

How to Write an FRQ

Read the following steps to be successful when answering FRQ's.

1. Understand the Question: READ IT!!!!!!!

- a. Know what the question is asking you. If you are asked to discuss the change in federalism over time, you won't get full credit if you simply define federalism. The rest of the answer involves your interpretation of federalism changing through court cases, new policy, etc. **READ THE QUESTION CORRECTLY!!!!!!!**

2. Identify the question type:

- a. There are generally three types of questions on the exam. The verbs which the question uses will tell you what kind of question is being asked.
 - i. **Write about the meaning of a concept.** *Key verbs: Define, Describe, Identify, List, State, Summarize*
 - ii. **Write about both sides of an issue or recognize similarities and differences:** You don't need a full thesis statement to answer these questions because you're not asked to take a position and argue for it. However, you do need an organizing statement to allow the reader to connect the answer to the question. *Key verbs: Compare, Contrast, Discuss, Explain, and Illustrate.*
 - iii. **Write about a position and argue for a specific point of view.** A thesis statement is required for this type of question. *Key verbs: Analyze, Argue, and Interpret.*

3. Which path do I take?

- a. Often times, FRQ's will ask you to come up with several IDs and then elaborate on them. They might ask for "two reasons" or "three examples". However, there are often 7 or 8 possible right answers. Therefore, before you write, make a list of all possible answers that you know could work. Then, choose the ones that you feel the most comfortable writing about. HINT – AP readers will not penalize you for wrong answers, only missing answers. Therefore, if they ask for "two examples", then give three because it will give you another possibility of getting points if your other answers missed the mark.

4. Do I need an Introduction?

- a. Does the question ask you to take a position? If so, take one. Do not sit in the middle, argue one side because they don't care which side you argue. The only care that your argument works. **ONLY WRITE AN INTRODUCTION IF THEY ASK YOU TO TAKE A DEFINITE STAND.** An introduction in any other situation is a waste of time.

5. Format?

- a. There is no exact format in which to write an FRQ. It does not have to be in a 5-paragraph form. It can be mechanical (meaning that you number your answers), which is easy on the reader. **ALWAYS WRITE LEGIBLY IN BLUE OR BLACK PEN!**

6. Re-Read your answers:

- a. Students always are in a rush to turn in their tests, but if you have to sit in the room for 100 minutes anyway, why not re-read your answers? Go back and make sure you answered each question fully. If you did not, you can write more at the end, and then draw an arrow to the appropriate place where the information belongs.

General Tips:

- Give concrete examples. Specific examples of your answers help solidify your answers.
- Answer all parts of the question. Exam graders will reward students more for answering all parts of the question than for doing well on only one part.
- Understand what you are being asked before you start writing.
- Don't panic and start making things up. It is better to just make a brainstorm list and you might get lucky and stumble across a right answer.

Do's & Don'ts of the FRQ:

Do's:

- ✓ Write as neatly as possible. If they can't read it, they can't grade it. Neatly draw a line through a mistake, write correct information above.
- ✓ Read the Question! Then read the question again. Make sure you're answering only what is being asked.
- ✓ Reread your work if you have time. Make sure you LINK THE QUESTION TO THE ANSWER!
- ✓ There is no penalty for wrong information, so write as much as you can. If they ask for two examples and you know three, give three.
- ✓ Use the EXACT VOCABULARY from the question in each component of your answer. Most rubrics ask for linkage back to the question. This is a way to move in that direction.

Don'ts:

- ❖ Don't give personal opinions (like political affiliation or whether you like the president's policy). The exam tests your knowledge of political processes, not your opinion.
- ❖ Don't give long, unnecessary introductions. Get right to the point!
- ❖ Don't give them information they didn't ask for. There are no extra credit or "brownie" points.
- ❖ Don't spend more than 25 minutes on any free response question.
- ❖ Don't fall asleep. Fight the fatigue. Time is generally not a factor. Do not look back and think about how you wasted it because you were tired, bored, or indifferent.