

AP Government Review Tips

The Format of the Exam

<u>Questions</u>	<u>Time allowed</u>	<u>Percentage of grade</u>
60 multiple choice	45 minutes	50%
4 free response	100 minutes	50%

The questions on the test will cover topics from the whole course. However, in the multiple-choice section, you'll find that certain subjects come up more often:

Subject	Percentage of the Test
Government Institutions (congress, presidency, courts, bureaucracy)	35 to 40%
Political Behavior of Individuals (political culture, public opinion, voting)	10 to 20%
Political Behavior of Groups (political parties, elections, interest groups, PACs, and mass media)	10 to 20%
Constitutional Foundations (federalism, checks and balances, separation of powers, theories of democracy)	5 to 15%
Civil Liberties and Civil Rights	5 to 15%
Public Policy	5 to 15%

Preparing for the Exam

Preparing for the AP US Government Exam is like preparing for any other exam you've taken in your life; you have to study. We suggest creating a study plan, in which you decide what you need to study, and how much time you can spend on each subject. Refer to the chart above for percentages of questions covered on the Exam. Keep in mind that the focus of the Exam is on the general principles--the "big picture" that guides our system of government. Don't spend time memorizing obscure rules and "trivial pursuit" type facts.

One of the most important things you can do to help yourself on the exam is to relax and stay confident so that you can think clearly. Remember: you don't need to get every problem right to get a 5 on the exam, so if you find problems that you can't answer, don't let that lower your confidence. It's also important to keep going on the exam. Your goal is to "harvest" as many points as possible, so concentrate and work efficiently the entire time. Use every minute you have, and don't stop! Many people don't receive the score they deserve simply because they got tired, lost concentration, and missed questions.

Strategies for Questions

Strategies for Multiple-Choice Questions: Before choosing an answer, read through all the possible answers. On many of the questions you can avoid spending too much time on a problem by reading the possible answers first. This can help you eliminate answers that are incorrect, which will narrow down your choices.

Studying for the AP US Government Exam isn't just about memorizing a list of terms, although we recommend that you review the vocabulary used in your course. More important is that you understand those

terms and how they relate to each other so you can see how they fit into the big picture. Some of the major concepts you should understand and be able to explain are:

- Checks and balances
- Separation of powers
- Elements of the Constitution, such as the major powers of Congress
- What Federalist No. 10 is about
- Federalism
- Differences between the House and the Senate
- How a bill becomes a law
- The presidential election process

In addition to having a good grasp of the topics listed above, you should also understand the relationships between key concepts. On some exam questions, you may be asked to synthesize multiple concepts. A likely list of possibilities includes:

- Federalism and policy making
- Interest groups and theories of democracy
- Expansion of civil rights via judicial activism
- The mass media and the election process
- Public opinion and support for political parties

Strategies for Free-Response Questions

It's normal to get nervous when thinking about answering essay questions on an exam. If you spend some time understanding what the readers of the exam are looking for, you might be able to reduce this anxiety a bit. The first step in writing an answer is understanding the question. For example, if you're asked to discuss the implications of PACs, you won't get full credit for simply defining what a PAC is. This is only part of the answer. The rest of the answer involves your interpretation of the implications of PACs. The key to doing well on the free-response questions is reading the question correctly.

Questions on the AP US Government Exam generally fall into three categories, and the verbs used in the questions should reveal what the question is asking for. The first question type asks you to present information and write about the meaning of concepts. Some commonly used verbs in these questions include: define, describe, identify, list, state, and summarize.

The second question type asks you to demonstrate that you understand both sides of an issue or recognize similarities and differences. You don't need a full thesis statement to answer these questions because you're not asked to take a position and argue for it, however, you do need an organizing statement to orient your reader to your answer. Verbs used in this type of question include: compare, contrast, discuss, explain, and illustrate.

The final question type asks you to take a position and argue for a specific point of view. A thesis statement is required for this type of question. Verbs found in these questions include: analyze, argue, and interpret.

