

Writing a Document Based Question (DBQ)

Review the process for writing a DBQ.

Step 1

Carefully read the historical context and the task. Know exactly what the task is asking you to do:

- **underline the verb in the question:** evaluate, assess, analyze, establish the validity (truth), etc.
- **look carefully at any conjunction in the question:** i.e. does the question ask you to contrast AND compare, or does the question ask you to contrast OR compare.

Step 2

Next, draw a table or box outline that can be used to organize information and help in writing the essay.

Documents	Topic:	Topic:	Topic:	Outside info
1	Fact: Details:	Fact: Details:	Fact: Details:	
2	Fact: Details:	Fact: Details:	Fact: Details:	

Step 3

Read all of the documents and answer the questions in complete sentences. Underline relevant information. Complete the box outline as you go through the documents. **YOU MUST ANSWER ALL THE SCAFFOLDING QUESTIONS.** You must include $\frac{1}{2} + 1$ of the documents when writing your essay.

Step 4

Write your introductory paragraph:

- Write **two sentences that address the topic of the question in a general way**.
- Write **an organizational statement** in which you mention the two or three issues or aspects of the topic about which you are going to write (your argument categories).
- Write **a clear thesis sentence** that expresses your response to the task.

For example, in the sample DBQ from the June 2001 Global History and Geography Regents Examination below:

Historical Context:

The success of industrialization has led to environmental problems throughout the world. As the 21st century begins, many nations are trying to deal with the environmental effects of industrialization.

Task: Using information from the documents and your knowledge of global history and geography, answer the questions that follow each document in Part A. Your answers to the questions will help you write the Part B essay, in which you will be asked to:

- Discuss the problems that industrialization has caused in the nations of the world
- Explain how nations are responding to the problems created by industrialization

A suitable introduction for this sample DBQ appears below:

Industrialization began in the 1700s in Great Britain. Since that time, a variety of environmental problems have been documented throughout the world. Both developed and developing nations are now attempting to implement a variety of solutions in order to preserve Earth's delicate environment.

Step 5

Begin the first body paragraph with a topic sentence. Mention lots of specific, relevant information to support your thinking. The more information, the more accurate it is, the more you interpret it, the better the essay will score. Begin all body paragraphs with a topic sentence.

An Example is below. Note that the topic sentence is underline. The information from the documents is in yellow and outside information is in green.

In the 200 years since the Industrial Revolution began, the environment has been significantly altered as more nations industrialize and increase their manufacturing capacity to meet consumer demands. For example in 1997 according to *World Watch*, carbon dioxide emissions in developed nations reached three tons per person, while developing nations produced half a ton per person (Document 2). These emissions can produce smog in concentrated areas, such as Mexico City, one of the most polluted cities in the world. Carbon dioxide can also form acid rain which can affect areas far removed from the source of the pollution. For example, pollution from areas of the United States has been carried into southeastern Canada causing acid rain which is detrimental to ecosystems and drinking water. Carbon dioxide has also been linked to global warming which can affect global weather patterns. Again, polluting nations can have an effect on other nations as shown in the political cartoon labeled “Nature’s Equation” which illustrates that the devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch can be attributed to global warming, most likely caused by nations other than Honduras (Document 4).

Step 6

Write a conclusion paragraph.

- Look back at your introductory paragraph. This paragraph should express the same things, but in a more defined way. Your thesis should now be your conclusion, the main point to which you have written throughout the essay.

A suitable conclusion for this sample DBQ appears below:

Consumers demand products which stimulates factories to produce them. During this production process a variety of harmful pollutants are emitted, in addition to the pollutants created by energy-producing plants to provide the electricity that powers many consumer items. Smog, acid rain, global warming, and other easily observable forms of pollution have caused nation to seek a variety of different solutions designed to limit or eliminate the pollution caused by industrialization. As developing nations industrialize and catch up with developed ones, it is more important than ever that these solutions be adopted in order to preserve the Earth’s environment.

This conclusion borrows some material from the historical context, and also repeats what was first stated in the introduction and proven in the body paragraphs. It also connects the policies discussed with the need to implement solutions as more nations become industrialized.