guide. Now that you know how the exam is structured, you can use this information to support your goal of passing the test.

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition Cont.

The [College Board course description](#) includes information on the primary aims of the course. This includes introducing students to a variety of texts and giving them the tools needed to analyze and compare the information within. Writing skills will be focused on non-fiction pieces with an emphasis on research, analysis, and argument formation.

The core of the class is based on improving your reading and writing skills to match that of college students taking the same course. However, the College Board does not require the use of particular texts during the course. This allows the instructor some flexibility, as they can choose works that seem like the best fit. The selected works are meant to be challenging to students, as this promotes intellectual growth.

Improvements in Reading

The reading skills taught will help you perform successfully in college and help you become intellectually responsible in civic engagement. In simpler terms, you will learn to examine non-fiction works for a wide variety of purposes, including argument formation and analysis.

Particular attention is paid to rhetorical works written in formal and informal formats. This includes, but is not limited to, advertisements, scientific arguments, and political satires. The goal is to help students understand how language can convey the desired meaning based on the author's word choice. Critical literacy helps you learn to interpret the texts to find their true agenda.

College-Level Writing

Writing assignments during the course will focus on the following styles: rhetoric, analysis, and argument formation. The writing skills learned in this course will support future college-level work, as the research required and writing styles used will apply to a range of topics and other classwork.

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition Cont.

While some written works will be based on research and fact, you will also explore persuasive writing. This helps you craft an effective argument, supported by appropriate citations, to state your point of view.

Expansion of Vocabulary

As part of your AP English Language course, you can expect to be introduced to higher level vocabulary. Not only will this help you while reading the selected works for the course, but will also help you articulate your arguments in your writing. However, there are no specific vocabulary requirements, so your experience may vary from those who take courses under other instructors.

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition: Gathering Your Materials

Since there are no strict requirements regarding the included texts, it can be challenging to determine what materials will best serve your needs. Works that are introduced by your instructor are a great place to start, but you should look for additional materials on your own as well.

Review the materials that are included in your course syllabus, and use them as a guide for your other efforts. You can select other works by included authors, as well as compare the materials to others that served a similar function. Some categories that will be explored include essays, speeches, journalistic works, as well as individual images.

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition Cont.

For guidance on selecting appropriate works, consult the following resources.

College Board Materials for AP English Language and Composition

- [AP English Language and Composition Course Description](#) – A full review of the courses goals, requirements, and recommendations.
- [AP English Language and Composition Course Overview](#) – An overview of the course content and exam format, including a sample question.
- [AP English Language and Composition Reading Study Skills](#) – An overview of recommended techniques for advancing your reading study skills.
- [AP English Language and Composition Writing Study Skills](#) – An overview of recommended techniques for improving your writing study skills.

Online Educational Resources for AP English Language and Composition

Free educational resources are available for anyone who wishes to study the subjects. Here is a selection that provides coursework on various English and grammar skills.

- [Khan Academy-Grammar](#) – A variety of free course work focusing grammar and the English language.
- [Coursera](#) – Access to college coursework from recognized universities from across the globe.

Albert.io AP English Language and Composition Guide and Posts

At Albert.io, we have a large selection of informational articles and posts available for students interested in pursuing AP subjects. Here are some geared specifically to AP English Language and Composition:

- [The Ultimate List of AP English Language Tips](#) – A selection of tips designed to help you excel in your AP English Language class.

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition Cont.

- [The Best AP English Language Review Books of 2016](#) – This list includes additional study materials for consideration.
- [The Ultimate AP English Language Reading List](#) – A list of works that can help you develop the needed skills for the exam.
- [How to Craft an Argument for AP English Literature](#) – A review of how to write a persuasive piece.
- [5 Ways to Identify Rhetorical Devices](#) – Tips to help you spot rhetorical devices within texts.

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition: Practice Tests and Exam Skills

Now that you understand the information being presented, it is time to put that knowledge to the test. Practice exams offer the opportunity to simulate the test-taking experience. This will prepare you for the exam format, and provide information regarding which areas you should focus on.

Practice Tests

The first step for taking a practice test is to locate one. Albert.io offers some practice questions to help you familiarize yourself with the material. The College Board also has information on practice questions and scoring methodology.

- [Guide to AP English Language Multiple Choice and Free Response Questions](#) – A selection of questions based on texts of recognized significance.
- [Exam Questions and Scoring Information](#) – Questions and sample responses for the free-response questions on the AP English exam.

To get the most out of your practice exam questions, consider replicating the testing conditions. This includes setting appropriate time limits and restricting your access to supportive materials.

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition Cont.

If you do not complete a section within the time allotted, set the section aside. You can return to it later to complete the questions that were incomplete for additional experience. This helps keep the practice exam conditions exactly as they would be for the actual test.

If you take both sections during your practice test, take a break between each one to give yourself a chance to stretch and recharge.

Scoring Your Practice Exams

Scoring the multiple-choice section is a breeze. For each question, simply mark if you were right or wrong. Every incorrect response can help guide your future studies. Correct responses should be examined, allowing you to connect the question with the response. This helps reinforce the connection, in case your correct answer was partially a lucky guess.

Evaluating your written answers can be more difficult. It is important to be objective when reviewing your work, as this will help provide you with the information you need to improve. Albert.io has a guide to help you [score your own AP English Practice Essay](#) if you require further guidance. The [AP English Language and Composition 2016 Scoring Guidelines](#) from the College Board can also provide insight.

If you do not feel capable of scoring your free-response answers, consider working with a friend. This way, you can score each other's work, allowing you both to gain knowledge and experience. In some cases, your course instructor may be able to offer assistance, depending on their schedule.

Exam Skills

There is more of taking a test than simply having the knowledge. Test-taking can be a skill in its own right. Taking practice exams under realistic conditions helps you improve those skills, and develop strategies. You can also learn from your experience to help you perform more favorably during the actual exam.

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition Cont.

If you are interested in more exam strategies, check out the Albert.io posts on [AP English Language and Multiple Choice Strategies](#) and [11 AP English Language Test Taking Strategies](#).

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition: Learn from Your Mistakes

One of the benefits of practice exams is the opportunity to learn from your mistakes. You can look for patterns in your incorrect answers to help guide your study efforts. It may also point out some texts that would be helpful to review before the exam.

Before you jump in and start studying again, you should examine these three primary categories that may need improvement. This will help you address each problem area effectively, instead of simply focusing on core knowledge.

Issues of Timing

Taking a practice exam under realistic conditions can reveal issues regarding time management. If time ran out before you were able to answer more than a few multiple-choice questions, then you may need to adjust your strategy. Review the questions to see if some of them took up a disproportionate amount of your time. This can show you which areas need improvement in regards to skills.

When making adjustments for time, many consider it wise to skip questions that you are not immediately confident in your ability to answer. This allows you to answer all the questions in which you do feel confident and return to the more challenging ones after the others are complete. This may increase your total number of correct answers in comparison not to be able to review them all before time expires.

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition Cont.

While issues of time can be apparent during the multiple-choice section, they are more commonly experienced during the free-response portion. It is easy to become absorbed in a question longer than you anticipated. This can cause you to have insufficient time to complete one or both of your other responses. The essays are not graded on length, so it is unnecessary to write anything that does not add to your position.

A technique that can help you work more productively is to review all three questions first. Then, select the one you feel you can answer most easily. Remain concise and focused in your response while ensuring the information presented is thorough. Once you are done, move to the next question on which you are most comfortable, and use the same writing technique. This leaves the most difficult question for last. This can provide you with extra time to manage the harder question if you finish the other more quickly. If you begin to run out of time, it makes sure that your other two responses are of the highest quality, which may help elevate your overall score.

Stress Management

Studying for, and subsequently taking, the AP English Language and Composition exam can be overwhelming. Feelings of anxiety can make it difficult to focus, and may affect your overall performance.

It is important to remember that it is normal to feel nervous. In fact, it may be more surprising if you weren't a little anxious. Not only is this feeling normal, but also a feeling that is shared among the other test-takers in your class.

Keeping stress at a minimum may sound challenging, but some simple things can help. For example, eating a well-balanced diet before the test gives you the nutrition and energy you will need to perform. Additionally, getting enough rest can help you feel more relaxed. Maintaining proper hydration will also contribute to keeping you focused.

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition Cont.

If feelings of stress or anxiety begin to build up during the exam, use the following relaxation techniques to help regain your footing:

- Focus on positive thoughts, such as, “I reviewed all of this material, so I have the knowledge needed to do well.”
- Treat your feelings of anxiety as signs of excitement. The shift in perspective can make you see the situation more positively.
- Pause at regular intervals. Consciously relax your shoulders, release tension in your stomach, and shake out your hands and wrists if they begin to feel fatigued.
- Don’t forget to breathe.
- Take your time reading any instructions or passages, giving yourself the opportunity to understand them fully
- Answer the questions you know first, and give yourself a mental high five after answering each one.
- Skip questions that you are having trouble with. If you have time after reviewing every question at least once, you can always come back to them.

Proactively managing your feelings of stress and anxiety can help you remain calmer throughout the entire exam. As you complete each exam section, put the experience out of your mind. No good comes from worrying about answers that cannot be changed. Instead, focus on what you can do moving forward to get the best score possible.

Incorrect Responses

An incorrect response can come about in a variety of ways. Review your incorrect answers to help determine why you chose an incorrect response. Did you misread the instructions or questions? Did you not understand the material in the question? Was there a particular word with which you were not familiar? By asking those questions, you can determine what was truly responsible for the wrong answer. Then, you can adjust accordingly.

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition Cont.

For incorrect responses that relate to a lack of knowledge, look for patterns. This can indicate what areas you need to focus on to improve your overall score. Use that information to develop a personal AP English Language study plan to strengthen those weak areas.

