

How to Answer a Free Response Question (FRQ)

FRQ stands for Free Response Question, and it refers to the type of "essay question" that you'll see twice on each chapter test and thrice on the AP test itself.

FRQ's however, aren't like your standard essay question in that...

1. You won't write an introduction
2. You won't write a conclusion
3. You won't write in essay format

Instead, you respond in the CONSTRUCTED way that the question asks itself. Here are the basic guidelines:

a) A standard FRQ asks itself in numerous, labeled parts. For example, a question may have part 1 and part 2, and part 2 may be divided into items A and B. So, when you respond, You first write FRQ1 (or the appropriate number of the FRQ on the test) as a header. Then, you label the parts to which you were responding in the margin. For our example, you will have 1) in your margin and then the answer to JUST PART 1. You will then have 2A) in the margin and its answer and 2B) in the margin in its answer. Each part of the answer is labeled separately and appears separate. When you have finished the first FRQ, you skip a space or two and then start with your new header.

b) Always write with complete sentences. Regardless of what the question asks you to do, provide the response with a complete sentence or a number of complete sentences (perhaps divided into paragraphs if need be).

c) Respond to the command term appropriately. The AP has a given set of command verbs that it will use in FRQs, the command term is meant to indicate the level and depth of information that a grader will want to see. The following list is ordered by increasing complexity.

- **identify:** Identify means that you provide the number of items that the question has asked for with a complete sentence. For example, Identify the two primary causes of space-time compression. Your response would be, "The two primary causes of space-time compression are advances in communication and transportation technology."
- **define:** To define means to provide a full account of a word's meaning including all of its nuances and details. Doing so may take one sentence or several, but be sure to write in a complete sentence. Providing a textbook or APHG appropriate definition of a word is sufficient. For example, define space-time compression. Your response would be, "The theory of space-time compression states that advances in transportation and communication technology have the effect of lessening the amount of time it takes information to travel between two given places and thereby increasing the interaction between them."
- **explain:** To explain means to provide a full definition of the term referenced in the question and then go on to provide a full account of various aspects of the definition to clarify it. An explanation will require several sentences. Take the example question from the last term. While a simple definition of space-time compression is nice, to fully understand it takes some explanation. SO, a good response would begin with the same definition from

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above, but then continue with further explanation. For example, "The theory of space-time compression states that... (blah, blah, blah). So, while the physical distance between two places does not change, the amount of time it takes for information to flow between them does. Since information can flow much more quickly than in the past, physically distant cities can now be highly connected."

- **discuss:** To discuss means to define, then explain and then provide specific examples. A discussion may take multiple paragraphs. For example, Discuss the effects of space-time compression on modern society. A discussion will begin with the above explanation, but then go on to provide concrete, specific examples. For example, "(insert above definition plus example) (blah, blah, blah)... For example, London and New York City are separated by hundreds of miles of the Atlantic ocean. In the 1700's, when the only mode of communication between the England and it colonies was the written word, and the only means of transporting it was a boat, it could take the two places several months to complete one cycle of inquiry and response. Therefore, those cities had little interaction (little enough, indeed, to cause a revolution at one point). However, in the year 2013, a banker in London can send an email inquiry to a bank in NYC in milliseconds, and the banker in NVC can type a five minute response and send the email back in milliseconds. The complete cycle takes only minutes, and those two cities can now be deeply connected to each other. The time, if not the space, between them has been compressed."

d) The grader of the FRQ is looking only for the information asked. Read carefully, respond fully and accurately, and then move on. You do not need elaborate introductions (beyond a brief phrase referencing the question). And you do not need summaries or conclusions. Be exact, be complete, and that's it.