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Cracking the Free-Response Essay Section

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE AP HUMAN GEOGRAPHY ESSAYS

After you finish the multiple-choice section, you will have a five-minute break before you begin Section II: Free Response Questions, otherwise known as the essay section. In this part of the exam, you will be given a separate test booklet that contains the essay questions and lined paper to write your three essays. Let's review the basic facts of the essay section.

Number of Questions:	3
Time Allowed:	75 minutes
Writing Instrument:	Pen (preferable) but pencil is allowed
Goal:	60% the available points in the essay section

Just like on the multiple-choice section, to do well on the essays you need to know your human geography *and* how to answer the AP Human Geography Exam essay questions. You may know the material from class and may consider yourself a decent writer, but if you don't know how to write *this* kind of essay then you won't get the credit you deserve.

Even if you aren't totally comfortable with the material in the course and even if you don't consider yourself the best writer, you can learn to write an effective point-winning AP Human Geography essay. Data from previous years shows that the average AP Human Geography student only earns 35 percent of the available points on the essay section. We'll show you how to get all those points that most students aren't earning.

How can you do this? You need strategies to earn the maximum number of points. In this section, I will give you the tools to score essay points and get a 4 or 5 on the exam—even if your English teacher tells you that you don't write well. We'll go through the scoring system, the writing style, and the rules.

THE SCORING SYSTEM

Each essay is scored by an individual reader—a real human being, who is either an AP Human Geography teacher or a geography professor. This person is part of a team of readers who are trained to read the same essay question and assign it a standard number of points.

Before the reading begins, each team establishes a scoring rubric. The rubric is a set of guidelines that tells the reader what they can give points for in each part of the essay answer. Each year in June after school is out, the readers are retrained and the rubric is recalculated to maintain accurate scores.

No Grading, Just Points

When readers begin to look at your essay, they begin with a blank slate of zero points. As they go through your essay, they will issue points when your writing matches the material on the scoring rubric. There is a set number of points available for each essay. This can range anywhere from 6 to 12 points per essay question. No half points are awarded.

Readers are not allowed to say, "That seemed like a nice essay. I'll give it 9 out of 10 points." They also may not think to themselves, "That essay would fail in my class. I'll give them only 2 points."

Instead they must use the rubric to score every essay. Readers' scoring is constantly checked for accuracy. Occasionally, they must explain how and why they gave points on a particular essay.

How a Rubric Works

The rubric divides the points available for each part of the essay. For instance, if you have an eight-point essay with three parts, there may be two points available on the first part and three points available on each of the second and third parts. These are the maximum number of points available for each part. The reader cannot give you extra credit just because you wrote very well in Part B. The reader also can't transfer points within an essay if you did better on one part than another. It's important to know that *there are no negative or penalty points in the essay section*. A reader cannot take points away that you've already earned just because you wrote something else incorrectly.

Unfortunately, you will not be able to tell how many points are available on each question. However, you can estimate the number of points available by examining the structure of the question. Generally, the first part of the question has the least amount of points available—between 1 and 3, usually. The later parts of the question generally carry the bulk of the points, anywhere from 3 to 6, depending on the structure. Later in this chapter, we will show you several practice essay questions, and explain how to estimate the number of points available.

To get the maximum number of points, make sure that you cover all parts of the question in your essay. *Most students lose points because they forget to answer part of the question*. We'll also show you in this chapter how to write a shorthand essay to prevent missing out on large chunks of available points. Likewise, students lose points because they don't use the vocabulary from the course to explain what they know. Using keywords is another critical tool, which we will discuss. Before we do that, let's find out about the kinds of questions you will see.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS

As we said in chapter 1, there is not a strict rule about the types of essay questions presented in the AP Human Geography Exam, nor are there requirements that any particular subject area be covered. However, there will not be two or more questions from the same subject area. For example, one question might be on political geography, the next one on agriculture, and a third on urbanization. The following year, there might be a political geography essay question again, but the next questions might be drawn from economic geography and energy resources.

There is no way of knowing what will show up as an essay question. However, we can tell you what questions have been asked in the past. These past questions won't be asked again any time in the near future. In fact, the reuse of past questions is wholly unlikely, given the large number of potential questions from the course.

Past AP Human Geography Essay Question Subjects:

2001

- Principles of the Green Revolution
- Factors that accelerated suburbanization since the 1950s
- Criticism of Rostow's model of the five stages of economic development

2002

- Comparison of political geography principles between Europe & the Middle East
- Elements of religion in the cultural landscape
- The characteristics of urban communities with female heads-of-household

2003

- Principle of core-periphery in the urban networks of Germany and Argentina
- Criticism of how tourism affects regional distinctiveness
- Factors of Europe's shift from net emigration to net immigration since the 1800s

2004

- Factors behind the development of Maquiladora cities in Mexico
- Restructuring of the American poultry industry in the twentieth century
- Comparison of demographic patterns between inner city and suburban areas

2005

- Comparison of supranationalism and devolution in modern states
- Patterns of immigration into the United States since 1900
- Forces behind urban revitalization in the United States since 1900

2006

- Principles behind global migration patterns in the late twentieth century
- Transition from manufacturing to services in small towns of the American South
- Centripetal and centrifugal forces in South Asia

2007

- Prediction of land use using von Thünen's model
- Revival of ethnic languages in the face of cultural globalization by English
- Global economic restructuring and the new international division of labor

2008

- Comparison of principles behind von Thünen and the Concentric Zone Model
- Recent patterns of internal migration in the United States
- Trends of increasing female school enrollments in the Third World

What to Expect When You're Expecting (Essays)

It's not that the Educational Testing Service will never again include an essay question on a particular topic. In fact, von Thünen's model was the focus of a question in 2007 and was half of a comparison question in 2008. Therefore, keep in mind that authors may use one of the topics again, but approach it from a different angle. For example, it's likely immigration to Europe will one day show up in a question asking about the relationship between low fertility rates and the need for guest workers (e.g., Turkish *gastarbeiter* in Germany). Don't count out previous topics; just be prepared to approach them from a few different angles.