If misreading the questions or instructions were to blame, consider if you rushed through that portion of the exam. While answering as many questions correctly as possible is important, it is worth taking your time to avoid incorrect answers solely because you were moving too quickly. Review the information on time and stress management, and work to integrate those techniques for your next practice exam.

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition: Dedicating the “Right” Amount of Time

The amount of time required to study effectively can be hard to determine. First, you will need to factor in the amount of work required to meet your class requirements. Then, consider these guidelines to help you determine what you need beyond the standard coursework.

Use Your Current Grade as a Guide

If your AP English Language course has begun, your grade can be an excellent signal in regards to your studying needs. Even though a class grade does not directly relate to the score you can get on the exam, it is a great indicator of your current level of understanding.

For students who find the class difficult, more time dedicated to studying may be necessary. Not only can this help improve your grade, but will also leave you better prepared for the exam. That does not mean that you have to study in large blocks of time. In fact, it can be more effective to concentrate on your studies for short bursts of time. This may help you retain information more effectively, and can limit the stress involved with having to study in the first place.

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition Cont.

If test anxiety is a major culprit of your lower grade, focus time on stress management techniques. By practicing deep breathing exercises, and other relaxation techniques, you may be able to use them more effectively when the next test arrives.

For students with higher grades, you may want to adjust the focus of your studies. For example, reading a wider range of texts that may be on the exam can increase your comfort level should those works appear in your tests. It can also help you sharpen your critical thinking skills.

Review the Scoring Rubric

Since scoring the free-response questions is standardized, becoming familiar with the scoring rubric will help you keep your writing focused. This provides guidance as to how the ideal response is crafted and makes it easier to include desired features in your own responses.

Fit in More Reading

E-books make it easier to fit more reading into your day. Consider downloading some of the recommended texts and use your downtime to complete a piece here and there. Since AP English Language includes examining essays, many of the written works can be reviewed fairly quickly. This can make them ideal for the bus ride home, in between classes, or during lunch.

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition: Studying Mistakes

Now that you know how to choose what to study, it is important to consider how you should study as well. Many students make mistakes when it comes to studying effectively. This can hurt your ability to retain information, or may have you focused on less than ideal topics. Before you finalize your AP English Language study guide, consider the following points.

How to Study for AP English Language and Composition Cont.

Not Studying Based on Priority

Many students study chronologically based on when the information was introduced in their coursework. While this method works fine for those who are struggling in general, it is not ideal if you are already comfortable with certain sections.

Instead of wasting time reviewing information that you already know, focus on the areas that give you trouble. This allows your time studying to do the most good, as you are improving the areas in which you are weak.

Always Cramming

Cramming is a common practice among students. Instead of spreading out their studying over a reasonable period, they try to force in as much information as possible as fast as possible. While this may work for the occasional quiz, it is not effective for the exam.

If you take a little time every day, you can allow yourself to fully absorb the information. For example, spend some time every evening to read just one essay, consider one question, or review one key point. Then, you won't have to sacrifice large chunks of time to studying because you used 30 minutes here and 15 minutes there.

Wrapping Up

After reading this piece, you should feel more prepared to face the AP English Language and Composition course with confidence. You can plan your studies in a way that will provide you the most benefit, and work with supplemental materials to support your assigned work.

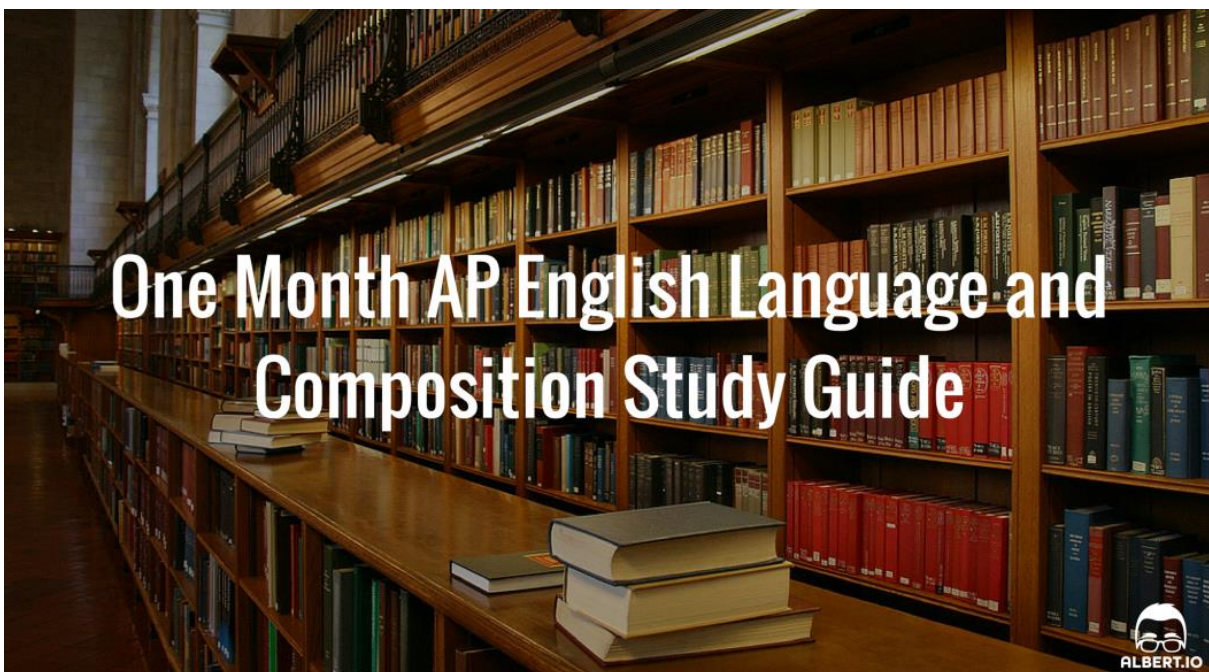


How to Study for AP English Language and Composition Cont.

If you ever feel nervous about your progress, remember that you are not alone. Don't be afraid to return to this study guide for assistance, or discuss your concerns with your instructor. Friends that are taking the class can also be a great support system, and you can work together to reach your common goal.

Will your studies require a large amount of effort? Yes, they will. Will you become frustrated with certain portions of the material? Probably yes. Is it worth the trouble? It definitely is.

One Month AP English Language and Composition Study Guide



The AP English Language and Composition test. It's what you've been working towards all year long. While one month of remaining study time may seem like enough, it will pass quickly. This one-month study guide is designed to enhance and reinforce what you have already learned in class and provide you with ample practice in every area you will be tested in.

One Month AP English Language and Composition Study Guide Cont.

Are you ready to get started?

Course Materials

1. An Upgraded Account on [Albert.io](https://albert.io)
2. [Official AP English Language and Composition Course and Exam Description](#)

Resource Materials

1. AP style study guide supplied by your teacher or that you have purchased
2. All your classwork and handouts from the course
3. Dictionary and thesaurus
4. Notebook and index cards
5. Your common sense and a sense of humor

Print this study guide and keep it in a secure and accessible location.

WEEK 1

Day 1

In your [Official AP English Language and Composition Course and Exam Description](#), read through the section titled Writing pages 31-35. This section covers the Argumentative Essay requirements. In your notebook, write at least five key points that you want to remember.

Review your vocabulary. Refer to your class materials including any prior reading handouts. Make a flashcard for any word you are not confident of. You will be adding to and reviewing these vocabulary words multiple times throughout this study guide.

One Month AP English Language and Composition Study Guide Cont.

Day 2

Go to the [Albert.io](https://albert.io) AP English Language Free Response section and read through the Values prompt. Pay close attention to the example response and how it is graded according to the rubric.

Complete the first section in your chosen AP style study guide book. The first section of most AP study guides will usually provide you with a good idea of your current skill and comprehension levels.

Day 3

Choose a classic novel such as *Moby Dick* or a Shakespeare play to read for 30 minutes. It is important that you are comfortable reading all styles of writing. The goal of the Multiple Choice section of the test is to challenge your ability to choose THE MOST CORRECT answer. The most correct choice is typically rooted in the context of the reading.

Pay close attention to the minute differences between words. Did you read “minute” as a noun as in a length of time or as an adjective, as in “a small amount?” With that in mind, expand your vocabulary index cards with 10 additional words.

Day 4

Go to the [Albert.io](https://albert.io) Practice Questions and complete as many questions in the Rhetoric section as you can in 40 minutes. It is important that you become confident and quick in choosing your answers.

Complete a section in your AP style study guide book pertaining to the Argumentative Essay.

Take a deep breath and get a good night’s sleep

One Month AP English Language and Composition Study Guide Cont.

Day 5

Choose an Argumentative Essay prompt from either your AP style study guide or any prompt your teacher provided. There are many prompts on the [Albert.io](#) AP English Language Free Style section should you struggle for a prompt.

Give yourself 40 minutes to write an essay. Learning to write a complete essay in the allotted time is key to a high score in the AP exam. It is highly recommended that you bring this essay to your teacher for feedback. Also, refer to the [Albert.io](#) AP English Language Outline How To section. Read through the **How to Tackle the AP English Language General Argument Essay**

Day 6

Go to [Official AP English Language and Composition Course and Exam Description](#) and read through pages 36-38. In your notebook, write up to 5 key points to remember regarding Synthesis writing.

Review your notes from class this week.

Read the Albert.io review article titled [How to Study for AP English Language](#)

Go back through the previous study days in week one. Did you complete all the assignments? Complete any remaining activities from Week One of this one-month study guide.

[Start your AP English Language Prep today](#)

One Month AP English Language and Composition Study Guide Cont.

