

DBQ HINTS

- **Answer the question that is asked.**
- Read and understand the question – you’re answering the question, not the documents.
- Make sure you know what the question is asking.
- Look for the point of view of the author of each document.
- Take into account the social status of the author of each document.
- Look for the tone of each document (look for sarcasm & bias).
- Look very carefully at the date of each document.
- Look for change over time in the documents.
- Look for possible solutions in the documents.
- What facts, ideas or concepts are expressed in the documents?
- Try to get at least one idea from each document.
- Look for contradictions between each document.
- Look at “tags” – the tag tells you the source of the document.
- Do not overemphasize the First Document.
- Remember that the documents are not necessarily facts. Many times the documents simply express an opinion or perception.
- Respect the documents
- Do not make a document say something it doesn't really say.
- Assume the reader of the exam knows the documents inside and out but cite the documents that you use by number, i.e. (Document A)
- Documents are often given in chronological order BUT do not use them in chronological order.
- Use at least half + one of the documents, more if possible.
- Use of all the documents is not necessary; don't force the documents to fit.
- The thesis must not be simply a restatement of the question.
- Do not ramble.
- Remember that there is no one right answer on the DBQ.
- Use a grid or chart to organize your information.

How to Answer an AP-Level DBQ

1. Start with a clearly stated thesis. Good essays begin with a thesis statement, back it up with supporting evidence from documents and outside knowledge and, if time permits, restate the thesis at the end.
2. Make sure you have additional outside information beyond the documents presented on the exam. You need to demonstrate an ability to integrate outside knowledge in your document-based essay question as well as your ability to use the documents themselves.
3. Organize your response carefully. Make an outline before you begin your essay.
4. Make sure that your thesis matches your own assessment and knowledge. You should support a clear, simple thesis that can be supported using the documents and other outside information you may know. You may agree or disagree with the statement.
5. Build an argument. The best essays are those that marshal the positive arguments in favor of their position but that also refute or answer rival theses. Even if you think a statement is completely true, it is better to confront and negate the evidence that seems to refute it than to ignore the counter-evidence completely.
6. Integrate the documents and your analysis. You do not have to use all of the documents but you must use the majority of them and integrate them well. Don't merely explain what is stated in the documents. Use the documents as part of an integrated essay in support of your thesis.
7. Don't quote large portions of the documents. The reader of the essays are already familiar with the documents. You can quote a short passage or two if necessary to make your point, but don't waste time or space reciting them.

A DBQ provides the student with an opportunity to weigh significant evidence/documents to reach an informed position and to present the information in response to a question.

How to Answer the DBQ Question

The Process:

1. Read the question carefully. What does the question ask you to do?

Underline key words, eras, names, issues, or categories used in the question.

2. Brainstorm and write down the facts - names, dates, and events that you know about the topic and time period.

3. Read and analyze the documents:

Look at the author and the time the document was written.

Identify the point of view or main idea of the document. Underline key words.

Write notes in the margin summarizing each document. Respond to the prompt questions after the document. If there are no questions, write down the main ideas.

4. Reread the question. Carefully consider your document summaries and their relationship to the question asked.

5. Plan/Organize your response so that you prove your thesis with supporting evidence and information. (Categorize, block, outline, mind map).

Identify the main subjects to be discussed in the body select the documents related to each major subject. Write down important information from the document and from your knowledge of the issue.

6. Write an organized essay responding to the question.

Introductory paragraph

Take a stand on the question. Respond to all parts of the question.

Develop your thesis. To what degree is it true?

Provide background, explanation and definition of terms used in the question.

Introduce the topics you will discuss in the body of your essay.

Body paragraphs

Use a separate paragraph for each topic, issue, or argument.

Include specific examples to support generalizations or to make distinctions.

Cite specific evidence from the documents but avoid long quotations.

Integrate information from the documents and from your knowledge in responding to the questions.

Concluding paragraph

Restate your position and main ideas that you presented in your essay.

Analyzing Primary Sources

Time and Place Rule, Bias Rule & Questions for Primary Sources

Historians analyze historical sources in different ways. First, historians think about where, when and why a document was created. They consider whether a source was created close in location and time to an actual historical event. Historians also think about the purpose of a source. Was it a personal diary intended to be kept private? Was the document prepared for the public?

Some primary sources may be judged more reliable than others, but every source is biased in some way. As a result, historians read sources skeptically and critically. They also cross-check sources against other evidence and sources. Historians follow a few basic rules to help them analyze primary sources. Read these rules below. Then read the questions for analyzing primary sources. Use these rules and questions as you analyze primary source documents yourself.

• Time and Place Rule

To judge the quality of a primary source, historians use the time and place rule. This rule says the closer in time and place a source and its creator were to an event in the past, the better the source will be. Based on the time and place rule, better primary sources (starting with the most reliable) might include:

Direct traces of the event;

Accounts of the event, created at the time it occurred, by firsthand observers and participants;

Accounts of the event, created after the event occurred, by firsthand observers and participants;

Accounts of the event, created after the event occurred, by people who did not participate or witness the event, but who used interviews or evidence from the time of the event.

• Bias Rule

The historians' second rule is the bias rule. It says that every source is biased in some way.

Documents tell us only what the creator of the document thought happened, or perhaps only what the creator wants us to think happened. As a result, historians follow these bias rule guidelines when they review evidence from the past:

Every piece of evidence and every source must be read or viewed skeptically and critically.

No piece of evidence should be taken at face value. The creator's point of view must be considered.

Each piece of evidence and source must be cross-checked and compared with related sources and pieces of evidence.

• **Questions for Analyzing Primary Sources**

1. Who created the source and why? Was it created through a spur-of-the-moment act, a routine transaction, or a thoughtful, deliberate process?
2. Did the recorder have firsthand knowledge of the event? Or, did the recorder report what others saw and heard?
3. Was the recorder a neutral party, or did the creator have opinions or interests that might have influenced what was recorded?
4. Did the recorder produce the source for personal use, for one or more individuals, or for a large audience?
5. Was the source meant to be public or private?
6. Did the recorder wish to inform or persuade others? (Check the words in the source. The words may tell you whether the recorder was trying to be objective or persuasive.) Did the recorder have reasons to be honest or dishonest?
7. Was the information recorded during the event, immediately after the event, or after some lapse of time? How large a lapse of time?