

The Long Essay

In order to develop effective essay writing skills, specific attention will be paid to the steps needed to construct an effective essay. Specifically, we will examine question choice, research, thesis construction, topic sentences and outlining. Throughout the week you will be expected to progress through the various steps. When you are asked to write a long essay without having seen the question (blind) you will follow a similar process. The idea in our essay writing process is that you practice and develop these skills, gradually leading up to blind questions. As the week progresses, the following checklist will be used to monitor your progress.

Step	Completed
1. Choose a question (when given options)	
2. Research (evidenced by notes)	
3. Thesis	
4. Topic Sentences	
5. Outline Created	

Detailed Explanation of Steps

1. Choose a question – While this seems simple, it may be the most important moment in writing the Long Essay. Which question do you know the most about? For which question can you provide relevant detail? You may want to explore both questions before making this decision.
2. Research – For in class essays, nothing more than your textbook is needed. As you re-read portions of the text, what relevant specific details can you find? Look for significant, formative moments in U.S. history (new legislation, important people and their contributions, the ramifications of specific presidential elections, etc.) Do not concern yourself with statistics or quotes. You will not be able (nor are you expected) to replicate this on a blind question so attempting to integrate this material into your essay is not a productive use of your time or energy.
3. Thesis – Your thesis must be clear and it must explicitly reference the question. AP essays may ask you to analyze different elements; your thesis must address all of them. While your thesis must provide a clear direction for your essay, you normally do not need to include ultra-specific details (legislative acts, elections, etc.). These are things that you will include in your analysis to support your essay.
4. Topic Sentences – The first sentence of the paragraph needs to clearly indicate (explicitly reference) the direction of your analysis. It should also be clear what part of the question you will address. Again, you do not need to give ultra-specific details, but you do need to provide a more focused and specific direction for your analysis.

Body paragraphs that begin with a clear, focused, topic sentence provide you as a writer the needed structure to analyze the question.

5. Outline – This is a crucial and often overlooked step in the process. Ideally, an effective outline would include your thesis, the areas of the question you will address, topic sentences, and relevant details you will incorporate in your analysis.