



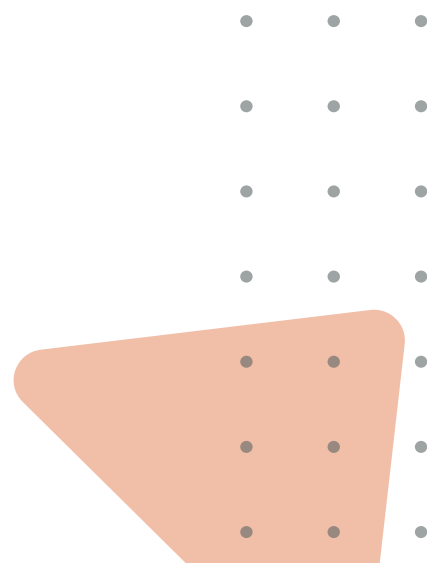
2020

AP SURVIVAL GUIDE

Learn how to quickly adapt to the new AP format for this year's online exams.

Before we explore the ins and outs of AP exams, let's take a moment to celebrate your hard work and commitment. You've come this far in the midst of a global pandemic—you're already a rock star. You should be immensely proud of what you've accomplished just to get here.

Probably one of the reasons you've come this far is that you care about earning a score that reflects how hard you've worked in class for the past year. And we're here to help you do that.



This year’s AP exams will look and feel different: they’re online, at home, open note, and only 45 minutes long.

ArborBridge’s AP Survival Guide was designed to help you **navigate these changes and achieve success on test day.**

Read on for key information and tips on:

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How to Prepare for an Open Note Test **Page 7**

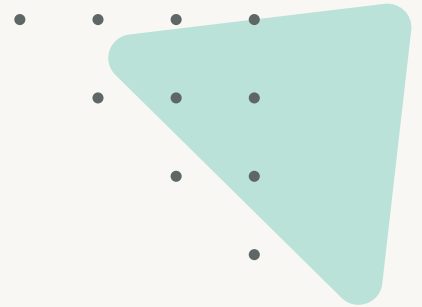
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Part One
WHEN TO TAKE THE EXAMS
AND HOW TO STUDY

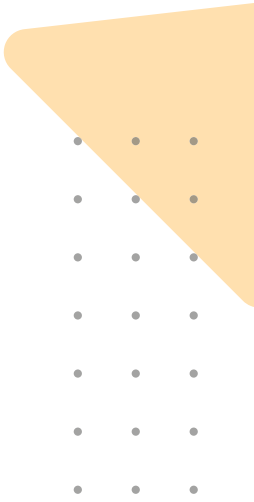


This year, there are two AP testing windows: May 11-22 and June 1-5.

Even so, **all students should plan for the May testing window**, barring extenuating circumstances. Treat the June testing window as a “make-up” window only.

Here’s why:

- If you miss the May exams for any reason, such as illness or tech issues, **you’ll still have June as a back-up plan.**
- If June students experience tech issues that prevent them from submitting their answers, **no further make-up dates will be offered.**
- **You’ll perform your best while the material is fresh.** This year’s AP exams will include only the content that is covered by most teachers through early March. The sooner you take your exam, the more recently you’ll have learned and studied the material you’re being tested on.



To prepare for May, you should keep up with any AP classes offered through your school, continue meeting with any tutors you're currently working with, and practice with past years' free-response questions from the College Board. We encourage you to stick to a regular schedule for independent studying, ideally 2-3 study sessions per week for each subject.

Here's an example of what a weekly AP prep schedule could look like:

Monday: Tutoring Session

- 1 hour
- Review FRQs and get one-on-one support from tutor

Tuesday: Independent Studying

- 30 minutes
- Continue reviewing AP materials and setting up notes for test day

Wednesday: Independent Studying

- 30 minutes
- Practice with FRQs from past exams

Thursday: Tutoring Session

- 1 hour
- Review FRQs and get one-on-one support from tutor

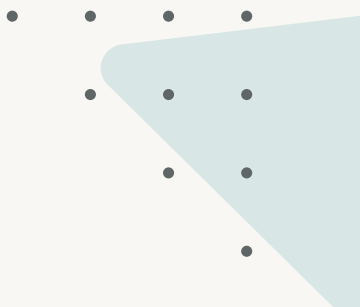
Friday: Independent Studying

- 1 hour
- Continue reviewing materials, setting up notes, and practicing with past FRQs

If the May testing window ends up not working out for any reason, you can continue following a consistent schedule in preparation for June.



Part Two
**HOW TO PREPARE FOR
AN OPEN NOTE TEST**



This year's AP exams are open book and open note, but that doesn't mean you don't need to prepare. In fact, open note exams can be harder because they place a greater emphasis on applying concepts rather than recalling facts.

You can use the following during the exam:

- Class notes
- Resources provided by your teacher
- Previous assignments and assessments
- Calculators for certain exams

If you use digital resources, you can store and access them on your personal or school email, digital classroom site, and online storage accessible only by you (i.e. personal Dropbox or Google Drive account).

To type or not to type? Stick with whichever mode, handwriting or typing, you are comfortable with. Now is not the time to reinvent the wheel.