WEEK 2

Day 1

Do you feel more competent this week than last? Your skills and your confidence will continue to grow stronger each week.

Complete the next section in your AP style study guide book.

Review your vocabulary index cards and your notes from class last week.

Read the writing on pages 52 & 53 of your [Official AP English Language and Composition Course and Exam Description](#). Choose a vivid paragraph from that reading and in your notebook, write 5 reasons why you feel the author chose to use those particular words to paint that particular picture.

Day 2

In your notebook, write as many tone of voice words in 10 minutes as possible. Words such as angrily, noisily, agitated and so on.

Read through the advice on **How to Tackle AP English Language Author's Meaning Questions**

In the Practice Questions section, complete the first three sets of questions in the Author's Meaning and Purpose category.

Day 3

Select a Synthesis writing prompt from either your AP study guide book or any prompt your teacher has provided. Give yourself 10 minutes to write a thesis statement based on that prompt.

One Month AP English Language and Composition Study Guide Cont.

Give yourself 5 minutes to write an introduction paragraph for your chosen prompt. Take these writings to your teacher and ask them to critique your writing.

In your [Official AP English Language and Composition Course and Exam Description](#), refer to the section on Images to Texts on page 27 & 28. During the AP test, the documents will appear very similar yet there will be one that has the BEST data to support your writing.

Day 4

It is time to see your progress in the Albert.io Check List. How you are doing? In what areas are you strong and what areas are you lacking?

Go to the Practice Questions and complete 40 additional questions in the section you are struggling in OR complete all the questions in the Organization and Structure section.

Day 5

Using the Synthesis prompt you choose on Day 3, give yourself 40 minutes to write the complete essay. Use the thesis and introduction you previously wrote but edit as needed.

Read the article [How to Ace the AP English Language and Composition Synthesis Essay](#). In your notebook, write five key points you want to remember from that article.

Take yourself and/or dog out for a walk. If walking isn't an option, spend at least a half hour outside enjoying your favorite activity or sit in a quiet area and relax.

One Month AP English Language and Composition Study Guide Cont.

Day 6

At the end of the Albert.io AP English Language FAQ section, there are many helpful articles. Today there are two articles for you to read. The first is ***The Little Student Who Could: Digging Deep for your AP English Essays*** and the second is ***Beating the Clock: How to Write Three AP Comp Essays in Two Hours***.

Complete a section in your AP style study guide. In your notebook, write five key points from the lesson.

[Start your AP English Language Prep today](#)

One Month AP English Language and Composition Study Guide Cont.

WEEK 3

Day 1

In 30 minutes, write as many metaphoric phrases as you possibly can. If possible, take your phrases to your teacher for critiquing.

Review your vocabulary index cards and add any additional words you need to continually review.

Go to the [Albert.io](https://albert.io) AP English Language Practice Questions and complete the last three sections of questions in the Rhetoric category. If you have already completed those questions, spend 30 minutes answering questions in any other category.

Day 2

Read 30 minutes of your favorite Shakespeare.

Complete a section in your AP style study guide. Add any words you are unfamiliar with to your vocabulary index cards.

Go to sleep early tonight.

Day 3

Finish any remaining Practice Questions in [Albert.io](https://albert.io) Author's Meaning and Purpose section. Don't cheat yourself out of valuable study time. If you have already completed that section, continue working for at least 30 minutes in another section of your choosing.

One Month AP English Language and Composition Study Guide Cont.

Read through the 'Of Studies' prompt in the Free Response Question section. Closely analyze the Example Response and how it was graded according to the rubric.

Review your class notes from last week. Pay special attention to any annotations you have made or teacher comments.

Day 4

Choose any of the Rhetorical prompts from the Albert.io AP English Language Free Response section to write an essay on. Give yourself 40 minutes to complete the essay.

Spend at least 20 minutes reviewing how to cite sources. Use your notes from class or use a website such as [wikiHow](https://www.wikihow.com).

Day 5

Complete another section of your AP style study guide

Read the preamble of the [Declaration of Independence](#). Now read it again. In your notebook, write down every word you do not know the meaning of. Find the definitions. Then ask yourself why the authors would choose those particular words.

Day 6

Read the article titled [How to Master AP English Language Arguing](#).

In your notebook, write up to 5 key points from the article.

Look back at the work you completed this week. Did you complete each assignment in this one-month study guide?

[Start your AP English Language Prep today](#)

One Month AP English Language and Composition Study Guide Cont.

WEEK 4

Day 1

In your notebook, make a list of any remaining questions you have.

Read through the “A God Who Remembers” prompt in the [Albert.io](#) AP English Language Free Response section. How do your essays compare with the example essay? In your notebook, write 5 similarities and 5 differences.

Day 2

Review your notes from class last week and your vocabulary cards.

Read the article [The Ultimate List of AP English Language Tips](#) on the Albert.io website.

If you have any sections remaining in your AP style study guide, complete another section. If there are no remaining sections, take the day off!

Day 3

Read 30 minutes of any non-fiction writing piece.

Read at least two articles you have not yet read in the [Albert.io](#) AP English Language Outline section.

Review two of the essays you have written throughout the AP English Language and Composition course. Do you see how far you have come?

One Month AP English Language and Composition Study Guide Cont.

Day 4

Review three of the sections you have completed in your AP style study guide.

Read another two articles you have not yet read in the Albert.io Outline section.

Challenge yourself to complete any remaining practice questions in the Albert.io AP English Language section or the questions found on pages 47-51 in [Official AP English Language and Composition Course and Exam Description](#).

Day 5

Have you completed all the Practice Questions in Albert.io? If not, take at least 40 minutes and answer more questions.

Scroll to the bottom of the Albert.io AP English Language FAQ. Read the article titled [Don't Blindly Answer C! AP English Multiple Choice Strategies](#).

Day 6

Scroll to the bottom of the [Albert.io](#) AP English Language FAQ. Read the articles you have not already read.

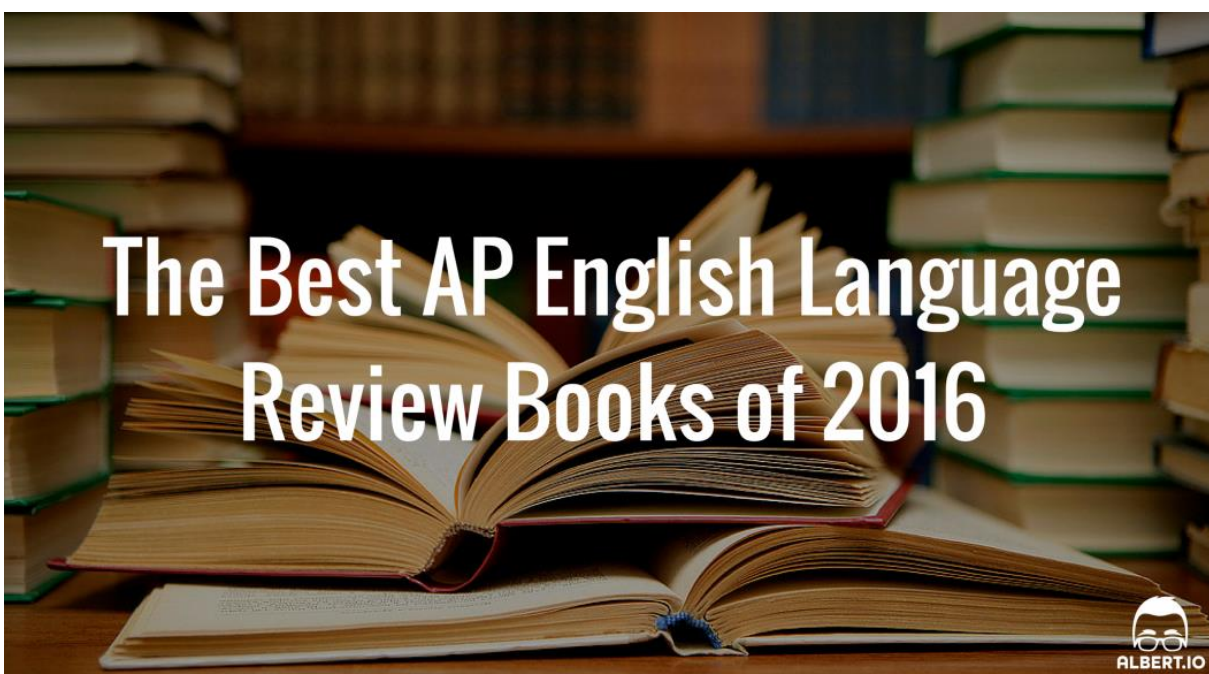
Use the Check List to ensure you are ready for the test.

Congratulations on completing this AP English Language and Composition one-month study guide! The bottom line is, if you have walked through all these assignments and followed your teachers directing, you will be comfortable and confident on test day.

[Let us know](#) what has worked for you. What did you like best about this one month study guide? Do you have recommendations of your own on how to study for the AP English Language exam?

[Start your AP English Language Prep today](#)

The Best AP English Language Review Books of 2016



If you're taking AP English Language and Composition, you're probably trying to find the perfect review book to help prepare for the exam. This can be extremely overwhelming since there are so many options out there and sifting through user reviews can be tedious and contradictory.

The Best AP English Language Review Books of 2016 Cont.

Luckily, we're here to help! The first thing you should know is that practice is extremely important for this particular exam, even more so than memorizing vocab and rhetorical strategies. You cannot practice enough. The being said, the perfect AP English Language and Composition review book should place most of its focus on practice.