There are some general expectations about AP Human Geography essay questions that you should keep in mind as you prepare. Repeating what we covered in the first chapter, here is a list of the things you can expect in the free-response section:

- At least one question will have a *map, table, diagram, or model* that you must analyze to answer part of the question or the entire question. It is wholly possible all three questions have some sort of visual element that you will have to analyze to some degree.
- Another essay question will likely require you to make a *critical argument* regarding a theory, principle, or issue in human geography. Basically, you will have to explain what is right and wrong about the theory or principle.
- Another common essay type are *process* questions, where you have to describe the details of a geographic theory, principle, or issue. In other words, how does something work in a particular order—factor A affects person X and causes them to migrate to place Z.
- Be aware that there are *hybrid questions* which may ask you to do two or more of these things in a single essay.

Be familiar with these question types and understand that how the question is written will give you an idea of what you are expected to present in your answer.

What You Are NOT Expecting

As you read through the list of past questions, you probably had at least one moment where you thought something like, "Poultry? You can't be serious! Neither my teacher nor the textbook ever mentioned chickens or turkeys!" Think of how the students in 2004 must have felt when they saw a question about the American poultry industry. Shock and panic must have struck many a student. To some degree, the exam is testing how well you deal with the unexpected and how well you can use what you know about people, places, and time periods to fill in information about other subjects.

The point is that you should expect one question on the exam to come from completely unexpected subject matter. *The key is to not panic.* Approach the question like you would the other essays. Here, you must read behind the question and get into the writer's head.

Generally, these unexpected topics ask you to apply the theories and principles that you have learned and apply them to places or situations that you have not. For example, in 2006 students were shown a photograph of a small industrial park and asked about the factors behind the change

in land use from manufacturing to a telephone call center in a small southern town in the United States. Think of the picture and reference to the American South as *distractors* to some degree. The distractors should help guide your answer to the question, not make you freak out because you don't know the details.

The question really asked about the shift from manufacturing to service industries in the American economy, often referred to in textbooks as "deindustrialization" of First World economic restructuring. Regardless of where it is or what it looks like, the same principles apply: In today's economy, companies seek cheaper land, cheaper labor, and fewer regulations. The English language is necessary for call centers. That's why they are located in the less expensive and non-unionized southern states. Low-cost manufacturing, on the other hand, has moved to Third World and newly industrialized locations, where language is not an issue.

Answer these unexpected questions the best you can. Remember the rules and don't leave any question or part of a question blank. Make an outline and attempt each part of the question. You never know where you will pick up a point or two, or four.

AP HUMAN GEOGRAPHY EXAM ESSAY STRATEGY

In this section, we will explain the writing style for the essays, give you the rules for effective essay writing, show you the directions, and discuss time management. Combined, these strategies will improve your AP Human Geography Exam essay writing skills.

WRITING STYLE FOR THE AP HUMAN GEOGRAPHY EXAM

Here's something most people don't expect: *There is no required writing style* on the AP Human Geography Exam. This differs significantly from the AP history tests, where students are required to use a specific style that includes things such as thesis statements. On the AP Human Geography Exam, unless the question specifically requires an introduction, *you should not write an introductory paragraph, and you should not write a thesis statement for your essay.* This fact may drive your AP U.S. History and English teachers nuts, but it is the truth. The rubric doesn't give points for it, so you don't need it. The author of this book has read thousands of AP Human Geography essays and has never given a student points because they wrote an introductory paragraph.

Unless you have some additional information to write about, the same policy goes for concluding paragraphs. Do not just write a concluding paragraph to restate the exact same things that you wrote in the body of your essay. As we will show you later in this chapter, only use a concluding paragraph to add points that you may have forgotten to cover earlier in your writing.

Just the Facts, Ma'am

You've probably always been told to put introductory and concluding paragraphs in your essays at school, but the simple cold fact is that the readers don't care since they *just want to see your straightforward answer to the question.* You should not write anything that is not going to earn you points. Just as in the multiple-choice section, *you cannot waste time.* To focus on all of the essay questions within

the 75-minute time period, you need all the extra time you can get. Sure, it's better to say more than to say less to pick up additional points. However, you only have 75 minutes in which to finish.

Now, you should feel somewhat relieved. Not having to write so formally on the essays is one of the "easier" aspects of the AP Human Geography Exam. Nonetheless, you still need to approach the essay section with a plan for all contingencies. Before we get to the "what to do" parts of strategy, we are going to give you the "what not to do" rules first.

The Rules for Effective Essay Writing

Here are a few rules to follow on the essay section. Violating these rules can eliminate your possibility of earning a 4 or 5 on the exam. Included are instructions for what you can do to get out of these situations:

Rule #1: Don't Leave Anything Blank

If you write two of the essays and leave a third one blank, it will be almost statistically impossible to score a 4 or 5 on the exam. If you are stumped on a question, you need to write at least a paragraph on what you know about the material or anything you think might be related. What's the difference between a blank sheet and a few sentences? It has to do with the type of score you'll be issued. A blank essay receives a "-" score, which will take you out of the running for that 4 or 5 score. A couple of lines of writing on the subject of the question will at least give you a "0" score, and if you use the right vocabulary might even earn you a point or two. This approach will significantly increase the possibility of earning at least a score of 4. Think of the 0 as a low score and the - as a disqualification.