Given that the exams still have a time limit, you need to spend most of your time answering questions rather than accessing information. So you'll need to organize your materials well in advance, and then practice efficiently using them to write strong answers.



Tips for organizing notes:

Create a table of contents. Decrease the time you spend looking for information. Start by numbering the pages of your notes, then create a table of contents at the front of your notebook or as the first page of your typed notes.

Less is more. You'll almost certainly run out of time if you rely too heavily on notes. And if you have too many resources or notes that are too wordy, you may spend too much time reading to find what you need.

If you took a lot of notes this year, first compile everything to create a new, shortened guide. It should be comprehensive but skimmable.

- Start with topics likely to be on your exam. Use these topics as section headers.
- Under each header, write a short summary of the main idea of that topic and/or list any key definitions. Try to limit yourself to five key definitions per topic.
- Finally, write the page numbers associated with the topic next to each key definition.

Tag useful chapters or pages. As you review your resources, mark useful chapters or pages with a sticky note or other type of page marker. Make sure to label your tags for easier and more efficient use on test day.

If you have typed notes, use **Command + F** (Mac) or **Control + F** (Windows) to quickly find key words.

Prepare a cheat sheet. Make a one-page list of the most important information (i.e. formulas, key definitions and concepts, etc.) that are likely to be on the test.

Compare with a friend. Study and compare notes with your friends to further master key concepts. However, we don't recommend borrowing or using your friends' notes because doing so not only deprives you of your learning experience but also increases the risk of plagiarism.

Practice. After you make your open notes, practice answering old FRQs (or whatever your exam will consist of) using only your notes, under the time limit. Aim to complete at least 4 timed practice FRQs before your test day. After each round, jot down what went well and what didn't, and make any needed changes to your notes. If you have a tutor, ask them to grade your answers and give you feedback.

Pro tip. The College Board said, “We don't expect students to use their books and notes. That will slow them down. Students should come to the exam knowing the material, and notes won't be especially helpful given the time limits.” At the end of the day, preparing your open notes should be seen as more of a process step than a tool you will thoroughly use on test day.



Part Three

TECH TROUBLESHOOTING



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For the first time, the College Board will require students to complete their AP exams at home and online. The College Board has released test-day logistical details with a *video demonstration* to help students familiarize themselves with the online testing system.

For more detailed information and to keep up with the latest changes, visit College Board's [AP Coronavirus Updates](#) page in the days leading up to the exam.

Here's what we know, along with several steps students can take to begin practicing and preparing.

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What we know

How do I access the exam? Two days before the exam, you'll receive an email containing your 8-character AP ID and an e-ticket you can click to access your personalized exam.

- You can take your exams on any device – including a computer, a tablet, or a smartphone.
- On test day, click your e-ticket to check in 30 minutes before the scheduled start time.
- At the bottom of the screen, you'll see a countdown timer. **The exam will automatically begin when the timer hits 00:00.**

How do I keep track of time? Once the exam begins, use the on-screen countdown timer to track how much time you have to write and submit your response.

- The timer will automatically be adjusted for students who receive extended time.
- *The timer will turn red when you have 5 minutes left, and you should use those 5 minutes to submit your response.*

How do I write my response? You can either type or handwrite your response.

- **Before beginning your response, make sure to type/write your AP ID and initials at the top of each page.**
- If you're typing your response on a computer, make sure to periodically save your document.
- If you're writing your response by hand, use a No. 2 pencil or a blue/black pen on white paper.

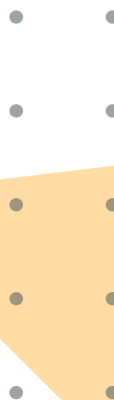
How do I submit my response? You have 3 options:

- **Attach a text file.** Accepted file formats include .doc, .docx, .pdf, .txt, .odt.
- **Copy and paste** your response into the text box provided.
- **Attach a photo** of a handwritten response. Make sure the photo is vertical and well lit. “Submit” only after you have attached all photos.

For **typed responses** (a good choice for subjects like English and history), we recommend attaching a file to avoid copy/paste errors. For **handwritten responses** (which may be more efficient for some math and science exams), you will need to attach photos.

How can I practice with the exam interface? Run through the AP 2020 Exam [interactive demo](#) at least once before test day. *Make sure to run the demo from the same device and same browser you plan to use on test day to confirm everything works properly.*

- You can launch the demo as many times as you like, which can help you familiarize yourself with the interface and confirm which method of submitting your responses will be easiest for you on test day.



How to prepare

Gather your materials. Gather all of the materials you'll need, including your electronic devices, textbook, and notes, with chargers and spare batteries if needed. Check College Board's [What Students Need on Exam Day](#) page for subject-specific information.

Type essays and short answers on a laptop or desktop computer for maximum efficiency. However, consider handwriting your answers for math and science exams because typing out symbols, subscripts, and superscripts may be time consuming. Check out College Board's [reference guides](#) and keyboarding tip sheets in advance.