Here are some other things you should look for in a good review book:

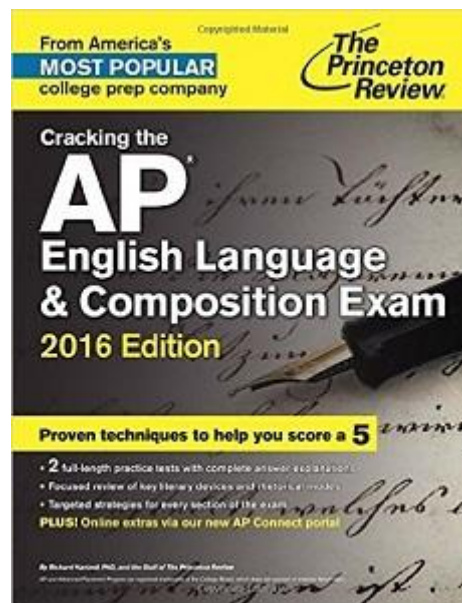
- Several full-length practice exams
- At least one diagnostic exam
- Whole chapters dedicated to writing essays
- Whole chapters dedicated to understanding multiple-choice questions
- A glossary or appendix of key terms

It's also useful to consider your personal studying methods and the time you have left before the exam. Are you cramming or do you have several months before exam day? Are you struggling with writing high-scoring essays? Are the multiple-choice questions your main weakness? Knowing your study goals is essential to picking the right review book for you.

Without further ado, let's take a look at five of the most popular AP English Language and Composition review book options and help you narrow down which is the right book for you!

The Best AP English Language Review Books of 2016 Cont.

[Princeton Review Cracking the AP English Language & Composition Exam](#)



This 256-page review book focuses on exam-taking strategies, vocabulary, and rhetorical strategies, with practice taking a back seat. Some say the book includes mostly just commonsense information, while others say it helped them get a great score on the AP English Language and Composition exam.

The Princeton Review is usually seen as the best of the best when it comes to AP preparation. But is that true here? Let's see.

Pros:

- This review books includes a helpful list of rhetorical strategies you should know for the exam, as well as a “hit parade,” which defines around 200 vocabulary words you might see on the exam.
- Comes with pacing drills to help you maximize points on the exam.

The Best AP English Language Review Books of 2016 Cont.

Cons:

- The multiple-choice strategies section is short and doesn't offer much helpful advice. In fact, there are only around 10 pages explaining the multiple-choice section, which is worrying since this section is worth 45% of your entire exam score.
- This is a big one: both students and teachers say that the practice exams are way too difficult, and are *not* a good indicator of what you'll see on the actual exam. There's too much obscure terminology that you'll never see on the exam.
- This review book only contains two practice exams which is really just not enough. Additionally, there is no diagnostic exam.
- Some of the practice essay prompts are confusing and garbled.

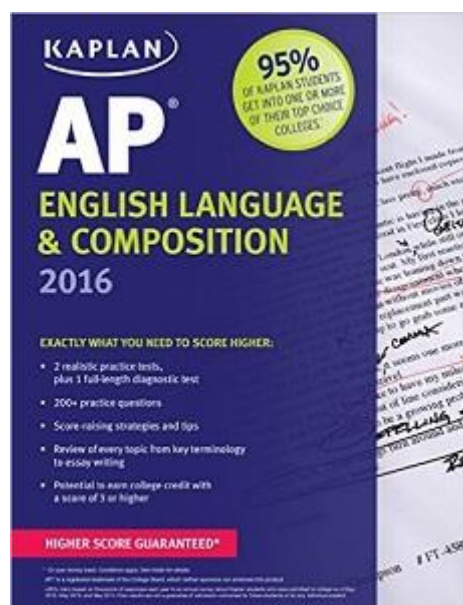
Useful For:

- Students cramming a few weeks (or even a few days) before the exam.
- Students wanting to build up, or brush up on, their vocabulary for the exam.

Grade: C-

The Best AP English Language Review Books of 2016 Cont.

[Kaplan AP English Language and Composition](#)



This 360-page review book touches on a little bit of everything: practice tests, test-taking strategies, and an in-depth review of important concepts, terminology, and grammar. Opinions seem to be mixed on this review book, with some saying it is very helpful, and some saying to avoid it completely. But what's the truth? Let's find out.

Pros:

- Includes a grammar reference guide, a guide to usage and style, a chapter on how to read critically, a chapter on key terminology, and a full list of important word roots.
- Includes two full-length practice exams as well as a diagnostic test, complete with answers and explanations.
- Includes a two-page removable study sheet with key terms and facts.

The Best AP English Language Review Books of 2016 Cont.

Cons:

- The multiple-choice practice questions focus mostly on literary devices, instead of testing your critical reading skills.
- The practice questions are much harder than the actual exam and the passages for the essay prompts are unrealistically long. Some students like that the practice questions are more difficult than the actual exam, but more often, this will just freak you out and lower your confidence.
- Only comes with two practice exams. For an AP exam that requires so much practice, two practice exams may not be enough.

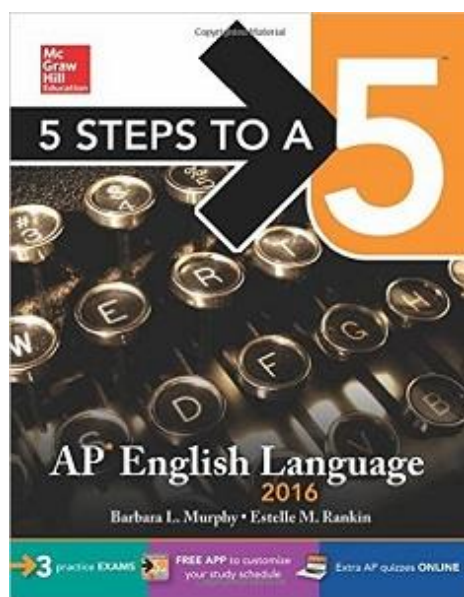
Useful For:

- Students just starting out in AP Language and Composition who need to not only review for the exam, but also *learn* key concepts and terminology.
- Students who want to exercise their essay writing and multiple-choice skills by taking difficult practice exams.

Grade: B

The Best AP English Language Review Books of 2016 Cont.

[5 Steps to a 5 AP English Language 2016](#)



This 272-page review book includes an even balance of test-taking strategies, knowledge review, and practice. The basic premise of this book is its 5-step preparation plan and its three study plans you can choose from to fit your learning style (and the time you have left until the exam). Unlike other review books, this one really emphasizes having a well-thought out study plan and sticking to it. Will 5 Steps to a 5 get you that score of 5? Let's find out.

Pros:

- This review book includes 3 full-length practice exams, plus a diagnostic test! The more practice the better.
- The author of this review book has been an AP Reader (evaluates and scores free-response sections AP Exams) for over 10 years and is a consultant for the College Board's AP English Language and Composition exam. She knows what she's talking about.

The Best AP English Language Review Books of 2016 Cont.

- You will gain access to a bonus app called the AP Planner, which allows you to customize your study schedule, receive daily assignment notifications, and answer extra practice questions. This can help keep you on track.
- Essay writing skills take up a big chunk of this review book, which is a huge plus. This book will give you helpful strategies and tips on style, coherence, and more.

Cons:

- Focuses a little too much on the structure of the test and the grading scheme.
- Explanations of essay responses are sometimes unclear or abstract.
- The practice exams are more difficult than the actual AP English Language and Composition exam.

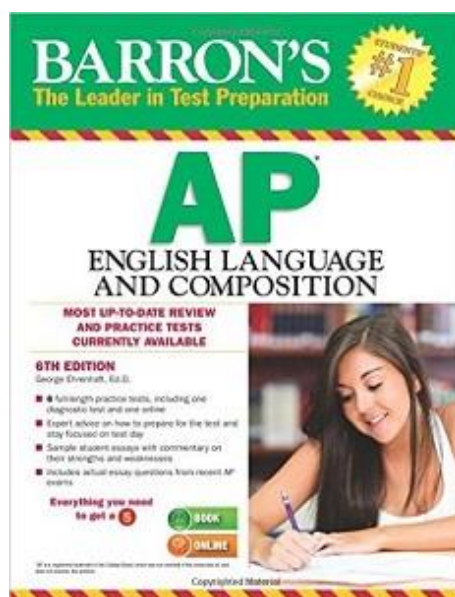
Useful For:

- Students struggling with time management and students who want a clearly defined schedule and plan of attack.
- Students needing to hone their essay writing skills.

GRADE: B+

The Best AP English Language Review Books of 2016 Cont.

[Barron's AP English Language and Composition 6th Edition](#)



This 408-page review book is chock-full of practice tests and helpful test-taking strategies. It avoids going over key terms and concepts of language and composition, and instead focuses on teaching you *how* to take the test. It is highly recommended by AP teachers and students alike. But will it work for you? Let's see.

Pros:

- This review book comes with five full-length practice exams, as well as a bonus online practice test! This is great news since practice is so important for the AP English Language and Composition exam. All of the questions and answers are fully explained for all six of the practice tests.
- You can purchase an additional CD-ROM with the book to access two additional full-length practice exams with answer explanations and automatic scoring.

The Best AP English Language Review Books of 2016 Cont.

- The diagnostic test included with the book is a useful tool to help gauge where you're currently at and what you need to focus your studies on.
- It comes with useful advice on how to answer multiple-choice questions, as well as an entire chapter dedicated to helping you master the essay questions.

Cons:

- The book is mostly about how to take the test rather than reviewing course material.
- Some of the practice question instructions aren't very clear and some of the explanations for the practice problems aren't very insightful.