Likewise, if there is a part of the question that you don't know the answer to, you should still write something using the technical vocabulary from the course. Do this just in case you can pick up a point or two for identifying significant issues. Another approach to get last-ditch points is to give a real-world example of something that you're not sure how to technically explain.

Rule #2: No Bullet Points

Although you may pick up a point or two for identifying important vocabulary, just writing a few bullet points won't get you enough points for a high score. Even if you don't think you know the full answer to the essay question, the parts that you do know should be written out to earn the maximum points possible. Why? Some scoring rubrics distribute points for each question part on a sliding scale. For example, you might get one point for identifying an issue or using vocabulary properly, a second point for a basic discussion, and a third point for a complex discussion of the issue.

Rule #3: No Artwork, Please

Even if the question refers to a particular geographic model or place, do not draw your answer as a diagram or map. The reader will not be able to give you any points, even if what you're writing is basically correct. Answers must be in essay format, plain and simple. If you're visualizing a model or a map, write down what you see in your mind. Don't just describe the structure or places; discuss processes and explain why things are in a particular place or how they got to be there. Don't forget to use the technical vocabulary from that part of the course.

Rule #4: Editt Yoru Worrk!

As much as you think it might be fun to spend what time you have left over to draw pictures or write poems about population pyramids in the back of the test booklet, this is not a good idea. Use this time to edit. See page 69 for tips on editing.

WHAT THE DIRECTIONS SAY

The essay instructions are straightforward, and they mean what they say. There's nothing hidden here:

Directions: You have 75 minutes to answer all three of the following questions. It is recommended that you spend approximately one-third of your time (25 minutes) on each question. It is suggested that you take up to 5 minutes of this time to plan and outline each answer. While a formal essay is not required, it is not enough to answer a question by merely listing facts. Illustrate your answers with substantive geographic examples where appropriate. Be sure that you number each of your answers, including individual parts, in the answer booklet as the questions are numbered below.

TIME MANAGEMENT

The most important thing in the directions is the advice on how to spend your time. What may sound confusing is the bit about "5 minutes." On average, here's how you would plan your time:

- Essay 1: 5 minutes to outline and 20 minutes to write
- Essay 2: 5 minutes to outline and 20 minutes to write
- Essay 3: 5 minutes to outline and 20 minutes to write for a total of 75 minutes.

However, after the exam you might find out that this would have been a *better schedule*:

- Essay 2: 4 minutes to outline, 14 minutes to write and 2 minutes to edit
- Essay 3: 6 minutes to outline, 19 minutes to write and 3 minutes to edit
- Essay 1: 5 minutes to outline, 21 minutes to write and 1 minute to edit

Why? You are going to answer the question that you know best first. Moreover, you are likely to spend less time doing it because the answer flows easily. And you won't need as much time to edit, so you'll just do the *quick editing* that we'll show you in a few pages. The second essay is one in which you also know the material, but it's trickier and you'll need more time to formulate and write your answer. The third essay is the tough one, possibly even a "stumper" that you are just not ready to answer. You are just going to answer this one to pick up as many points as possible.

The point is to be flexible with your time within the 75-minute time frame. Try to target 20 total minutes for the first essay you choose to write, 25 total minutes for the second essay, and 30 total minutes for the last essay. Within those totals, keep in mind that you need to outline, write, and edit your work.

A FEW OTHER AP ESSAY-WRITING FACTS AND GUIDELINES

- You may write the essays in any order in the answer booklet. For example, you can start with Essay 3, then Essay 1, and finish with Essay 2. Don't forget to write the number of the essay you are writing in the box at the top of each page.
- When you begin the next essay, start on a fresh page.
- With average-sized handwriting, most high-scoring essays use two to three pages of the answer booklet.
- There's no need to give your essay a title. Focus on getting points.
- You may double-space your essays.
- Very small and poor handwriting will harm your score. If a reader can't decipher your writing, then they can't give you points. Write carefully and legibly.
- Readers do not grade for spelling or grammar. You don't get extra points for spelling Zimbabwe correctly, nor can a reader deduct points for your attempt to spell "the palace of Verseye" when you meant Versailles. They still have to give you credit. Yes, they understand you are under pressure.

ALSO KEEP IN MIND...

It's important to recognize if the question specifies a certain place. If the question refers to, for instance, "European border policies' effect on free trade," then you must talk about Europe. If the question is more general, such as "Describe an example of a fuzzy border between two culture regions," then you can pick any example, such as the American "Dixie" border with the Northern United States.

Make sure to recognize any historical time frame. If the question says "since 1950," then make sure your descriptions and examples are not from a previous time period. Likewise, if the question specifies "geopolitics during the Cold War," then you should refer to events between 1946 and 1991.

HOW TO CRACK THE AP HUMAN GEOGRAPHY ESSAY QUESTIONS

In this section, we will discuss outlining, keyword vocabulary, writing tools, and editing strategies. Keep in mind that you are not just writing; *you are constructing an answer*. Think about it: you could unknowingly write an answer that reads well but falls apart under the rubric. Or, using the following strategies you can construct an answer that "reads to the rubric" and considerably raises your essay section score.

Data show that the average student earns only one-third of the available points on the essay section. Why? In addition to the problems covered in the "rules" section above, students tend to have problems organizing their answers and using the intended vocabulary.

How to Make a Shorthand Outline

The key to writing an effective and organized essay is to understand that the questions are written with a particular structure in mind. This question structure is how you will want to *construct* your written answer. *The basic way to outline your essay is to outline the question.* One of the best things about the shorthand outline is that you answer each part of the question in the order asked. This is not required but it makes the essay more readable, decreasing the chance a reader will miss potential points. Moreover, by checking off each part of the essay that you complete, you will make sure that you answer all parts of the question, thus avoiding the trap that causes most students to lose points.

