

Steps for Writing U.S. History Essay

- 1. Carefully read and analyze the question**
 - Break the question down in to multiple questions
 - This way you understand exactly what the question is asking
- 2. Brainstorm what you already know**
 - list every relevant issue, historical term, name, or event that may apply
 - always brainstorm before looking at the documents (for DBQs)
 - create categories to help organize your ideas
- 3. Read the Documents (for Document Based Questions)**
 - read each document
 - ask yourself what is the document really saying?
 - do I know any of these terms that are in the documents?
 - what is the source? Do I know anything about it?
 - look for possible themes that are suggested by the documents
 - Which category can this document go under?
 - consider their order, inconsistencies, sources, and counterarguments
 - consider using APPARTS or SOAPStone to analyze the documents
 - use the rule $\frac{1}{2} + 1$ when citing documents within your essay
 - Eliminate the 1 document that confuses you the most
- 4. Develop a Thesis**
 - This statement normally goes at the end of your introductory paragraph.
 - this is position you will support and argue
 - make sure your thesis answers the question, is well developed, and supported by several main points
 - if appropriate, create a complex-compound thesis statement using a key word such as “although,” “despite,” “however,” etc.
- 5. Outline**
 - organize your brainstorm into at least three themes/main points
 - These points will be the topics of your paragraphs
 - support each theme with appropriate explanation and examples
 - Always Describe and Explain your examples!
 - Do not create a list of examples, explain them!
 - use documents to support your arguments, not as your main points
 - Try to get 1 document per topic paragraph
 - insert documents into your outline that support your argument
 - remember the rule $\frac{1}{2} + 1$
 - you can use more than this minimum number of documents but remember to use them effectively!
- 6. Write the Essay**
 - Intro: HOTT (Hook, Overview, Thesis, preview of Themes)
 - Body: TEST (Topic sentence, Evidence, Summary, Transition)
 - End: STOP (Summarize, Restate thesis, Omit new info, add Perspective)
 - There is no maximum number of paragraphs and not necessarily a minimum number of paragraphs. You need to adequately answer the questions you have been asked and provide the necessary information to support your answers. This means you will probably never write less than a 6 paragraph essay.
- 7. Proofread**
 - use any extra time to reread your essay
 - make corrections that are neat and easy to read and understand
 - if you remember new information write a new paragraph, circle it, and draw an arrow to indicate where the new paragraph should be inserted into the essay

Rules for Document Use in DBQs

1. The **minimum number of documents** to use is determined by using this rule: $\frac{1}{2} + 1$
 - If given 8 Documents ($\frac{1}{2} \times 8 + 1 = 5$) so you need to use 5 docs in your essay
 - If given 9 Documents ($\frac{1}{2} \times 9 + 1 = 6$) so you need to use 6 docs because you always round up!
 - Never feel that you have to use all the documents given. Focus on the ones you understand the best and put them in your minimum number list and then go from there.
2. **DO NOT** begin your sentences with these kinds of phrases:
 - Document B & C show...
 - As shown in Document E...
 - Document F suggests...
 - Using arguments suggested in Documents G & H, you can...
 - Document D indicates...
 - In Document A...
3. **Always** place your document references at the end of the sentences or phrases you are writing (**Doc A**).
4. **Quoting**: this is not something that is necessary. I should be able to read your introduction and explanation and still get the same understanding of your paragraph without ever needing the quote.

**However, if you choose to quote follow the following directions:

***Introduce the Quote:**

- Who said it and why is that person important
- What text is the quote from (if you have not mentioned it yet)?
- Give background on ideas in the quote (Explain terms!)

***The Quote itself:**

- Try to quote the minimum number of words possible.
- Always parenthetically cite the source of your quotes (Doc B).

***Explain the Quote:**

- Translate the quote into your own words
- Connect quote back to the point you are trying to make to begin with