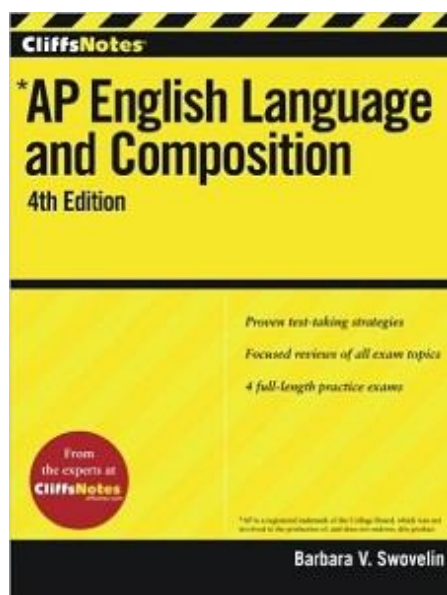
Useful For:

- Students who already know the course material, but need practice writing essays and answering multiple-choice questions.
- Students who have plenty of time to review before the exam (not useful for cramming).

GRADE: A-

The Best AP English Language Review Books of 2016 Cont.

[CliffsNotes AP English Language and Composition 4th Edition](#)



This 336-page review book is known as the Holy Grail of review books amongst AP English Language and Composition students and teachers. In fact, many AP teachers actually *require* this review book for their classes and many students have scored a 5 by using it! But what makes it so great and will it fit *your* needs? Let's break it down.

Pros:

- With 4 full-length practice exams, this review book consists mostly of practice tests. Since practice is essential to getting a high score on the AP Language exam, you can never take too many practice exams.
- The practice multiple-choice questions come with detailed explanations on *why* an answer is correct as well as explaining why the other options are *not*.

The Best AP English Language Review Books of 2016 Cont.

- The readings and sample problems are very similar to the real exam, which is surprisingly rare to find in review books. You'll see a wide variety of readings and essays in this review book, covering modern non-fiction, essays from the 17th and 18th centuries, and more.
- There are model "low" and "high" scoring essay responses for all three of the prompts (Argumentative, Prose, Synthesis) to help you see what makes an essay a good essay and what makes an essay a poor essay.
- Includes in-depth explanations of the different question types you might see on the exam, and how to answer them effectively.

Cons:

- The book mostly focuses on test-taking strategies and practice questions, so if you're looking for a review of concepts you will be disappointed. There are definitions of terms at the back of the book, but it does not go into too much depth.

Useful For:

- Students who want to review and brush up for the exam, not *learn* new terms and vocabulary.
- Students struggling with the essay section, or students wanting to get higher scoring essays.

GRADE: A

The Best AP English Language Review Books of 2016 Cont.

So Which One is the Best AP English Language and Composition Review Book?

There's no such thing as a perfect review book, but CliffsNotes gets pretty darn close. Not only does it have four practice exams, but the questions are as close as you'll get to the actual questions you'll see on the AP English Language and Composition exam. If you don't know which review book to get, give CliffsNotes a try, especially if you're looking for extra essay help and practice.

A close second is Barron's. This one comes with a whopping five full-length practice exams (plus a bonus online practice test!), which can't be beat by any other review book. If you do get this book, make sure you get it towards the beginning of the year, since it's not really useful for cramming.

The other three review books, 5 Steps to a 5, Kaplan, and Princeton Review, each have their merits but they also have many drawbacks which prevents them from getting an A grade:

5 Steps to a 5 is the best review book for planning your study time effectively, but the practice exams can be too difficult and abstract.

Kaplan is the best book for reviewing terminology and grammar, but again, the practice exams are too difficult.

Finally, the lowest-scoring review book, the Princeton Review, is lacking in the practice department (which is a deal-breaker since the exam requires a lot of practice) and has some of the hardest example questions out there.

The Best AP English Language Review Books of 2016 Cont.

Final Verdict

Book Title	Pages	Biggest Pro	Biggest Con	Perks	Grade
Princeton Review Cracking the AP English Language & Composition Exam, 2016 Edition	256	Useful for building up your vocabulary for the exam.	There are only two practice exams and even those aren't representative of what you'll see on the exam.	Access to AP Connect online portal, which includes pre-college information and exam updates	C-
Kaplan AP English Language & Composition 2016	360	The best book for in-depth review of important concepts, terminology, and grammar.	Only comes with two practice exams.	Two-page, full-color removable study sheet	B

The Best AP English Language Review Books of 2016 Cont.

Book Title	Pages	Biggest Pro	Biggest Con	Perks	Grade
5 Steps to a 5 AP English Language 2016	272	Has great study plans to prevent procrastination and keep you on track.	The practice exams are way more difficult than the actual exam.	Access to McGraw-Hill Education's interactive AP Planner app	B+
Barron's AP English Language and Composition, 6th Edition	408	Comes with five full-length practice exams!	Some practice questions can be unclear.	Bonus online practice test	A-
CliffsNotes AP English Language and Composition, 4th Edition	336	Includes four full-length practice exams that are very similar to questions you'll see on the actual exam.	Does not include very much review of language concepts, vocabulary, etc.	—	A

The Ultimate AP English Language Reading List



[Image Source: Wikimedia Commons](#)

Within the AP English Language curriculum are certain books that will assist you in answering free response questions during the exam as well as some of the multiple choice questions. By being well-read you can get a leg up on the other students, thus vastly improving your score, so get reading! Below is a list of the ultimate AP English Language reading list and a quick synopsis for each work.

The Ultimate AP English Language Reading List Cont.

The Fountainhead

The Fountainhead by Ayn Rand is a novel depicting Howard Roark and his journey through his struggling life. Ayn Rand focuses on her objectivist manifesto as she tells the story of Roark and simultaneously persuades her audience that the self will triumph over all else. Rand utilizes amazing rhetorical prowess in *The Fountainhead*, making this novel a great way to introduce students to analyzing rhetorical methods and devices. This is important for the second free response question on the AP English exam, because that essay question will ask the student to pick out how the author uses rhetoric. If you practice with *The Fountainhead*, then finding rhetorical devices in a work will become much easier.

The Scarlet Letter

The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne is a story of a young woman who had an affair with a priest. It is a story of sin, guilt, mystery, and adultery as Hester Prynne makes her way through turmoil when she wore a red letter 'A' for adultery. This novel was famous for its use of symbolism, making *The Scarlet Letter* a fantastic tool for looking beyond the surface of a text. This will serve the student well as he or she analyzes various texts during the multiple choice and the free response section of the AP English Language exam.

The multiple choice exam dictates that the student must be able to look deeply into a passage and see beyond the words. The questions are made to utilize critical thinking skills that one needs to pick apart *The Scarlet Letter*.

Hamlet

Hamlet by William Shakespeare is a play that follows Hamlet, the son of the newly murdered king of Denmark. Hamlet was sent into a spiraling depression after his mother remarries and he is unable to claim the throne. Therefore, Hamlet plots to kill Claudius, the new king. He eventually did so after his hamartia takes over and all is already lost. At the end, almost the entire cast was slain.

The Ultimate

AP English Language Reading List Cont.

Hamlet is important to the AP English Language exam, because Shakespeare utilizes important figurative language, form, and other important writing techniques in order to convey his messages within the play. It is important to explore *Hamlet* as well because of the different format. Because some students have difficulty understanding Shakespeare's iambic pentameter with an interpreter, reading this play will help the student. *Hamlet* passages often make an appearance in the multiple choice section of the AP English Language exam. Having a working knowledge of the play will put the student at an advantage over others in the multiple choice section.

The Grapes of Wrath

This next novel is a text that utilizes an important rhetorical device, pathos. Pathos is the appeal to the audience's emotions, and *The Grapes of Wrath* shows the reader how to captivate an audience with their own emotions. *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck took place during the Great Depression. Here, we get to follow a group of people that have been terribly affected by the lack of food and work. The various Americans that are focused on show a different perspective on how horrible the Great Depression was, and the fall and the triumph of the human spirit. It is emotionally captivating and persuading, which is a wonderful model to look at when thinking about how to craft a free response essay.

The Kite Runner

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini is a narrative that depicts two boys, Hassan and Amir, as they grew up in the Middle East. Discrimination was covered in this novel as well as rape culture, victim blaming, and how to deal with trauma in a negative and positive way.

This novel reveals a different perspective than the Eurocentric views that the western world is used to. Its cultural perspective brings into light a point that is essential in the AP Language exams, which is that everyone is going to have a different way of looking at your argument. Make it as accessible as possible.

The Ultimate AP English Language Reading List Cont.

Also, *The Kite Runner* is a great example of using pathos, a tool that is essential to the essays on the AP English Language exam. This novel also utilizes narrative as a method of revealing a concept to the readers. By reading *The Kite Runner* the student learns to see the underlying concepts, which is a great skill to have for the multiple choice section of the AP English Language exam.

A Thousand Splendid Suns

A Thousand Splendid Suns is the companion piece to *The Kite Runner*. Written by Khaled Hosseini as well, this text follows three women through their experiences growing up in the Middle East. The exploration of point of view is useful to a student, because the passages given in the multiple choice section may be nebulous regarding point of view. Being able to figure out who is speaking and why the author is having him or her speak is valuable for the exam. The marginalization of the woman's experience is highlighted here and the writing is very concise and to the point. Because of the concise language, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is a great example for how to eliminate redundancy in the student's free response question essays.

The Life of Pi

Another great skill to have going into the AP English Language exam is to be able to think outside of the box. *The Life of Pi* by Yann Martel is a novel that focuses on Pi, an Indian boy that is shipwrecked with wild animals. These wild animals, whether they are real or not, tormented Pi and took him on a journey through spiritual awakening. The reader was told at the end of the novel that there are two stories and he or she had to choose which the real narrative was. Seeing outside of the confines of the story will allow the student to see deeper aspects of other texts. This will become useful when reading the sources for the synthesis essay or the multiple choice passages that need thorough analysis.

The Ultimate AP English Language Reading List Cont.