Where to Write Your Outline

The answer booklet for the AP Human Geography essays contains many blank sheets of lined paper. In fact there's far more paper than you actually need to write the three essays. You can write your outline in the booklet. Just label it as "outline" and the reader will go on to your essay. And no, you are not allowed to bring scrap paper into the exam room.

There are two approaches you can take on where in the booklet to write your outline:

1. Before the Essay

Do this if you decide to approach and outline the questions one at a time. Open the booklet to the first two side-by-side blank pages. On the left-hand page, write the outline for the essay you have decided to answer first. On the right-hand page, begin writing the essay. When you finish the first essay, flip to the next two empty side-by-side pages and repeat for the second. Likewise for the third question. As we will show you later in this section, make sure to leave space next to the outline to insert keywords.

The advantage of this approach is that you have your outline right next to the essay as you write it. This will allow you not only to remember the order in which you are writing, but also to check off each section as you complete it.

2. In the Front or Back of the Book

If you read all three questions and have ideas coming out of your head for all of them, it might be better to do all of your outlines first. In this case, turn to either the first or last sheet of lined paper in the booklet. Write all three outlines on this sheet, or use the first three or last three pages if you need more space. Do this so that when you are mid-essay, you can easily flip back to the outline. Again, make sure to leave space for your keyword list.

The advantage here is that you won't have to estimate the size of each essay and possibly make a mistake by writing an outline on a page you'll need for an essay.

Double-Check Your Work

No matter which method you use, you should check off each part of the outline as you complete that part of the essay. Then move to the next part of the outline to consider the next point in your essay. At the end each essay, go over the outline one last time to make sure you didn't forget to address a part of the question. Something else might pop into your head at this point and you can add it in a follow-up paragraph.

HOW TO CRACK AN ESSAY

Let's take a sample question and show how it's done:

1. Many economic factors have advanced suburbanization in the United States.
 - A. Describe **two** effects that service industries have had on the expansion of suburbs since the 1960s.
 - B. Discuss the negative aspects of suburban sprawl for the following service sectors:
 - Education
 - Transportation
 - Environmental Protection

A shorthand outline is just that—short. To save time outlining, use abbreviations for long terms that you know. Label each section to make sure you cover all parts of the question. Here's an example of what a shorthand outline would look like for this question.

Q1 Outline:

A. Define:

- A1. Service jobs available in **subn. CBDs**
- A2. Serv. consumers living in **sub. areas.**

B. Discuss:

- B1a. Schools are expensive. Taxes are hi
- B1b. More school blds. and land needed
- B2a. Highways are expensive.
- B2b. More roads, more problems
- B3a. Change from nature to living space
- B3b. New homes eat up land

LABELING EACH PART

Notice how we have numbered the outline Q1 as this is for the question numbered in the test booklet as "1" (not the first question you choose to answer). A1 and A2 refer to the parts of section A, which specifies "two" descriptions (often these requirements are in bold type). B1a through B3b refers to section B, which has three required example areas, and asks for aspects (plural), meaning you must discuss more than one aspect per example.

ABBREVIATE EVEN MORE

If you can, abbreviate terms in your outline even further than what we have done here. As long as you understand what you are writing, the more shorthand abbreviations you use, the more time you will save.

WHAT TO DO? OPERATOR TERMS

We need to consider what the question is asking you to do. Each question will direct you with an operator term that specifies what you are expected to do with the topic material.

To help guide your writing, put the operator term at the top of each section, as we have done in the outline above. These verbs include *describe*, *discuss*, *analyze*, *define*, *give example*, *explain*, *compare*, *contrast*, or *assess*. In addition, a question may inquire *to what extent (or degree)* or ask *the limitations of* a particular principle or factor. What do these operators ask you to do?

Describe: Write out the details or component parts of the concept or issue that the question addresses. Emphasize the most important elements and say why these are significant. The author wants you to illustrate in your writing (but don't draw a picture).

Discuss: Write about both sides of an issue or concept. State the positive and negative aspects. Explain who benefits and who loses in the process or situation. Or, explain the impacts of the issue or concept.

Analyze: Write about the relationship between factors and their impacts. Look for cause and effect relationships. State why the process you describe is a problem or a benefit in the real world.

Define: Write out the definition of a term or process. Say why the concept is significant to geographic thinking or why it matters in the real world. Some definitions are simple (like "place") and other can be complex (like "environmental determinism").

Example: Write about a real-world place, process, or situation that captures the essence of the concept that the question addresses. Make sure that the example you give is the most topical. Don't just use one that you like. Some questions will give you the example and you will have to describe how and why that place fits the concept.

Explain: Write about a process that is implied in the question. In conceptual terms: A happens, resulting in B, which then leads to C. Say why these things occur. State why the process you describe is a problem or a benefit in the real world.

Compare: Take two or more concepts or examples and state their similarities (give more than one). If there are differences, list these as well. State why the similarities or differences are significant and say what impact they have.

Contrast: Specifically describe the differences between two or more concepts or examples. Make sure to find at least two differences (unless the question says to give only one or the primary difference).

Assess: Write about the importance, impact, or effectiveness of a concept or issue. You will need to determine the positives and negatives of the conceptual or real-world situation. It's OK if you state that positives and negatives balance out, or if the good outweighs the bad (or vice versa).

Some operators can ask you to *criticize a topic or issue*, such as:

To what extent (or degree): Not all concepts or examples have the impact or effect they were supposed to. Sometimes intervening factors limit these impacts or effects. Your job is to illustrate these processes in your writing.

The limitations of: In addition to intervening factors, conflicts and controversies can emerge that dampen the expected result of a concept or process.