No matter what type of verb is used, one thing remains the same for all free-response questions: you always need to support your points with examples.

Keeping these points in mind, let's examine a question from the 1998 exam:

Question: Elections in the United States are characterized by low voter turnout. Discuss TWO demographic characteristics associated with nonvoting and THREE institutional obstacles associated with nonvoting.

Here is how you would answer this question: First, underline or circle words like "discuss," "two," and "three." Second, since the question asks for a discussion, you don't need to spend a lot of time writing a thesis and a long introduction. Instead, get right to the point "There are two characteristics that contribute to low voter turnout." State what they are and how they're linked to turnout. Then tackle the three institutional obstacles.

When you're finished writing your answer, review it to make sure you've included the correct number of examples in your answer (don't write about 3 voter characteristics and 2 obstacles by mistake).

Some general pointers to remember about free-response questions:

Short questions tend to ask for factual answers while longer questions ask for judgments (a thesis!).

Include concrete examples in your answers that show you understand the topic or concept. For example, if you're asked to name a major cause of low voter turnout, don't just write "registration barriers." Instead, write "For example, most states require registration 30 days in advance. If people can't do this, they can't vote." Answer all parts of the question. Most ask for more than one thing. Exam graders tend to reward students more for answering all parts of a question than for doing well on only one part. So keep track of the time and write at least something for each part of the question. Understand what you're being asked to write before you begin writing. If you're asked to answer two parts of the question, don't answer three. You'll get points deducted, not added, for doing the extra work (plus you'll waste precious time that could be spent on the next question).

What if you really don't understand or remember something? The first rule is don't panic and start making things up. Instead, try to write confidently about the parts of the question you do understand, and include all parts of the question in at least a general way, if possible. Remember, it's better to get some points than no points at all.

Here is an example of this last point:

If you're asked about the War Powers Act and the Budget and Impoundment Act but can't fully explain both of them, you can make a global statement at the beginning of your essay that shows that you know something about both of them, such as: "The War Powers Act and the Budget and Impoundment Act were passed to set limits on presidential power." That way you wouldn't have said anything incorrect, and you'd only lose points for not fully answering the question.

Do's and Don'ts

Do's

1. Write as neatly as possible (without wasting time). You'll get a better score if the reader can understand what you're writing. If you make a mistake, simply draw a line through it and write the correct information above it. And, don't use arrows or asterisk because they can be confusing to the readers.
2. Read the question. And then read it again. Think about what you're going to write. Outline your answer. Make sure you're only answering what has been asked.
3. Reread your work and make sure you've answered each question fully and correctly.
4. Leave yourself a few minutes at the end to revise or proofread your answers.

Don'ts

1. Don't give personal opinions (like your political affiliation or whether you like the president's policies). The Exam is testing your knowledge and understanding of the political process. Don't waste time stating an opinion, unless you're asked to do so.
2. Don't write out a repetition of the question. Just get to the answer.
3. Don't give information you weren't asked for. You won't get any extra points if you do. So don't waste your time writing it.
4. Don't spend too much time on any one multiple-choice question. Answer the easy ones first, then come back and do the more challenging questions. Keep moving!
5. Don't spend more than 25 minutes on any one free-response question.