Set up your testing area. Find a quiet area of your home with a strong WiFi connection. Make sure there's an outlet nearby to charge your computer or other devices and enough tabletop space to organize and easily access your resources.

Silence notifications. Silence all notifications on your devices to minimize distractions.

Get ready early. In the days leading up to the exam, practice using the [interactive demo](#) at least 2-3 times and watch the [The Exam Day Experience](#) video tour to familiarize yourself with the testing systems. On test day, have your testing area prepared at least 30 minutes before your scheduled start time.

Use your tools. Type your essay answers in Microsoft Word or Google Docs so you can use spell check or word count if needed. Word count can help ensure you've written similar lengths for each element to maximize total points.

Practice. Prepare under real test conditions by answering historic FRQs in the amount of time listed on the College Board website. Complete at least 4 timed FRQs before test day. After each round, jot down what went well and what didn't and make any needed changes to your testing area and devices. If you have a tutor, ask them to grade your answers and give you feedback.

Worst case scenario. If you run into major tech issues on test day that prevent you from finishing the exam, make note of exactly what happened and take screenshots or pictures with a phone, if possible. That way, you can follow up with the College Board and figure out a solution before the June make-up window.





Part Four
OVERCOMING ANXIETY
ON TEST DAY



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On its surface, a 45-minute test taken from the comfort of your home might sound like a breeze, but for many students, the pressure to perform can still be high. *There's a lot riding on just one or two questions*, and it can be stressful to know you have only one shot at showing what you've learned.

That feeling of stress is completely understandable. Test-taking anxiety is a common challenge even under normal circumstances.

However, with the right preparation, you'll be able to stay in control and channel your energy in the right direction when it happens.

Here are some steps you can take to manage your anxiety and remain composed during stressful moments on test day.



Reduce the uncertainties of test day

Even though some elements of test day may be outside of your control, you can prepare ahead of time for those that are in your control.

Tech. Tech issues are a top worry for many students. A certain level of uncertainty is inevitable because these are the first at-home, digital AP exams. To give yourself the best chance of success, practice using the [interactive demo](#) at least 2-3 times in the days leading up to the exam. On test day, plan to log in 30 minutes before your exam is scheduled to begin.

Testing environment. Find a quiet space where you can focus and perform your best on test day. Studying in the same spot now can help you increase your comfort level on test day.

Content. The College Board website tells you what types of FRQs you can expect to see. Make the most of this opportunity to organize your notes and practice with historic FRQs. Practicing under timed conditions is one of the best ways to fine-tune your pacing, get used to managing your anxiety, and practice using your notes effectively.

Remember, it's in the College Board's best interest for students to have a successful at-home testing experience. Unfairly tricky questions are unlikely, so if you've been consistently studying and practicing, you should be in great shape.

Build your self-awareness ahead of time

Recognizing your physical and mental responses to stress can go a long way toward counteracting them. Simply **naming your feelings** can decrease the intensity of negative emotions. Start paying attention to how you feel and how your body reacts when you study for an exam.

When you're anxious, does your breathing become irregular? Try counteracting that response with controlled breathing exercises, such as box breathing:

1. Inhale slowly for 4 seconds.
2. Hold your breath for 4 seconds.
3. Exhale slowly for 4 seconds.
4. Hold again for 4 seconds. Repeat steps 1-4.

Because this exercise slows your heartbeat, sends more oxygen to your brain, and lowers your blood pressure, you should feel yourself physically relaxing and becoming calmer.

It's equally important to **make a habit of acknowledging and amplifying your strengths**. If you can identify the things you're good at, you can build your confidence by reminding yourself of those strengths and showing them off on purpose on test day.



Have a routine for the morning of the exam

A test-day routine will get you mentally and physically ready to manage your anxiety and perform your best. Map out what time you'll wake up, what you'll eat, and how you'll get yourself set up.

As an example, your morning routine could look something like this:

7:30AM: Eat breakfast and put on comfortable clothes.

8:00AM: Wake up your body. Do a few jumping jacks or pushups to get your blood flowing.

8:10AM: Wake up your brain. Read something easy or review the first page of your notes.

8:20AM: Drink something, use the restroom, and double check you have everything you need.

8:30AM: Log in. Stretch and do controlled breathing exercises while you wait.

9:00AM: Begin your exam.

Focus on small, actionable steps

It's overwhelming to think about too much at once. **If you start to stress, focus on the smallest possible next step.** Instead of worrying about solving an entire problem, simply write down your given information to start.

Controlled breathing, tensing and releasing your muscles, and briefly closing your eyes to rest your eye muscles are other simple actions that help you mentally and physically reset during stressful moments.

It can also be helpful to **have a game plan** in case something goes wrong. Whatever the issue, you can try a few simple steps:

1. Stop and breathe. Don't let a minor issue spoil your entire exam.
2. Reset. Remind yourself that you have a plan for addressing problems and that you are in control of the situation.
3. Make a note, take a screenshot, and/or take a picture with your phone of the issue.
4. Contact the College Board immediately after the exam to report the incident and to find out what to do next.

Remember, you've got this. You've worked hard and know everything you need to know. Good luck!



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