In either case, the important thing to keep in mind is that you are expected to be critical. Say why there is a problem with the concept. Think of it this way: Someone had a good idea, but other things made it impossible or only partly useful; or some idea was good in theory but not in practice, and here is why. When applicable, identify who the winners and losers are, like you would in a "discuss" question.

DIRECTIONS IN THE QUESTION

Read questions carefully so that you know what and how much is being asked of you in each question, and so that you construct your outline correctly. The question format matters a lot. This is why you use your outline of the question as your outline for the answer. If a question asks for one example, that's all you have to give. If it says two or if it asks for plural "examples," "descriptions," "countries," or "places," you must provide more than one in order to get points from the rubric.

Should you give more than what is asked in the question? Or what if you are not sure of the answer but have several ideas? The value of providing several answer possibilities in excess of what is asked is debatable and, depending on the question, the rubric may not give you more points for this. In addition, including many ideas in an essay may add little to your score and will waste valuable time that could be used earning points on the other essays.

GIVING EXAMPLES

Should You Make a Laundry List?

Giving several more examples than what's requested is known as "laundry listing," and most readers will treat it as an illegal attempt to see what sticks to the rubric. In this situation, a reader is likely to give you points only for the first examples you give. For instance, let's say a question asks for two countries as examples and you list six. The reader will only look at the first two, see if they score on the rubric, and move on with the essay. This will be the case even if the first four are wrong and the fifth and sixth are correct—no points.

What If You're Not Sure which Examples to Give?

If you are unsure of your answer(s) and have more ideas than the number requested in mind, *add only one additional example* to the essay. A forgiving reader will see this as your being thorough, and will be less likely to see you as a laundry lister. Remember to put what you think are your best answers first, just in case the rubric or a reader rejects extra answers.

Should You Give Examples, Even If They Don't Ask?

Giving examples, even when they are not required, is a good strategy. This can help especially if you are not sure whether you have fully discussed or defined a topic. If you think your answer sounds weak, it probably is. Use an example to further illustrate your answer. Why? Some rubrics give points based upon the quality or depth of your answer. The rubric may look like this:

- 0 points: little to no discussion or no use of keywords
- 1 point: basic discussion or use of keywords
- 2 points: complex discussion

Using an example can be a sign of your mastery of the topic and can move you from a 1-point basic discussion to a 2-point complex discussion.

RUBRIC SCORING

Be the Rubric

In the end you want the reader to say (covering his mouth to make the Darth Vader voice), "The rubric is strong in this one." Well, not all the AP Human Geography readers are Star Wars fans, but you do want the reader to have that feeling that you have nailed down the rubric in your essay, or as a Zen Buddhist might proclaim, "Be at one with the rubric." Your goal is to estimate what the rubric might look like as you are writing your essay. This is not a requirement, but it can help you better conceptualize the question and your essay.

How Many Points?

The total number of points possible for a question varies. A question is usually divided up into anywhere from 6 to 12 available points. This does not mean that one essay is more valuable than another based upon the number of points available. In fact, the "weighted" value of each essay has more to do with the statistics of the overall student performance—you'll have no way of knowing.

However, you can attempt to estimate the point value of each question as you write the shorthand outline. In a two-part question, each section is worth at least 3 points, maybe more. If the question is divided into two or more sections, the first section will be worth equal to or less than the later parts. The later sections tend to have more points available, as they often ask for more complex descriptions. If a section is subdivided further, then the parts are likely of equal value (1 or 2 points each).

It's a 10

We are going to suppose the example question is a 10-point question. During the exam you'll never be sure. Estimate the number of points, but don't stress over whether you are correct. Remember, this is just a tool to help you better construct your answer. If you really want to know, you can find out the scoring guidelines from the ETS Web site after the exam, in late July.

LET'S OUTLINE IT AGAIN

Now that we have given you these additional tips about examples and rubric scoring, let's look at the question again and see a more advanced outline. Here we will add our point estimate totals for each section. In addition, we're going to add an example. In this case, imagine that you may not be sure about the negative aspects of suburban transportation services:

1. Many economic factors have advanced suburbanization in the United States.
 - A. Describe two effects that service industries have had on the expansion of suburbs since the 1960s.
 - B. Discuss the negative aspects of suburban sprawl for the following service sectors:
 - Education
 - Transportation
 - Environmental Protection

Q1 Outline: (10)

A. Describe (4):

A1. Service jobs available in sub. CBDs (2)

A2. Serv. consumers living in sub. areas. (2)

B. Discuss (6):

B1a. Schools are expensive. Taxes are hi (1)

B1b. More school blds. and land needed (1)

B2a. Highways are expensive. (1?)

B2b. More roads, more problems (1?)

B2c. Cars favored over public transport (1?)

B3a. Change from nature to living space (1)

B3b. New homes eat up land (1)

In reality it could be a 12-point question if section A was 6 instead of 4 points. Again, this will depend on the intent of the question's author. These are things we will not know.

Just remember to give complete descriptions for TWO aspects of service industry impacts on suburbanization and use examples if need be.

We're not quite done preparing to write the essay. Let's see how applying keywords can enrich our outline and make for a more complete essay.

HOW TO CRACK IT: KEYWORD LISTS

There is an extensive vocabulary in the AP Human Geography course. A problem that many students have with the essay section is that they don't use the technical vocabulary and terms they learned in class. Doing so will earn additional points. Don't study vocabulary just in case you're asked a definition question on the multiple-choice section. *Study vocabulary so that you know what to say in the essay section.*

But It Sounds SO Geeky!

