

VERBS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE

In writing a free response answer, students should not focus on writing an essay, but instead should focus on scoring points. To maximize the number of points scored, the student should tailor the answer to what is called for in the question's verbs.

Here are the verbs that have been used on the free response section of the AP exam since 1998:

List: State, or briefly identify (this can usually be done in a sentence or two).

Example: List two ways in which federalism has changed since 1994.

Identify: Same as "list." Again, this can usually be done in a sentence or two.

Example: Identify two ways in which federalism has changed since 1994.

Discuss: Write about, consider, examine.

Example: Discuss two ways in which federalism has changed since 1994.

Describe: Give an account of, give a word picture of.

Example: Describe two methods by which federalism has changed since 1994.

Evaluate: Make a judgment, appraise, give an opinion of.

Example: Evaluate the contention that federalism has undergone substantial changes since 1994.

Explain: Make clear or plain, tell why/how, give reasons or causes for.

Example: Explain two reasons why federalism has changed since 1994.

Support: Provide reasons that back up an argument.

Example: Support the contention that federalism has changed since 1994 with two arguments.

Define: Tell the meaning of.

Example: Define federalism and...

Here is a chart that shows how often the above verbs have appeared on the AP exam since 1998:

VERB	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	TOTAL
List	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Identify	0	5	7	5	6	5	4	0	4	3	39
Discuss	3	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Describe	1	2	1	1	2	0	3	6	2	6	24
Evaluate	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Explain	1	8	5	5	6	6	7	4	3	6	51
Support	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Define	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	1	1	7