

# Can You Do the DBQ?

Effective performance on the AP Exam's document-based question (DBQ) involves several different skills. This writing guide encapsulates the main aspects of these skills and provides students with pointers for writing better responses to the DBQ.

## How to Interrogate a Document

1. What is the document?
2. Who wrote the document?
3. When and where was the document written?
4. Why was the document written?
5. Who was the document's intended audience?
6. What does the document say?
7. Finally, what does the document mean?

## Specifics for Writing Your DBQ Response

1. Formulate a thesis about history, not merely about the documents. *Make sure your thesis answers the question!*
2. Focus your discussion on the documents and the inferences you can draw from them.
3. Use all of the documents.
4. Do not quote extensively; long quotations are bad.
5. A good DBQ *analyzes* and *draws conclusions* from the documents. You should avoid the "laundry list" approach; that is, do not merely summarize each document.
6. Look for trends of *change over time* in the documents. (Sometimes change over time is not a relevant factor in the question, so look for it but do not think that it is always required.)

From "AP European History: Teachers Guide" available online

[[http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/repository/ap07\\_eurohist\\_teachersguide.pdf](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/repository/ap07_eurohist_teachersguide.pdf)]

7. Refer to the content, or the author, of the document so specifically in your text that the reader cannot help but recognize the document you are referring to without your having to cite it in parentheses.
8. According to the AP Exam Readers, indicators of analysis include:
  - Analytical essay structure (thesis, discussion with evidence, conclusion)
  - Organization of evidence in categories, especially ones not specified in the question itself (grouping is good)
  - Frequent reference to the terms of the question
  - Combination/juxtaposition of documents
  - Recognition of contradictions and ambiguities in documents
  - Reference to the *point of view* and the *purpose* of the document

## The Basic Core-Scoring Guide

You must earn the first six basic core points of the AP Exam's Core-Scoring Guide for the DBQ before you can receive the three optional points from the expanded core. You will earn the six points by ensuring your essay accomplishes the following tasks:

- Provides an appropriate, explicitly stated **thesis** that directly addresses all parts of the question and does NOT simply restate the question.
- Discusses a **majority of the documents** individually and specifically.
- Demonstrates understanding of the basic meaning of a majority of the documents.
- Supports the thesis with appropriate interpretations of a majority of the documents.
- Analyzes the documents by explicitly grouping them **in at least three** appropriate ways.
- Takes into account both the sources of the documents and the authors' points of view **in three separate instances**.

From "AP European History: Teachers Guide" available online

[[http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/repository/ap07\\_eurohist\\_teachersguide.pdf](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/repository/ap07_eurohist_teachersguide.pdf)]