If you feel uncomfortable talking in terms of "core-periphery relationships" and "diffusion processes" or if it feels stupid to liken something to "economic restructuring," *get over it now!*

When you walk out of the exam, you can go back to using "Dude!" and "Whatever!?" in daily conversation. During the essay section, the geeky-sounding terms earn points. Not only will you raise your AP score, but you will also start getting used to the fact that, in real life, people use technical terms in their work all the time.

Keyword Lists

Now that we have that out of the way, how do you know where to insert the vocabulary in your essay? What if you forget?

Using a keyword list is a good way to make sure that you use technical vocabulary at the right point in the essay. When you write your shorthand outline, leave room to the right of the outline to make a keyword list. Write down terms that you know are part of the material on the essay's topic. Try to write them alongside the part of the outline where they should fall in the essay. For example, using your outline for the example question:

1. Many economic factors have advanced suburbanization in the United States.
 - A. Describe two effects that service industries have had on the expansion of suburbs since the 1960s.
 - B. Discuss the negative aspects of suburban sprawl for the following service sectors:
 - Education
 - Transportation
 - Environmental Protection

Q1 Outline: (10)

A. Describe (4):

- A1. Service jobs available in sub. CBDs (2) R&D, office parks, white-collar
- A2. Serv. consumers living in sub. areas. (2) retail, professional services proximity

B. Discuss (6):

- B1a. Schools are expensive. Taxes are hi (1) local tax revenue
- B1b. More school blds. and land needed (1) facilities
- B2a. Highways are expensive. (1) infrastructure
- B2b. More roads, more problems (1) congestion, commuter
- B2c. Cars favored over public transport (?) sustainability
- B3a. Change from nature to living space (1) population pressure
- B3b. New homes eat up land (1) farmland preservation

THERE IT IS

Now you have a complete shorthand outline and are ready to write the essay answer.

As you write your essay, cross off the keywords so that you don't forget to use them. Although we have not done it here, you should abbreviate keywords as well.

HOW MUCH TIME TO OUTLINE?

Recall the time breakdowns from earlier in the chapter. Keep in mind that you need to complete the outline in a target time of 5 minutes or less. There's a lot to keep in mind just for the outline, but this will improve your score, so don't skip it. Don't spend a huge amount of time writing an elaborate outline or thinking about the rubric. Remember, the more shorthand you use, the better. To practice, use the questions at the end of this chapter. Make sure to time yourself on both the outline and the essay writing, separately.

EXAMPLE ESSAY

Using our completed shorthand outline, we've written an example of an essay in response to the question that would get all 10 points:

1. Many economic factors have advanced suburbanization in the United States.
 - A. Describe two effects that service industries have had on the expansion of suburbs since the 1960s.
 - B. Discuss the negative aspects of suburban sprawl for the following service sectors:
 - Education
 - Transportation
 - Environmental Protection

Q1 Outline: (10)

A. Describe (4):

- A1. Service jobs available in sub. CBDs (2) R&D, office parks, white-collar,
- A2. Serv. consumers living in sub. areas. (2) retail, professional services proximity

B. Discuss (6):

- B1a. Schools are expensive. Taxes are hi (1) local tax revenue
- B1b. More school blds. and land needed (1) facilities
- B2a. Highways are expensive. (1) infrastructure
- B2b. More roads, more problems (1) congestion, commuter
- B2c. Cars favored over public transport (?) sustainable
- B3a. Change from nature to living space (1) population pressure
- B3b. New homes eat up land (1) farmland preservation

1. In the 1960s many Americans continued the existing pattern of migration and settlement in suburban areas. Of the many factors that led to suburban expansion, the rise of service industries and decline of manufacturing has been important since that time. One effect has been the growth of service sector jobs that have emerged in suburban CBDs and edge cities. Many companies decided to locate in suburbs because affordable land space was available to build office parks and research and development facilities, like the Research Triangle Park in North Carolina. Thus, professionals and, later, Baby Boomers continued to settle in these areas due to job availability.

A second and related factor leading to the expansion of suburbs is that the wealthier consumers of services, like retailing, and professional services such as doctors and dentists, live in the suburbs. Instead of following the tradition of locating these services in old downtown CBDs, business people decided to select locations in close proximity to their consumers. Malls, medical and office buildings have thus been a part of the expansion of suburban land space.

The negative aspects of suburban sprawl have caused problems for public services like education, transportation and environmental protection. Education has suffered from the need to continuously expand school capacity. School construction and increasing teacher salaries have required increased local taxes, which homeowners complain about. In addition, schools can take up a lot of land and limited space in suburbs may make it difficult to find room for facilities.

Highways and public transportation are another increasing infrastructure expense for public services. Building new roads has become more costly as land prices have soared in suburban areas, plus there may be limited space to put in large highways. Some have also argued that building more roads will just lead to more commuter cars and congestion. Thus, governments must spend more money on sustainable public transportation solutions like rail and buses.

Another problem related sustainability problem is how when new suburbs are built they consume existing natural areas and farmland. Protecting natural and historic environments has become an important political issue in the late 1960s. And suburban population pressure on the environment has been a problem. For example, some suburbs in California have encroached on the habitats of endangered species like giant redwoods and mountain lions. Problems like these led to legislation like the Endangered Species Act. Similarly, in Ohio laws have been passed to protect historic farmland from housing development.

(400 words)

ANOTHER WAY TO DO IT

Guide the reader by inserting numeric headings, like this:

Question 1.

A1.

In the 1960s many Americans continued the existing pattern of migration and settlement in suburban areas. Of the many factors that led to suburban expansion, the rise of service industries and decline of manufacturing has been important since that time. One effect has been the growth of service sector jobs that have emerged in suburban CBDs and edge cities. Many companies decided to locate in suburbs because affordable land space was available to build office parks and research and development facilities, like the Research Triangle Park in North Carolina. Thus, professionals and, later, Baby Boomers continued to settle in these areas due to job availability.