AP Government Course Outline

- I. Constitutional Underpinnings of United States Government (5-15%)
 - A. Considerations that influenced the formulation and adoption of the Constitution
 - B. Separation of powers
 - C. Federalism
 - D. Theories of democratic government
- II. Political beliefs and behaviors of individuals (10-20%)
 - A. Beliefs that citizens hold about their government and its leaders
 - B. Processes by which citizens learn about politics
 - C. The nature, sources, and consequences of public opinion
 - D. The ways in which citizens vote and otherwise participate in political life
 - E. Factors that influence citizens to differ from one another in terms of political beliefs and behaviors
- III. Political parties, interest groups, and mass media: mechanisms that facilitate the communication of interests and preferences by like-minded citizens (10-20%)
 - A. Political parties and elections (including their functions, organization, historical development, and effects on the political process)
 - B. Interest groups (including PAC's)
 1. The range of interests that are or are not represented
 2. The activities of interest groups
 3. The effects of interest groups on the political process
 4. The unique characteristics and roles of PAC's in the political process
 - C. The mass media
 1. The functions and structures of the media
 2. The impacts of media on politics
- IV. Institutions of National Government: The Congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, and the federal courts (35-45%)
 - A. The major formal and informal institutional arrangements of powers
 - B. Relationships among these four institutions
 - C. Links between these institutions and political parties, interest groups, the media, sub-national governments, and public opinion
- V. Public policy (5-15%)
 - A. Policy making in a federal system
 - B. The formation of policy agenda
 - C. The role of institutions in the enactment of policy

- D. The role of the bureaucracy and the courts in policy implementation and interpretation
 - E. Linkages between policy processes and the following:
 1. Political institutions and federalism
 2. Political parties
 3. Interest groups
 4. Public opinion
 5. Elections
 6. Policy networks
- VI. Civil liberties and civil rights (5-15%)
- A. The development of civil liberties and civil rights by judicial interpretation
 - B. Knowledge of substantive rights and liberties
 - C. The impact of the Fourteenth Amendment on the constitutional development of rights and liberties

AP Terms-Concepts-Cases

Constitutional Underpinnings/Foundations:

evolution/force theory; divine right theory; social contract; characteristics of a state; unitary government; federal government; confederation; monarchy; oligarchy; aristocracy; theocracy; dictatorship; authoritarian; totalitarian; anarchy; presidential government; parliamentary government; democracy; direct democracy; representative democracy; pluralist theory; elite and class theory; hyper-pluralism; politics; majority rule; minority rights; compromise; political participation; public policy; public goods; justice; political issue; political system; linkage institutions; policy impacts; policy gridlock; freedom; order; equality; *jus sanguinis*; *jus soli*; ideology; liberals; conservatives; moderates; libertarians; political correctness

government; limited government; representative government; rule of law; Magna Carta; Petition of Right; English Bill of Rights; common law; Mayflower Compact; John Locke; natural rights; Baron de Montesquieu; Jean Rousseau; Social Contract; Stamp Act; Coercive Acts; boycott; unicameral; constitution; popular sovereignty; First and Second Continental Congresses; Thomas Paine & *Common Sense*; Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence (key parts); Articles of Confederation, incl weaknesses; ratification; Shay's Rebellion; Framers; James Madison; Virginia Plan; New Jersey Plan; Connecticut Compromise (Great Compromise); bicameral; Three-Fifths Compromise; Commerce and Slave Trade Compromise; Alexander Hamilton; Federalist; *Federalist Papers*; Federalist #10 #51 #78; Anti-Federalists; separation of powers; checks and balances; constitutionalism; unconstitutional; *Marbury v. Madison*; judicial review; federalism; eminent domain; *McCulloch v. Maryland*; elastic clause; bills of attainder; ex post facto; how Constitution is organized...preamble and articles; amendment; formal and informal amendment; Bill of Rights debate; federalism; *McCulloch v. Maryland*; supremacy clause; *Gibbons v. Ogden*; Commerce Clause; Elastic Clause (necessary and proper clause); expressed/delegated/enumerated powers; implied powers; inherent powers; reserved powers; prohibited powers; concurrent powers; vertical federalism; horizontal federalism; administrative regulations; dual federalism; layer cake federalism; cooperative/shared federalism; marble cake federalism; picket fence federalism; block grants; categorical grants; equalization; matching requirements; new federalism; interstate; intrastate; federal mandates; unfunded mandates; enabling act; full faith and credit; extradition; interstate compacts; "the Reagan Revolution"; "peace dividend"

Civil Liberties and Civil Rights:

