

# Long Essay Scoring Rubric

Task	Points Possible	Description
Thesis/Claim	1	To earn this point, the thesis must make a claim that responds to the prompt (rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt) with a historically defensible thesis/claim that establishes a line of reasoning. The thesis must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, either in the introduction or the conclusion.
Contextualization	1	To earn this point, the response must relate the topic of the prompt to broader historical events, developments, or processes that occur before, during, or continue after the time frame of the question. This point is not awarded for merely a phrase or reference.
Evidence	2 total	To earn <b>1 point</b> , the response must identify specific historical examples of evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt. To earn <b>2 points</b> , the response must use specific and relevant examples of historical evidence to support an <b>argument</b> in response to the prompt.
Analysis and Reasoning	2 total	To earn <b>the first point</b> , the response must demonstrate the use of historical reasoning (e.g., comparison, causation, and change and/or continuity over time) to frame or structure and argument, although the reasoning might be uneven or imbalanced. To earn <b>the second point</b> , a response must demonstrate a complex understanding of the historical development that is the focus of the prompt, using evidence. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explaining nuance of an issue by analyzing multiple variables</li> <li>• Explaining both similarity and difference, or explaining both continuity and change, or explaining multiple causes, or explaining both cause and effect</li> <li>• Explaining relevant and insightful connections within and across periods</li> <li>• Confirming the validity of an argument by corroborating multiple perspectives across themes</li> <li>• Qualifying or modifying an argument by considering diverse or alternative views or evidence</li> </ul> This standing must be part of the argument, not merely a phrase or reference.

**Maximum Points: 6**

# Summary

- The long-essay portion of the exam consists of two prompts. You must answer one of them.
- Choose the question about which you know the most specific details, not the one that looks easiest.
- Study each question carefully. Make sure you are answering the question exactly. If you misinterpret a question and write about something other than what the prompt asks, you will receive a 0 for that question.
- Circle all key words. Consider the dates given; they are clues to what you are to write about. If, for example, a question asks, "How did the nature of the Soviet regime change after 1924?", the question is in fact asking you to show the differences between the leadership and policies of Lenin and Stalin.
- Do not ignore any part of the question. If a question asks you to "Compare and contrast the different personalities and leadership styles of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, and his son Philip II, King of Spain, and how these influenced the methods they used to counter the Protestant movement," be sure to address personalities, leadership styles, and the ways these influenced policy toward the Reformation. If you find yourself in a situation in which you do not know enough to answer a part of the question, do not ignore that part. Use the historical knowledge you have, combined with logic, to guess at the answer.
- Decide on a thesis, and then write an outline for your essay.
- Follow your outline. Stick to one important idea per paragraph. Provide concrete examples to support the point you are making. We recommend at least two examples per issue.



- Stay focused on the question, and don't go off on tangents. Write only about what the question asks, and carefully choose the evidence to support it. You have very little time to throw together these essays. Do not spend time including information that isn't directly relevant.
- Your introductory paragraph is more than just your thesis statement. It should also set the historical scene (time, place, historical situation) so that the reader can more clearly understand what your essay is about. In your thesis, do not simply restate the question; be sure to also *answer* the question. The thesis tells the reader what the main points of the essay are.
- Remember: This is a European history exam. If you write about the Cold War, for example, put as much focus as possible on what the Europeans are doing. If your essay deals with literature, art, philosophy, science, economics, social issues, and so on, place the discussion in the correct historical context.
- Do not be concerned with literary merit. Be sure your essay is logically organized, easy to understand, and always focused on the thesis. Each paragraph should have a topic sentence, and the essay should close with a concluding paragraph.
- Write clearly and neatly. Do not write in overly complex sentences. Toss in a couple of big words that you know you will not misuse. When in doubt, stick to simple syntax and vocabulary.
- Use transition words to indicate continuity of thought and changes in the direction of your argument.
- Keep a close watch on the time. Remember that 40 minutes for an essay is less time than you may think. Be sure to pace yourself by taking no more than five minutes to brainstorm and outline, and by working steadily through the essay. Remember that the style of the sentences is less important than the quality of the ideas.
- Stay positive. Do not panic. Everyone else is at least as nervous as you are.

As you are writing, observe the following guidelines:

- **Keep sentences as simple as possible.** Long sentences get convoluted very quickly.
- **Throw in a few big words.** But don't overdo it. Remember that good writing does not have to be complicated; some great ideas can be stated simply. *Never* use a word if you are unsure of its meaning or proper usage. A malapropism (misuse of a word) might cost you points.
- **Write clearly and neatly.** Here is an easy way to put your grader in a good mood. Graders look at a lot of chicken scratch; it strains their eyes and makes them grumpy. Neatly written essays make them happy. When you cross out, do it neatly. If you are making any major edits—if you want to insert a paragraph in the middle of your essay, for example—make sure you indicate these changes clearly.
- **Define your terms.** Most questions require you to use terms that mean different things to different people. One person's "liberal" is another person's "conservative," and yet another person's "extremist." What one person considers "expansionism," another might call "colonialism" or "imperialism." The folks who grade the test want to know what you think these terms mean. When you use them, define them. Take particular care to define any such terms that appear in the question. Almost all official College Board materials emphasize this point, so do not forget it. Be sure to define any term that you suspect can be defined in more than one way.
- **Use transition words to show where you are going.** When continuing an idea, use words such as *furthermore*, *also*, and *in addition*. When changing the flow of thought, use words such as *however* and *yet*. Transition words make your essay easier to understand by clarifying your intentions. Better yet, they indicate to the graders that you know how to make a coherent, persuasive argument.

#### Key Words

Using transition words (such as "however" and "furthermore") and structural indicators (such as "first," "second," and "finally," for example) in your essay is a great way to organize your writing and give the reader a sense of where your essay is headed. This will also make your writing seem more coherent and persuasive.

- **Use structural indicators to organize your paragraphs.** Another way to clarify your intentions is to organize your essay around structural indicators. For example, if you are making a number of related points, number them ("First...Second...And last..."). If you are writing a compare/contrast essay, use the indicators "on the one hand" and "on the other hand."
- **Stick to your outline.** Unless you get an absolutely brilliant idea while you are writing, do not deviate from your outline. If you do, you risk winding up with an incoherent essay.
- **Try to prove one "big picture" idea per paragraph.** Keep it simple. Each paragraph should make one point and then substantiate that point with historical evidence.
- **Back up your ideas with examples.** Yes, we have said it already, but it bears repeating: do not just throw ideas out there and hope that you are right. You will score big points if you substantiate your claims with facts.



- **Try to fill the essay form.** An overly short essay will hurt you more than one that is overly long.
- **Make sure your first and last paragraphs directly address the question.**  
Nothing will cost you points faster than if the graders decide you did not answer the question. It is always a safe move to start your final paragraph by answering the question. If you have written a good essay, that answer will serve as a legitimate conclusion.
- **Always place every essay into a historical context.** For example, if you are given an essay asking you to compare and contrast Newton's and Einstein's ideas on the universe, don't make it an essay on science. Instead, show how each of these men was a product of his respective time period, and show how their ideas influenced their contemporaries as well as future generations.