

## AP Psychology – Free Response Question Writing from the mindset of an AP Reader

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- The FRQ (free response question) is worth 1/3 of your total score on the AP Psychology exam. The FRQ usually has about 7-9 ideas or bullets to answer.
  - There are two FRQs on the AP Psychology exam.
  - You get 50 minutes to write *BOTH* FRQs.
  - Each are weighted equally.
- Do not include an **introduction** or a **conclusion**. Remember – this is not an essay and you are not in English class.
- Do write one paragraph per point. If an FRQ is worth seven points, you should have seven paragraphs.
- Paragraphs do not need topic sentences. Each paragraph should be between 1-3 sentences.
- Remember **TAD**. Terms, Applied, and Defined. Even if the prompt doesn't EXPLICITLY tell you to define – define. So, if "Negative Reinforcement" in relation to child rearing is the bullet point, it should look like this:
  - Negative reinforcement (the term) is encouraging behavior by taking away an aversive or unpleasant stimulus(the definition). Taking away the chore of dishes for getting an A in AP Psychology is negative reinforcement. (the application)
- Write neatly and large enough for the reader to see – even the best ideas can't be scored if the AP reader can't read your handwriting.
  - SKIP A LINE BETWEEN EACH IDEA/BULLET. The day your AP exam is graded, your reader is grading, potentially, hundreds of FRQs. Make it as reader-friendly as possible.
  - Use blue or black ink. Don't use pink glitter pen, and don't use a pencil. Please.
- Write the FRQ in the order that it appears on the test booklet. DO NOT skip around. It confuses your reader and they may miss points because you've skipped around.
- Do not simply "parrot" the prompt.
  - For example, when asked to answer the relationship between deciding where to apply to college and the pre-frontal cortex, do not write:
    - The pre-frontal cortex is related to decision-making. (The prompt already tells you that it is related to decision making.) A better answer would be *The pre-frontal cortex is related to personality. You'd want to pick a school that meshed with your personality so you'd "fit in."*
- Underline each term or idea that you're answering so your reader can follow where you're at. (Don't underline the whole FRQ, though.)
- Do not put question marks next to your ideas or in your answer. It gives the reader the impression that you don't know what you're talking about.
- DO not use vague words in your FRQ - words like "things" and "something" tell your reader nothing about what you know. An example?
  - *Prospective memory is recollection of something that makes you recall a particular thing.*
- Do not "shotgun" your answers. For example, if you're unsure of what the IV is in a study of whether or not Red Bull makes you a better dancer, don't put:
  - The IV in this experiment is the Red Bull, the dancing, your outfit, the music you're dancing to, what you're wearing, the color of the paint in the room, etc....
  - The correct answer is up there ^, but your reader is instructed to NOT give you credit for this tactic, since you don't really \*know\* what the IV is.