Civil Liberties: civil liberties; Bill of Rights, 1-10 plus all other amendments; incorporation doctrine; due process; selective incorporation; "establishment" clause; conscientious objectors; "free exercise" clause; *Lemon* test; "clear and present danger" test; "bad tendency" test; "hate crime"; speech codes; prior restraint; *Miller* test; libel; slander; freedom expression; symbolic speech; commercial speech; shield laws; search warrant; probable cause; balancing test; preferred freedoms; litigation; indictment; due process; substantive due process; procedural due process; exclusionary rule; Burger Court; "good faith" exception; Rehnquist Court; Warren Court; *jus sanguinis*; *jus soli*; judicial interpretation; bill of attainder; habeas corpus; ex-post facto laws; grand jury; double jeopardy; self-incrimination; Miranda rights

Barron v. Baltimore; Cruzan v. Director, Missouri Department of Health; Edwards v. Aguillard; Engel v. Vitale; Epperson v. Arkansas; Escobedo v. Illinois; Everson v. New Jersey; Gideon v. Wainwright; Gitlow v. New York; Griswold v. Connecticut; Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier; Lemon v. Kurtzman; Lynch v. Donnelly; Mapp v. Ohio; Miller v. California; Miranda v. Arizona; Near v. Minnesota; New York Times v. United States; New York Times v. Sullivan; Osborne v. Ohio; Roe v. Wade; Roth v. United States; Schenck v. United States; School District of Abington Township v. Schempp; Texas v. Johnson; Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District; Wallace v. Jaffree; Lee v. Weisman; Westside Community Schools v. Mergens; Wisconsin v. Yoder; Furman v. Georgia

Civil Rights: civil rights; *Dred Scott* decision, *Dred Scott v. Sandford*; Jim Crow laws; *Plessey v. Ferguson*; "Grandfather clause"; "separate but equal"; *de jure* segregation; *de facto* segregation; *Brown v. Board of Education (Brown I)*; *Brown v. Board of Education (Brown II)*; Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); Civil Rights Act of 1964; *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenberg County Schools*; *Smith v. Allwright*; suffrage; white primary; Voting Rights Act of 1965; *Korematsu v. United States*; reservation; Equal Rights Amendment; women's liberation; National Organization for Women (NOW); National Women's Political Caucus; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC); Title IX of Education Act of 1972; pro-life groups; pro-choice groups; Hyde amendment; gray liberation; Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (the ADA); affirmative action programs; *University of California Regents v. Bakke*; *Adarand Constructors v. Peña*; *Hopwood v. Texas*; *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale*

Political Beliefs and Behaviors of Individuals:

Public Opinion: public opinion; demography; census; melting pot; reapportionment; political socialization; opinion leaders; reference group; primary group; secondary group; polls; sample; population; universe; random sample; sampling error; random-digit dialing; cluster sampling; quota sample; "bandwagon effect"; exit poll; political ideology; political participation; protest; civil disobedience; ideology; conservative; liberal; moderates; interest group; pluralist theory; elite theory; hyper-pluralist theory; potential group; actual group; collective good; lobbyists; electioneering; Political Action Committees (PACs); *amicus curiae* briefs; class action lawsuits; Republican; Democrat; Independent

Voting and Voting Behavior: historical obstacles to voting, 15th, 19th, 23rd, 24th, 26th amendment; Voting Rights Act of 1965; gender gap; factors affecting how we vote; registration, turn out/decline; Motor Voter Bill; office ballot; split/straight ticket; franchise; suffrage; "literacy test"; "grandfather clause"; poll tax

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media:

Media: high-tech politics; mass media; media events; sound bite; "the press"; press conferences; investigative journalism; print media; broadcast media; yellow journalism; beats; trial balloons; talking heads; linkage institutions; spin/spin doctors; media bias

Political Parties: political party; functions of political parties; coalition; major political party; party activists; party identification; party in the electorate; party as an organization; party-in-government; political party development/eras; political action committees; "loyal opposition"; "out party"; linkage institutions; single-member district system; party image; split-ticket/ticket-splitting; party machines; patronage; civil service system; national convention; party platform; national committee; national chairperson; party history/eras; critical election; realigning election; party realignment; Federalists; Anti-Federalists; Democratic-Republican; Democratic Party; Republican Party; New Deal; party de-alignment; super-delegates; minor (third) parties; winner-take-all system; proportional representation; political polarization; divided government; plurality