The Overachievers

The AP English Language exam emphasizes non-fiction works over the fiction, making the following book even more important. *The Overachievers* is a non-fiction work by Alexandra Robbins that follows eight high schoolers believed to be pressured into the highest GPA and the “best” college. She puts standardized testing in a very negative light as she reports on her findings. This book is important to the AP English Language exam, because this is a non-fiction source, which embodies much of what the sources will be like for the synthesis essay in the free response section of the exam.

As I Lay Dying

Sometimes it is the journey that matters. In Faulkner’s novel *As I Lay Dying*, a journey is used as to support the greater whole of the novel and the argument that Faulkner makes. *As I Lay Dying* is a southern gothic novel that embodies the dysfunctional family. The family treks forty miles toward the city of Jefferson with their dead mother in a coffin. This was her last wish. Through calamities the family goes to the city and finally buries her decaying corpse.

This novel can be directly related to the free response questions in the AP English Language exam, because every supporting detail makes a difference. Like every character in *As I Lay Dying* contributed to Faulkner’s overall argument.

Freakonomics

In this non-fiction text the author looks into a different topic in every chapter ranging from cheating teachers to legalizing abortion to lowering poverty. He does this by using many sources and bringing other data. This is important to the AP English Language exam, because the exam’s free response questions will demand that you use a certain amount of the sources provided to craft your argument. Without this ability you will not score well.

The Ultimate AP English Language Reading List Cont.

A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Soldier Boy

Have you ever felt studying for AP exams is too hard? Well, your troubles will definitely be put into perspective with this next novel. *A Long Way Gone* was the memoir of a young boy, Beah, who grew up in Sierra Leone amidst the violence. He was taken into an army at a young age and became a child soldier. After becoming addicted to drugs, Beah was rehabilitated by UNICEF.

This non-fiction book is another great addition to your AP English Language repertoire, because learning how to analyze a memoir and pick out the important parts of the argument will assist you in answering multiple choice questions and writing your essay.

How Starbucks Saved My Life

How Starbucks Saved My Life is another memoir. This one is about an executive who loses his job and has to work at Starbucks in order to make a living. The main character learns from his supervisor about minorities and real hard work. This non-fiction work utilizes time and facts in order to get across a message. These concrete details and support allows the author to proficiently persuade the audience. The credibility that the author creates for himself is a tool that the student will need to create for him or herself. The student can do this by maintaining clear and persuasive language as *How Starbucks Saved My Life* does.

Profiles in Courage

Do you have a love of history? Then *Profiles in Courage* is for you. It is a non-fiction collection of autobiographies written by John F. Kennedy after he researched senators who tried to stop the Civil War from happening.

The Ultimate

AP English Language Reading List Cont.

The relevancy of the work historically that shows how people can do great deeds in a terrible time. This message is even more powerful after you have read each of the autobiographies. By doing something like this and adding many supporting examples to your argument, then you will gain a large impact.

By reading this work the student gets used to working with real life texts, which is mainly what the free response sources for the synthesis essay will be.

1984

1984 by George Orwell is a dystopian novel about a man trapped in a world where it feels like Big Brother was always watching. The man, Winston, starts a sexual relationship with a woman and begins to rebel against the totalitarian society. Winston does this until he is tortured at the end of the novel.

1984 is Orwell's cautionary tale that he argues for very well. Orwell shows examples of what will happen to society, why it will happen, and the effects of this. If you can pick out the rhetorical methods put forth by Orwell, and answer questions about the persuasive technique, then you will have be more prepared for the multiple choice portion. This is because the multiple choice section contains passages with rhetorical devices that the student needs to be able to identify. Practicing with *1984* will get the student ready for that.

A Room of One's Own

We will now journey into the world of feminism for *A Room of One's Own*, an essay by Virginia Woolf. This non-fiction piece reveals the plight of the woman and how a woman in that time period lived. Woolf used her persuasive writing in order to reveal the problem of the repression of women. She did this predominantly by using a bedroom as a symbol for equality. Woolf convinced her readers that women deserve a room of their own.

The Ultimate

AP English Language Reading List Cont.

Virginia Woolf was an enticing author not only because of her persuasive talent. She utilized grammar, diction, and syntax in order to truly enhance her own writing and in turn, her argument. One example of this is in the title of the essay. *A Room of One's Own* is a feminist essay, but Woolf specifically uses the word, "one's" instead of "her". This careful diction allows Woolf to push equality is every aspect of her argument from her style to the words itself.

Politics and the English Language

This essay by George Orwell showcases the murky political language that English is turning into. He criticizes the politicians that make lies sound truthful, causing strife within the nation. Orwell lays out his solutions in points very clearly, showing how print needs to be.

This essay is important to doing well on the AP English Language Exam, because if you follow his advice on the economy of language, then you will clarify your argument. Orwell's issue with the language was that people cloud their arguments with it, so be sure to read and follow his advice.

Outliers

This non-fiction book is by Malcolm Gladwell, who argues that he knows the story of success. He illustrates how to succeed in everything: from ice hockey to accumulating a Bill Gates level of wealth.

This is important for the betterment of your score, because this author not only seems to have the recipe for success, but he also makes a clear argument that is a wonderful example for crafting an argument.

The Ultimate AP English Language Reading List Cont.

The Unknown Citizen

The Unknown Citizen is a poem written by W. H. Auden. He criticizes individualism in the United States that he does not believe exists. Auden also speaks of a time before. This was a time where individuals were only to be known for their number. He then discusses controlling government agencies that micromanage the people's lives.

This poem will be useful, because the exam focuses on real world criticisms within unfamiliar texts. The poem is all about criticizing the world in which Auden lived, making this poem great practice for the exam.

Silent Spring

Silent Spring was an environmental look at society written by Rachel Carson. This non-fiction book focused on the destruction of bird species because of the pollution of pesticides. This book led to the banning of the dangerous pesticide, DDT. This was a great book to read, because this was an argument that won the day. Carson got what she wanted, and she also spread awareness for her cause. This was what you want to do on exam day. *Silent Spring* is also a non-fiction work; therefore, the intense analysis of the work will be good practice for the AP test.

Utopia

Utopia by Thomas More was a book that was written in 1516 in Latin. This was written to convey his ideas about political, social, and religious norms in society. Strong arguments are spurred forward by More's use of fiction. Because of this, *Utopia* is a valuable work to have a working knowledge of for the AP English Language Exam. More's use of fiction is a popular and effective way to persuade, and knowing this will assist you in your multiple choice portion of the exam. Since *Utopia* was written in a much older vernacular, this gives the students a different approach to prose that will prove useful if older texts come up on the exam.

The Ultimate

AP English Language Reading List Cont.

King Lear

One of Shakespeare's most famous plays, *King Lear*, is another great work to have in your repertoire. This tragedy is about a man called Lear who splits his estate between his three girls based on how well they flatter him. Naturally, everything falls apart as human nature destroys Lear. This is an important one to have in your mind on exam day, because the writers of the exam love to throw in a Shakespeare excerpt in the multiple choice section, and this is one of Shakespeare's most famous plays. Being able to pick this work apart will set you apart from the others.

Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar is another famous play by William Shakespeare. Even though the play is called *Julius Caesar*, the psychological tragedy focuses more on Brutus's patriotism and his guilt. The amazing language that is used within the play makes the work stand out. The figurative language is so compelling that it would be remiss if we had not mentioned it. To have a great argument you may need some beautiful figurative language, and this is a great example. In the multiple choice section you will have to pick out certain figurative language terms, so practicing identifying them in this work will be helpful.

The Handmaid's Tale

The Handmaid's Tale is a work of fiction that speculates about the dystopian future of a Christian theocracy that overthrows the United States government. This is another example of how working with a concrete, definite message through fiction will cement your argument in the minds of your readers. While it may not be possible to write in fiction on your AP English Language Exam, you will get extra practice in analyzing that argument under the layers of fable. Analysis is extremely important in every aspect of the AP English Language exam, from the multiple choice to the free response section.

The Ultimate AP English Language Reading List Cont.

Kabul Beauty School

Deborah Rodriguez, the author of the novel *Kabul Beauty School*, writes in her book about her experiences traveling to war-torn Afghanistan. This heart-warming tale reveals the social and political issue of war-torn nations and the treatment of women. This more modern novel is a great addition to your reading list, because the message of equality is sent through this novel, utilizing subtlety and a ton of pathos. This appeal to the emotions allows the audience to get close to the argument and buy into it. Doing this on your exam will give you a leg up. Also, being able to think in different ways, like Rodriguez does, will allow you to see different angles on the multiple choice sections. Some questions do not have a straightforward answer and must be thought of differently.

The Great Gatsby

The Great Gatsby, a novel by Fitzgerald, is the story of an outsider who meets a man named Gatsby. Gatsby is a rich man who covers his insecurities and traumas by throwing extravagant parties. Symbolism runs rampant in this tale as the “green light” that Gatsby stares at longingly represents his unattainable love, Daisy. Gatsby’s life unfortunately ends as he is shot in the closing of the novel. Fitzgerald uses a stunning precision and beautiful phrasing in order to convey his point. He looks at Gatsby as he looks at society, once again showing that symbolism. This is a great way to strengthen your argument and practice identifying different elements of figurative speech for the multiple choice section.

The Crucible

The Crucible is a play written by Arthur Miller that focuses on Puritans and the Salem Witch Trials. The Salem Witch Trials originated when girls blamed men and women they disliked in order to get rid of them. This play focuses on how religious zeal can cause mass hysteria and paranoia. Having that dramatic aspect added to a historical aspect puts even more power in the play. The story focuses on how characterization can fuel an argument or message.

The Ultimate AP English Language Reading List Cont.

