

FRQ SAMPLE WRITING GUIDE

Let's take a look at a sample APGoPo question:

1. The United States Constitution has endured for more than two centuries as the framework of government. However, the meaning of the Constitution has been changed both by formal and informal methods.
 - (a) Identify two formal methods for adding amendments to the Constitution.
 - (b) Describe two informal methods that have been used to change the meaning of the Constitution. Provide one specific example for each informal method you described.
 - (c) Explain why informal methods are used more often than the formal amendment process.
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Here is how you answer the question:

1. Underline the verbs in the question that tell you what to do. Tailor your answer to what is called for in the verbs, e.g. "identify" asks for a mere listing, whereas "discuss," "explain," or "describe" calls for more elaboration.
2. Jot down the letter for each part of the answer, and then do what that part of the question calls for. If a part of the question asks you to "identify" something, that can be accomplished in a sentence or two. On the other hand, "discuss," "explain," or "describe" requires much more. With verbs such as these, avoid minimalism. It is crucial to have enough support for your answer. **USE EXAMPLES WHEREVER POSSIBLE.**
3. Skip lines between each part of the question to make your answer easier for the reader to grade.
4. If there is an actual question (e.g. "Does Congress exercise effective oversight over the bureaucracy?"), be sure to answer it (e.g. "Congress exercises effective oversight over the bureaucracy"). Typically, you will then be required to back up your answer with a certain number of supporting points.
5. If the question calls for you to do something such as "Explain three reasons for..." or "Discuss two reasons why...", number your responses to make your answer easier for the reader to grade.
6. Unless there is an actual question, you do NOT need to include a thesis. Most free response items ALREADY INCLUDE the thesis in the question (see the model question above)! You do not need an introduction or conclusion, either. You get ZERO points for these. Put your time and effort into answering the prompt! (**AP = Answer the Prompt**)
7. In effect, your task in answering free response questions is to score points rather than write a formal essay. Look again at the question above. How many points do you think part (a) is worth? Part (b)? Part (c)? Again, once you know what the question is asking for, tailor your answer to score the maximum number of points possible.
8. Even if you cannot answer all parts of the question, answer what you can! You are not expected to earn perfect scores on all four questions. If you can earn MOST of the points possible on each question, you should be in fine shape!

****Here is a model answer for the question:**

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

SECTION II

Time – 100 minutes

Directions: You have 100 minutes to answer all four of the following questions. Unless the directions indicate otherwise, respond to all parts of all four questions. It is suggested that you take a few minutes to plan and outline each answer. Spend approximately one-fourth of your time (25 minutes) on each question. In your response, use substantive examples where appropriate. Make certain to number each of your answers as the question is numbered below.

- 1) The United States Constitution has endured for more than two centuries as the framework of government. However, the meaning of the Constitution has been changed both by formal and informal methods.
- (a) Identify two formal methods for adding amendments to the Constitution.
 - (b) Describe two informal methods that have been used to change the meaning of the Constitution. Provide one specific example for each informal method you described.
 - (c) Explain why informal methods are used more often than the formal amendment process.

(a)

i) Congress can propose an amendment with a 2/3 vote in both houses, and the proposed amendment can then be ratified by 3/4 of the state legislatures.

ii) Congress can propose an amendment with a 2/3 vote in both houses, and the proposed amendment can be approved by ratifying conventions in 3/4 of the states.

(b)

i) Judicial interpretation: As a framework for government, the wording of the Constitution can be vague, and requires clarification. This clarification can be performed by court decisions. In effect, the Supreme Court can be a "constitutional convention in continuous session." For example, when the Supreme Court struck down school segregation in the *Brown v. Board* case, it was clarifying the meaning of the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause.

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Free-Response Question Writing Guide Rubric

Question 1

8 POINTS TOTAL

Part (a): 2 points (1 for each method identification)

Part (b): 4 points (1 for each description; 1 for each example)

Part (c): 2 points

Part (a): (1 point for each method identification; 2 points total)

Formal methods:

Methods of amendment must include one method of proposal and one method of ratification.

Methods of proposal:

- By two-thirds vote in both houses of Congress
- By national constitutional convention called by Congress at the request of two-thirds of the state legislatures (never been used)

Methods of Ratification:

- By legislatures in three-fourths of the states
- By conventions in three-fourths of the states

Students do not have to give the exact fractions, as long as they understand that it is an extraordinary majority *and* that it involves federalism.

Simple majority is not adequate.

Do not have to use exact terms (propose, ratify, supermajority, federalism).

Part (b): (1 point for each description of informal methods; 1 point for each example; 4 points total)

Informal methods may include:

- Courts (judicial review/judicial interpretation/application)
 - Elastic clause
 - Development of political customs/traditions
 - The example chosen must be linked to the method described.
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Part (c): (1 point for basic explanation; 1 point for elaboration; 2 points total)

Can get one point for a basic explanation. (i.e., "it's harder to amend formally")

Second point requires further elaboration

Score of zero (0) for attempted answer that earns no points

Score of dash (-) for blank or off-task answer