**Steps to Writing an AP Government & Politics FRQ**

The FRQ section of the AP Government & Politics Exam will require you to answer four mandatory questions in 100 minutes. The following steps will help you prepare to write effectively on this portion of the test.

**Before You Write:**

**(2-3 minutes for each FRQ)**

1. Read the factual statement at the beginning of the FRQ and do the following:
   1. **Underline** the important key words and phrases.
   2. **Make notes** in the margin on any other key words, phrases, court cases, or current events that come to mind.
2. Read the entire series of questions (a, b, c, d, etc.) and do the following:
   1. **Underline** the verbs (that tell you what to do).
   2. **Box** any key vocabulary terms.
   3. **Circle** *main, primary, or fundamental* (if applicable) so you understand what it is asking.

**As You Write:**

**(20 minutes for each FRQ)**

1. Breakdown your answer to each question in the order it was asked and do the following:
   1. **Label the essay** based on which part of the question you’re answering at the time.
   2. Erase all labels once you’ve finished writing the FRQ.
      1. AP readers cannot award points if a correct answer is written in the wrong section.
   3. **Skip lines between each part of the question** (not every line) to make your answer easier for the reader to grade.
2. **Copy part of the question as a lead-in to your answer** and do the following:
   1. Do what each part of the question calls for!
   2. If a part of the question asks you to “identify” or “define” something, this may be accomplished in one or two sentences.
   3. “Explain” and “describe” require much more – **avoid “minimalism”** with these verbs, and be sure to answer the **“how and why?”**
   4. Do your best to include as many examples wherever possible and **link them to the question**; examples add validity and clarity to shaky or incomplete explanations (more examples = better scores).
   5. Add a “spare tire,” as there is **no penalty for wrong information**; if the question asks for two examples, give three.
      1. **Exception:** unless it asked for the *main, primary,* or *fundamental* (only put one example when the question uses such words).
   6. **Use the exact vocabulary from the question in each component of your answer.**
3. State the obvious – prove that you know what you’re talking about.
   1. **Pretend as if your audience is a child** – explain in clear, simple terms rather than verbose wordiness.
4. **Write neat and legibly** – if they can’t read it, they can’t grade it.

**After You Write:**

**(2-3 minutes for each FRQ)**

1. **Reread your work if you have time.**
   1. Students are always in a rush to turn in their tests, but if you have to sit in the room for 100 minutes anyway, why not reread your answers?
   2. 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.
   3. **Remember to erase your “a, b, c, d” labels** in case you wrote a correct response in the wrong section.

**Other Important Information**

* Complete the FRQs you know first.
* FRQs are nothing like APUSH essays or English papers – **avoid verbosity, opinion, and fluffy language!**
* **Introductions, theses, and conclusions are virtually worthless** as they only waste time and ink – leave them out of your response!
* Political science writing (especially in AP Government) is technical; focus on quality, **NOT** quantity; content driven, **NOT** writing driven!
  + Most essays that are 2-3 pages long receive a score of a “0.”
  + Most essays that are 1 ½ pages receive a score of a “3” or “4.”
* **Spelling does not count**, but you should do your best.
* **FRQs are scored, not graded**; each question has a certain number of items the graders are looking for, like a checklist.