Interest Groups: interest groups; types of interest groups; functions of interest groups; lobbying; functions of lobbyist; iron triangle; direct and indirect techniques of interest groups; impact of interest groups/lobbyist on legislative and executive branches; pros-cons of interest groups; PACS; reform attempts of 1946 and 1995; *U.S. v. Harris*; policy gridlock

Nominations, Campaigns, Elections: nomination; caucus; precinct; state convention; non-partisan primary; Super Tuesday; open primary; closed primary; *Smith v. Allwright*; direct mail; Federal Election Campaign Act (1974); soft money; Political Action Committees (PACs)

Institutions of National Government:

Congress: oversight function; trustee; constituents; delegate; partisan; politico; apportioned; senatorial courtesy; off-year elections; gerrymandering; franking privilege; Speaker of the House; President Pro-temp of Senate; President of Senate (VP); majority and minority leaders; majority and minority whips; joint resolutions; concurrent resolutions; standing committees; joint committees; special or select committees; conference committee; legislative oversight; seniority system; safe congressional district; congressional caucus; calendars; rules; discharge petition; Committee of the Whole; quorum; voice vote; standing vote; roll-call vote; filibuster; cloture; veto override; how bill passed; incumbency; term limits; pork barrel; casework; General Accounting Office (GAO); Congressional Budget Office (CBO); *Westberry v. Sanders*; *Baker v. Carr*

President: Executive Office of President; White House staff; chief of state; chief executive; chief administrator; chief diplomat; commander in chief; chief legislator; chief of party; chief citizen; presidential succession; electoral college; presidential electors; cabinet; treaty; executive agreement; veto power; pocket veto; executive privilege; diplomatic recognition; federal budget; impoundment of funds; reprieve; pardon; commutation; amnesty; appointment with Senate confirmation

Bureaucracy: bureaucracy; bureaucrat; administration; department; agency; commission; authority; staff agencies; line agencies; civil servants; quasi-judicial; spoils system; patronage; Pendleton Act of 1883; Office of Personnel Management (OPM); Merit System Protection Board; Hatch Act; cabinet; The Independent Regulatory Commissions; regulatory agencies; independent executive agencies; quasi-legislative; quasi-judicial; government corporations; iron triangle; red tape

Judicial: jurisdiction; exclusive jurisdiction; concurrent jurisdiction; plaintiff; defendant; original jurisdiction; appellate jurisdiction; judicial review; writ of certiorari; certificate; *amicus curiae* briefs; majority opinion; concurring opinion; dissenting opinion; redress; "rule of 4"; civil vs. criminal law; judicial activism vs. judicial restraint; original intent; stare decisis; common law; precedents; procedural vs. substantive due process, briefs, oral arguments

Public Policy:

foreign policy; 3 types foreign policy..military, economic, diplomatic; who makes/carries out foreign policy; Monroe Doctrine; Cold War; detente; isolationism; Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT); Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI - Star Wars); nuclear proliferation; terrorism; defense spending trends; domestic policy; economic policy; globalization; GATT; NAFTA; trade balance; Favored Nation status; foreign aid; elections and the economy; unemployment; monetary policy; regulating business; taxing and spending policy; deficits; surpluses, budget; taxes and tax policies; social welfare policy; uncontrollable/entitlement spending; means-tested spending; impact of New Deal and Great Society on government spending; Social Security system (SSI); Medicare system (FICA); Medicaid; Welfare program (TANF); Foodstamps; Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC); health & environment policy; environmental laws...Clean Air, Clean Water, Endangered Species, Wilderness Protection, etc. environmental impact statements; global warming; toxic wastes; energy dependence...lack of comprehensive policy...energy industry vs. environmentalists