A2.

A second and related factor leading to the expansion of suburbs is that the wealthier consumers of services, like retailing, and professional services such as doctors and dentists, live in the suburbs. Instead of following the tradition of locating these services in old downtown CBDs, business people decided to select locations in close proximity to their consumers. Malls, medical and office buildings have thus been a part of the expansion of suburban land space.

B1.

The negative aspects of suburban sprawl have caused problems for public services like education, transportation and environmental protection. Education has suffered from the need to continuously expand school capacity. School construction and increasing teacher salaries have required increased local taxes, which homeowners complain about. In addition, schools can take up a lot of land and limited space in suburbs may make it difficult to find room for facilities.

B2.

Highways and public transportation are another increasing infrastructure expense for public services. Building new roads has become more costly as land prices have soared in suburban areas, plus there may be limited space to put in large highways. Some have also argued that building more roads will just lead to more commuter cars and congestion. Thus, governments must spend more money on sustainable public transportation solutions like rail and busses.

B3.

Another related sustainability problem is how when new suburbs are built they consume existing natural areas and farmland. Protecting natural and historic environments has become an important political issue since the late 1960s. And suburban population pressure on the environment has been a problem. For example, some suburbs in California have encroached on the habitats of endangered species like giant redwoods and mountain lions. Problems like these led to legislation like the Endangered Species Act. Similarly, in Ohio laws have been passed to protect historic farmland from housing development.

The Labels

The labels help the reader figure out what part of the question you are answering. This is especially useful in questions with similar descriptions between two sections. If you accidentally include the correct information but under the wrong heading, don't worry. In this situation, readers are instructed to give you the point(s) anyway. Although it will help your writing and possibly your score to follow the structure of the question, you are not required to present the essay material in a particular order.

The Box

Note the box in the corner above the essay. You are instructed on the test to enter the number of the essay you are writing in this box. Make sure you do it for every page on which you have written. As you do practice essays, get into the habit of writing the question number in a box on the corner of every page. On the exam these boxes are meant to keep a reader from accidentally missing all or part of your essay.

THE RUBRIC

As we mentioned before, this is a 10-point question where the first part has 4 possible points and the second part has 6 possible points. What we don't know are the different possibilities for scoring. Depending on the subject matter you describe or discuss, you can earn 0, 1, or 2 points per item. Note that if you discuss something not on the rubric, then you get no points. Exceptions to the rubric are extremely rare, and you'd have to come up with a valid answer that the question's author, an expert in their field, may not have thought of when writing the rubric.

Example Question Rubric

Total Points: 10

Part A: 4 points (2 + 2)

For two (2) of the following categories, apply the following point structure

Education and Growth of Professional Suburban Population
Financial Services and Increased Mortgage Availability
Commercial Real Estate and Expanding Suburban Service Centers
Expanding Transport Services to Suburban Areas
Construction Services and Efficient Home Construction

0 points: little to no description

1 point: basic description or simple example

2 points: complex description with cause and effects

Part B: 6 points (2 + 2 + 2)

For the three (3) following categories, apply the following point structure

0 points: little to no discussion

1 point: basic discussion item or use of keyword or example

2 points: complex discussion with key words or examples

Category	Answer Topics
Education	Tax burden on local property owners, expanded need for school buildings and concern for increased class sizes, increasing teacher salaries, increasing demand for teachers, expanded bus service.
Transportation	Increased congestion, cost of new highways, complaints about toll road fees, need for land to expand highways, use of eminent domain to take private land, need for more public transit, unpopularity of public transit in the United States
Environmental Protection	New housing and office developments consuming habitat, wetlands, or open space in general. Farmland and parklands under threat from housing pressure. Air and solid waste pollution problems.

EDITING: DO IT AND EARN EXTRA POINTS!

Plan to take any leftover time to reread your essays and edit them. Try to leave at least 3 minutes in each essay for editing. When editing, you won't need to erase anything you've written. This is because readers cannot subtract points from the score that you've earned. If you think you have written something incorrectly, cross it out and write in the margin of the page next to where it should be. Or, in a concluding paragraph you can add the correct information, parenthetically noting that you're correcting a statement from before. If you see a place where you forgot to include an important vocabulary word, insert it with an arrow connecting it to where the term should fall within the text.

A smart tactic that the author has seen is to double-space your essays—skipping a blank line in the answer booklet while writing your essay. This will give you extra space to add edits during a reread of the essay. This also makes the essay easier to read (a good thing). Don't worry; there is plenty of space in the answer booklet.

WHAT IF YOU FORGOT SOMETHING AND NEED TO GO BACK?

Instead of a concluding paragraph that sums up and earns no extra points, consider a "follow-up paragraph" to add any extra details or examples. To do this, begin your follow-up statements with something like the following:

In addition to my previous description of _____, I would like to add...

or

To further illustrate my discussion on _____, I can offer the example of...

Regardless of how you begin this type of follow-up statement, it is important to direct the reader back to where the added text should have been included.

USE THE TIME WISELY

If you have time left at the end of the exam, spend the extra time editing or writing follow-ups. We know you just want to give your cramped hand a break, or you may have the desire to run out of the room to finally relax. Remember, in general it's better to say more than to say less if you have the time.

BUT DON'T SECOND GUESS YOURSELF

Unless you are absolutely sure that you've written something incorrectly, don't erase or scratch out anything you've written. Remember, readers cannot deduct points for incorrect information.

PRACTICE ESSAYS

Here are three practice essay questions. Check your watch or set a timer to see how you do on pacing. Make sure you have no distractions and are in a place where no one will distract you. Afterward, relax for a few minutes and then turn to page 72 to look at the scoring rubrics to see how you've done. Remember your goal of capturing 60 percent of the possible points.