By revealing the character of the individual you can enhance your essays. You can also think about this idea in terms of applying what you know to questions you are given in the multiple choice section. If you are not sure about one of the questions, then apply a work that you understand to the question. This may illuminate the answer.

In Cold Blood

In Cold Blood was written by Truman Capote to document the Herbert Clutter murders. The author does extensive research of these murders and on Clutter himself in order to get his message across. Without this skill you will not be able to properly answer your free response questions adequately. After all, the most important piece of the free response essays is your argument. You need to be able to make a claim and support it as Capote does. Also, the non-fiction element of Capote's work relates well to other passages that you will see on your multiple choice section of the AP English Language exam.

Reading for Success

This AP English Language reading list, while it does not encompass every book that will be useful during the AP English Language Exam, is a great place to start and finish. This is a ton of reading material, and by completing this list you will increase your AP score.

The Ultimate List of AP English Language Tips



The AP Language and Composition exam tests your ability to not only read content, but also to analyze what you have read and draw conclusions to present in an argument. The test consists of two parts: multiple choice and free response.

These AP English Language tips can help you feel confident about scoring a 5 on the AP Language and Composition exam. Let's get started.

The Ultimate List of AP English Language Tips Cont.

AP English Language Course Study Tips

Before you learn how to study for the specific portions of the AP Language exam, it's time to learn how to study for AP courses in general. AP stands for Advanced Placement; meaning, the courses are designed to challenge you more so than a regular high school class. It's safe to say that it's nearly impossible to pass the AP Language and Composition exam if you don't have a grasp on how to study for a class as stimulating as an Advanced Placement course.

1. Become Familiar with AP Style Questions: Before you can even begin to study for the AP exams, you need to familiarize yourself with the overall format of the questions being asked on the exam. AP Central is a study aid website developed by the College Board, who writes the AP exam. Here, they have the formats of the questions being asked on specific AP exams. They even have copies of the questions present on previous AP exams. Take a look at the questions they have specifically for the AP Language and Composition exam on [AP Central](#).

2. Complete Any Summer Work Assigned: Many AP English courses require you to read a few books over the summer vacation months. The teachers expect you to have read the content, and in some cases, they'll even want you to complete a book report or project during the first week of class. It would be incredibly unwise to procrastinate and try to cram reading three or more books in the span of the last few weeks of summer. Not only will you stress yourself out, but you also will hinder your understanding of the content. If you plan on procrastinating and not doing what is asked by your AP teachers, be prepared for a rude awakening at the beginning of the school year in the form of a bad project grade. This can develop into your end of the year exam scores suffering.

3. Teach Yourself the Material: A good portion of Advanced Placement courses is based on teaching yourself the content. I can guarantee that you won't understand every single concept covered in the hour or so that you're actually in the classroom. When this inevitably happens, you're going to feel lost and the subject matter becomes a little daunting.

The Ultimate List of AP English Language Tips Cont.

But the rest is up to you: you can either take it into your own hands and research the topic when you get home, or you can ignore the topic completely and hope you understand the next one. Here's a hint: you should choose the first one. There's a huge abundance of extra content out there for you to discover. Of course, there are the obvious choices like YouTube review videos and articles explaining the content you find a little hazy. However, there's also an incredible amount of hidden gems around the Internet just waiting to be discovered.

Teachers don't have time to cover every single tiny detail of content in the sixty minutes or so that they have you every day. At the end of the year, it's up to you to make sure you understand everything to make a 5 on the AP exam.

4. Develop Critical Thinking Skills: A good portion of Advanced Placement courses is designed to test your ability to think critically. Critical thinking is a skill that will be extremely beneficial for you to acquire, not only for AP courses, but also for real life. To pass many AP courses, you need to understand that everything covered isn't simply black and white. There are an incredible number of gray areas within the content that you need to learn to approach from every angle. If you keep an open mind and combine your observations as well as inferences you've made with the material, critical thinking will be a skill you'll build with ease. This will drastically increase your odds of scoring high on AP exams.

5. Go to Class: Avoid missing your AP classes at all costs. If you're not in class, how can you possibly expect to learn the content? You're more likely to get behind on assignments if you miss class, which can become very stressful. Any amount of added stress can severely affect your understanding of vital concepts covered on the end of the year exams.

6. Form a Study Group: One of the most effective ways to study for any exam is to form a study group. Ideally, this group will contain members of all knowledge levels. Each person will bring something to the table—maybe you know more about symbolism than Susan, while Susan understands literary devices better than Ryan, and so on.

The Ultimate List of AP English Language Tips Cont.

Learning other people's viewpoints on the subjects covered on the different exams will help you approach questions from every angle.

Now that you've followed the previous general Advanced Placement study tips, you can focus on studying specifically for the AP Language and Composition exam. This part of this article will focus on the multiple-choice portion, which amounts to 45% of your overall score. So you could say that it's pretty important.

[Start your AP English Language Prep today](#)

The Ultimate List of AP English Language Tips Cont.

AP English Language Multiple Choice Tips

1. Prepare Early: The most important tip for acing any standardized exam is to develop good study habits. Prepare early. If possible, start at the beginning of the semester. Once you learn your first new topic or cover a key concept, review it that night. Then, when you learn your second, study that in addition to the previous learned concept. The process should go on throughout the semester which will be a surefire way to remember important content at the end of the year.

2. Test Yourself: If you're one of the many high school students who don't spend most of their time studying, preparing early, and following the system of the previous study tip, we understand. You have cheer practice, guitar lessons, homework and everything in between. Studying every single night may be a bit of a struggle. If this sounds like you, then the best option for studying for the AP Language exam is to test yourself. Periodically throughout the semester, look up practice exams to test your comprehension of the material.

3. Read the Passages FIRST: Everyone knows the classic shortcut when it comes to multiple choice tests—read the questions first, then scan the passages to look for the answers. This is a method of approaching the exam that is completely wrong. It will leave you without a deep understanding of what the passage is about. With less comprehension, you're more likely to make mistakes and choose the wrong answer.

4. Read the Questions Thoroughly: This goes without saying. If you don't have a good grasp on the content of the question, you're going to get it wrong. Read the questions carefully and determine what it is asking, where in the text the answer can be found, and whether any of the choices provide a logical answer to the question.

The Ultimate List of AP English Language Tips Cont.

Sometimes the answer to the questions can be complicated and rather unnerving. To avoid getting overwhelmed by this, try covering up the multiple choice answers with your hand or ignore them completely while you read just the stem of the question. Try to come up with an answer for the question before you even glance at the possible choices.

5. Reread Portions of the Text: When you have determined where in the passage an answer can be found, reread that portion. Dissect it thoroughly and from there, decide what the correct answer might be.

6. Use the Process of Elimination: This tip may be a little bit obvious. Ever since you were young, you've heard the helpful suggestion of deducing answers. If you're familiar with the subject matter of the question, it should not be hard to rule out at least one of the choices that you have determined not to be the answer. Physically mark through the answers you believe are wrong. It will help you to visually see which answers couldn't possibly be the right one. Be sure to take your time when deducing an answer. Sometimes the writers of the test will write two answer choices that seem almost identical. However, one of them will have the slightest difference that makes it incorrect.

It might also help you to circle or underline the terms or reasoning within the wrong answer choices that proves they are incorrect. This may help you further into the test. If you get stumped on a similar question, you may look back onto these incorrect responses. With this information, you can deduce which answers are incorrect and which are correct.

7. Skip Difficult Questions: Because the multiple-choice portion is timed, you may not have time to answer every single question if you are unsure of a few. The simplest way to clear your mind and focus on the easier question is to immediately skip the more difficult questions that require more critical thinking. Then, once you have answered all of the questions you feel more confident about, go back to the more difficult questions, if time permits.

The Ultimate List of AP English Language Tips Cont.

8. Use Circles or Check Marks: Whenever you skip a question, be sure to circle its number. That way, when you're going back through your test, the search time for unanswered questions will be cut drastically. Alternatively, you can put a check mark beside every question you have answered, leaving unanswered questions with a blank space beside the numbers.

9. When in Doubt, Guess: On the AP Language and Composition exam, like every other Advanced Placement exam, your score on the multiple-choice portion is based on the number of questions you answer correctly. There is no penalty for incorrect answers. So there's no logical reason not to guess on questions you are stumped on.

10. Make Flashcards: For terms or concepts that are crucial for you to memorize, make flashcards. It may seem like an elementary study tip, but it truly works. Pay special attention to terms or concepts that you don't fully understand.

11. Study before Bed: If you've made flashcards, a great time to study them, or really any notes you've taken, is before you go to bed. The brain remembers the most information right before you go to sleep. This is because when you're asleep, it processes the most important memories of your day for storage. If you review right before bedtime, your brain prioritizes this information and stores it for quick access. Because of this, it'd be a good idea to study first thing in the morning, too. This will remind your brain that the subject you're studying really needs to be remembered.

12. Focus on Your Weaknesses: When you don't quite understand a concept as well as you should, be sure to take time to break it down. Run over it many times in your head and you can even research it for a better understanding. It's crucial that you're at least familiar with all concepts that are going to be covered on the exam.

The Ultimate List of AP English Language Tips Cont.

13. Don't Stress: This is easier said than done, we understand. But there is nothing worse than working your way through multiple choice questions and having your brain freeze because you're stressed out. This makes it difficult to even read the question, let alone understand it.

14. Remember to Breathe: The best thing you can do when you get overwhelmed by the pressures of the exam is to take a deep breath. Have confidence that you know the material well enough to get through this portion with ease.

