

Do's & Don't's When Writing A.P. Biology Essay Answers:

(Written by a long-time A.P. Bio Essay Grader)

DO:

1. Read the question twice before answering, and once after answering.
2. Outline the answer to avoid confusion and disorganization. Thinking ahead helps to avoid scratch-outs, skipping around, and rambling.
3. Define any term that you use.
4. Answer the parts of the question in the order called for. It is best to not skip around.
5. Write clearly and neatly. Unreadable answers are never given any credit.
6. Go into detail on the subject, and to the point. ANSWER the question THOROUGHLY!
7. If you cannot remember a word exactly, take a shot at it – get as close as you can. If you don't have a name for a concept, describe the concept.
8. Use a black ball point pen.
9. Remember that no detail is too small to be included, as long as it is to the point.
10. If you draw a diagram, carefully label it (otherwise it gets no points) and place them in the text at the appropriate place, not detached at the end.
11. Bring a watch to the exam so that you can pace yourself. You have four essays with about 22 minutes for each answer.
12. PRACTICE outlining and writing essays throughout the year.
13. Understand that the exam is written to be hard – the average score is about 50% correct. It is very likely that you will not know everything, so relax and do your best.

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DON'T:

1. Don't waste time on background information unless the question calls for historical development or historical significance. Answer the question!
2. Don't ramble, get to the point!
3. Don't shoot the bull – say what you know and go on to the next question. You can always come back if you remember something.
4. Don't use pencil or an ink color other than black.
5. Don't panic or get angry because you are unfamiliar with the question. You probably have read or heard something about the question – be calm and think.
6. Don't scratch out excessively. One or two lines through the unwanted words is sufficient.
7. Don't write words in the margins unless it is necessary.
8. Don't worry about spelling a word exactly or using perfect grammar. These are not a part of the standards that the graders use.
9. Don't write sloppily. It is easier for a grader to miss an important word when he/she cannot read your handwriting.
10. Don't write introductory or closing paragraphs. This is not an English essay, it is an answer to a question.
11. Don't leave questions blank. Make *some* effort on every question.