1.
 - A. Use the map to define the concept of "Fortress Europe" in relation to the external boundary of the European Union.
 - B. Explain the economic benefits of the European Union's open-border policy.
 - C. Explain the challenges or difficulties involving the European Union's open-border policy.

2. Compare the concept of cultural identity between the following regions:

Anglo North America

Latin America

Sub-Saharan Africa

Explain how these concepts differ from the European identification with nationality as a means of determining ethnicity.

3. Describe the free-market reforms of the People's Republic of China since the 1980s.

Give two examples of how China's engagement with the global economy has changed the country's landscape and economic geography.

PRACTICE ESSAY SCORING RUBRICS

Here are the rubrics and point distributions for the three practice questions. Turn to page 74 to total up your points and see how you've done.

1. (2 + 4 + 4 = 10 total points)

Part A—2 points

1 point for map identification or map example of border control.

1 point for "Fortress Europe" as the concept of border controls on the outer political boundary but not the internal boundaries.

Part B—4 points (2 + 2)

Per example of economic benefits (a maximum of 2 examples):

1 point for minor explanation or vocabulary keyword

2 points for complex explanation using keywords

For the following issues (maximum of 2 points for each bullet point):

- Free movement of labor across internal EU borders/reduces labor shortages
- Free movement of consumers across internal EU Borders/variety of markets
- Free movement of commerce or shipping (trains, canals, trucks moving goods)/decreases transit costs
- Knowledge or skill-sharing among the total European labor force/more competitive regional workforce
- Accentuates free-trade policies of zero tariffs and/or common currency usage

Part C—4 points (2 + 2)

Per example of challenge or difficulty (a maximum of 2 examples):

1 point for minor explanation or vocabulary keyword

2 points for complex explanation using keywords

For the following issues (maximum of 2 points for each bullet point):

- No internal border controls in use to limit movement of criminals or terrorists
- Once immigrants enter EU boundary there is no control over settlement locations
- Labor force must be multilingual to participate in other EU member states
- EU citizens have loss of local, regional, or national identity in favor of the general "European" ethnicity
- EU member state governments complain about loss of sovereignty over their territory or borders

2. (3 + 3 + 3 = 9 total points)

For each of the regions, the following point structure (a maximum of 3 points per region):

1 point for minor discussion or vocabulary keyword

2 points for complex discussion using keywords

1 point for comparison to European nation identity

Anglo North America:

- Identity based on race and ethnicity, possibly combined with notion of an American or Canadian nation-state that reduces racial and ethnic differences

Latin America:

- Mixed identity based on varying degrees of Native American, European, and African heritage, possibly combined with post-colonial national identity

Sub-Saharan Africa:

- Identity based on tribal (and/or clan) identity, possibly combined with post-colonial national identity
- Must explain that European identity is traditionally built upon the nation or nation-state concept. Do not accept "European" as an identity.

3. (4 + 4 = 8 total points)

Free Market Reforms—4 points (2 + 2)

Per example of reform (a maximum of 2 examples):

1 point for simple description or vocabulary keyword

2 points for complex description using keywords

Only 2 points maximum per bullet point

- Local agricultural markets allowed/farmers may sell excess produce beyond government production quotas
- Entrepreneurs allowed to open businesses/provide private services
- Foreign firms allowed to open factories in Special Economic Zones (SEZs)
- Workers allowed free movement to relocate in different places
- Increased tourism

Changes in Chinese Geography—4 points (2 + 2)

Per example of geographic changes (a maximum of 2 examples):

1 point for simple description or vocabulary keyword

2 points for complex description using keywords

Only 2 points maximum per bullet point

- Significant economic growth of coastal cities/provinces/SEZs
- Significant population/labor force migration to coastal cities/provinces/SEZs
- Loss of young workers from inland agricultural counties/provinces/regions
- Wealth accumulated by those engaged in free-market economic activity compared to communist (Marxist) tradition of equal earnings. Emerging middle and upper classes.
- Damage to environment/pollution/increased resource demand

TOTAL UP YOUR POINTS

Now that you've had a chance to see the rubrics, reread each of your essays with the rubric right next to the page—this is how AP readers do it. You can tally up the points for each section as you read through. If you are not sure if your writing constitutes a minor or complex discussion or comparison, ask your teacher to review your work. Be fair to yourself. If you don't think your statements were thorough, only give yourself 1 instead of 2 points. If what you wrote was not on the rubric, then you don't earn points, no matter how thorough or well-written it was.

Question 1—10 points

A. 0-2 possible B. 0-4 possible C. 0-4 possible Total points

_____ + _____ + _____ = _____

6 total points or better for 60 percent goal

Question 2—9 points

A. 0-3 possible B. 0-3 possible C. 0-3 possible Total Points

_____ + _____ + _____ + _____

6 total points or better for 60 percent goal.

Question 3—8 points

A. 0-4 possible B. 0-4 possible Total Points

_____ + _____ = _____

5 total points or better for 60 percent goal.

WHAT IF YOU DIDN'T MEET THE 60 PERCENT GOALS?

If you thought you knew the answers but scored below 60 percent, go back through this chapter and see how you missed points. Did you violate any of the "rules"? Did you understand the question directions? Or were you not thorough enough in your answers?

Another thing to examine is how well your outlines mimic the rubric. Were you at least close on the point distributions? Did you understand the requirements for plural descriptions or examples?

Repeat what you have learned in this chapter when you take the full practice exams in the back of this book. Practice might not make perfect, but at least we can meet the 60 percent goals and earn a 4 or 5 on the exam.