The next part of this article will focus on the seemingly daunting free response portion of the AP Language and Composition exam, worth 55% of your score. This portion consists of three different essays you must write within a two-hour period after a mandatory fifteen-minute reading period. Ultimately, these essays will assess your ability to quickly formulate arguments from inferences and analysis drawn from the sources provided to you. If you don't understand early on how to go about following the instructions that are asked on the exam, you might find this portion more difficult than the multiple-choice section.

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The Ultimate List of AP English Language Tips Cont.

Here are some tips to help you ace this portion of the exam:

AP English Language Free Response Question Tips

1. Understand the Question: Make sure you read the essay prompt many times and identify the key question being asked. Approach the question from each side of the possible argument that it poses.

2. Choose Your Side: Based on the evidence provided for you in the passages you've read, come up with an argument. It is often helpful to choose an argument that has more evidence and references to support it, even if you do not necessarily agree with every tiny detail.

3. Create a Thesis: Come up with a strong thesis statement that clearly and effectively approaches the topic and the argument you are presenting. Don't bother regurgitating the prompt in your introductory paragraphs—the scorers will just assume you are filling space and it will make your argument seem weak and lacking confidence. Answer all of the questions asked by the prompt in your introductory paragraph and include the main point of your argument in your thesis.

4. Build a Strong Body: Once you have your thesis statement, construct body paragraphs around it. Be sure to mention how the supporting evidence you are citing within your essays relates back to your argument.

5. Be Specific: Ambiguity and vague sentences have no place within an AP Language and Composition exam essay. The readers of your essay expect you to be exact and to the point. They want you to prove a point to them, not dance around it aimlessly. The more specific you are with your information, the better.

6. Use Your Resources: You're given sources for a reason. Use these to strengthen your argument and convince your audience of its legitimacy. Failing to use the resources provided to you will result in an incredibly low score. Why should you be given a high score when you couldn't even follow the directions of the exam?

The Ultimate List of AP English Language Tips Cont.

7. Develop a Tone: The tone of an essay is what sets the stage for your argument. If there is no tone, it makes the essay seem sloppy and poorly structured. The argument itself may even seem scattered and all over the place. The tone of your essay should reflect your side of the argument. If it doesn't, how can the readers be expected to understand completely what side you are taking?

8. Learn How to Make Assumptions: A great deal of the scoring of this portion is based on the assumptions you make. The assumptions and inferences made from your sources are crucial. Use them to explain your viewpoints and strengthen your argument. Logical assumptions give interesting perspectives to the scorers of the essays. The use of inferences and assumptions in your essays also demonstrates your ability to think critically (as we discussed earlier).

9. Organize Your Thoughts: As you work through planning your argument in the essays, make sure you take time to organize your thoughts. This will strengthen your argument and the overall structure of your essay. If your essay is neat and clean, the scorers can easily find what they are looking for in a well-written argument.

10. Know the Fundamentals of Writing: If you are unfamiliar with the structure of an essay, you definitely need to learn it before the exam. Think of an essay as a skeleton: the introductory, body, and conclusion paragraphs are the bones; the actual muscle, tendons, and organs holding it together are the bulk of the essay. This is what you add to it, including arguments and supporting evidence.

11. Use Variety: If you write your essay with choppy, short sentences having a simple vocabulary, the reader is going to assume that you are not well-versed in the English language. This can severely hurt your score—especially considering you are taking an exam in AP Language and Composition. If anything, this course should make your writing shine and appeal to the scorer. You wouldn't want the person grading your essay to assume that you are lacking in style and grammar.

12. Work Quickly: Although you want to keep all of these tips in mind, remember that this is still a timed portion of the exam. You don't have much time to spend trying to make every single part of your essays perfect.

The Ultimate List of AP English Language Tips Cont.

13. Develop Time Management Skills: Learning time management skills early on can help tremendously when it comes to timed exams. Practice taking timed exams frequently throughout the semester to build confidence and skill. This will really help when you're forced to formulate multiple arguments for different essays in a limited amount of time.

14. Know the Rubric: Knowing the rubric is an incredibly strategic move in acing the AP Language and Composition essay portion. When you know what exactly it is the scorers usually look for, you can be at ease. This is because you know exactly what to put into your arguments to make for a high-scoring essay.

15. Develop a Good Attitude: Having a good attitude going into the course will show the teacher that you are there to learn. Teachers are more willing to help students that seem upbeat and overall well-rounded. This can also translate into confidence when it comes exam time.

16. READ!: This may seem obvious, but many students don't understand how much reading is required for this course. AP Language and Composition covers writing styles throughout several centuries and it's crucial to become familiar with all of them. Reading a few books for leisure in between assignments will help drastically in developing a writing style of your own as well.

17. Practice Dissection: No, don't worry; you won't have to know how to dissect a dead frog for the AP Language exam. However, it is a good idea to practice dissecting everything you read. When reading, ask yourself: Who is the audience in this piece? What is it that the author is trying to accomplish by writing this? What is the main idea? Is there any symbolism used in vague sentences?

18. Write Neatly: Legible writing is a scorer's best friend. They are very busy people with thousands of essays to grade. They do not have much time trying to decipher your chicken scratch. The more the scorers can read, the more there is to grade.

The Ultimate List of AP English Language Tips Cont.

19. Plan Out Your Essays: Even though the essay portion is timed, you should still take a few minutes to plan out your arguments. The last thing you want to do is confuse your readers by having a sloppy essay with little to no organization or planning. Plans help bring structure and life to your writings.

20. Avoid Clichés: Sure, a cliché may bring a sense of familiarity to your writing. But mostly, it just bores the reader. If you must use a common cliché phrase, try to change it up a bit by using synonyms for the verbs.

21. Be Specific: When writing your essays for the AP Language and Composition exam, be specific. The prompt may ask you to discuss the rhetoric devices used in a passage. Instead of just listing them, provide a brief description of each device and how it is used. This will display a sophisticated understanding of the material sure to impress the readers.

22. Stay on Topic: This goes hand in hand with number five. If you have planned out your essay well, you'll be more conscious as to when your writing is deviating from the main topic. Periodically look back at the prompt as you are writing to make sure you're answering everything required in your essay.

23. Stay Healthy: A healthy body leads to a healthy mind; they go hand in hand. Be sure to fuel your body and brain with water and a good hearty breakfast before your exam. Moreover, be sure to get enough exercise and eat healthy throughout the rest of the year. You'll come to see both your mood and your school performance increase.

24. Learn How to Handle Stress: Stress can take a toll on each and every one of us. Learning how to handle it is a skill that is vital to every aspect of life, especially when it comes to school. Be sure to remember that your mental and physical health is more important than a score on a high school exam. Know your limits and take breaks when needed so you can assure a happy and healthy brain.

The Ultimate List of AP English Language Tips Cont.

25. Be comfortable in uncertainty, for that will lead to clarity. The essence of all art, and literature is no exception, is that it dwells in the realm of ambiguity and multiplicity; this is what makes great art. Consider Moby Dick, especially the chapter “The Whiteness of the Whale,” this is fundamentally the world of art. If students can only manage or see one answer, they will never be able to truly understand literature and will always succumb to superficial interpretations and debilitating stress. Thanks for the truly insightful tip from Dan B. from Holy Cross High School.

26. Say you have to read two articles, one in the San Francisco Chronicle and one posted on a blog. You know nothing about either author. You know nothing about the content (topic). **Brainstorm about what credibility factors you can deduce before you even see the articles.** Thanks for the tip from Mark M.

27. Multiple choice always presents a combination of easy, medium, and hard questions for each passage. Generally speaking, these questions follow the chronology of the passage, but they are all worth the same amount of points. Therefore, **the best approach is to go for easy and medium questions first** and skip questions that will require a significant amount of time up front. Thanks for the tip from Fred B.

28. When dealing with questions asking about things in context, the best approach is to return to the beginning of the sentence or the previous sentence and read the end of that sentence to understand its meaning. It may also be a good idea to read the sentence that follows as well. Thanks for the tip from Fred B.

29. If you’re running out of time, you should either scan the remaining questions and find the shortest questions or look for questions that contain the answer without requiring you to refer back to the text. Thanks for the tip from Fred B.

The Ultimate List of AP English Language Tips Cont.

30. A great way to pace yourself is to take the number of multiple choice questions and to divide the number by two. Therefore, if you have 60 questions to answer and an hour to do so, you should be at question 30 by the 30 minute mark. You can also use this approach by dividing by the number of passages. Thanks for the tip from Fred B.

31. Create your own excitement about the prompt and what you have to say about it. If you can find a way to be passionate about it, you will write faster, easier, and better. After this year's test one of my students said she remembered the tip and intentionally generated her own enthusiasm about her topics, so she came out feeling happy about what she wrote. She scored a 4. Thanks for the tip from Pam S.

32. Students need to enhance their vocabulary through adding quality verbs in order to read and write more effectively. This study should embrace the verb in both active and passive voice; likewise, the verb should be mastered for gerundive and participial uses. Thanks for the tip from Mike M.

33. Read credible newspapers daily. Connect current world events to classic essays and memoirs. Look for the connection between the human condition and the speaker's purpose. Always ask why? Why that word? Why that tone? Why that call to action? Thanks for the tip from Bobbi C.

34. The two skills of the course are *argument* and *rhetorical analysis*. One bit of advice that is central to impart to students is the tenet "acknowledge complexity." This is relevant in arguments (e.g. take time to address reasonable counter-arguments) and rhetorical analysis (e.g. a letter can be both threatening and conciliatory — check out Banneker's letter to Jefferson from the 2010 test). Passing the AP English Language and Composition exam is never going to be easy. But with the right amount of studying, motivation, and understanding (along with these tips, of course), you should have more than what it takes to score well on this exam. Prepare early, be confident in your comprehension of the material, and watch yourself work through the exam with certainty. Thanks for the tip from Peter D.



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