

THE PAPER 2 Guide

How to successfully write a Paper 2

Paper 2 consists of **twelve** sections, each covering one topic. There are **two** essay questions on each topic. **Students must answer two questions, each selected from a different topic.**

Some comparative questions on this paper require that examples be drawn from more than one region. When the word “region” is used in a paper 2 question, it refers to one of the four regional options defined by the world map in the introduction to the world history topics in the “World history topics” section.

The maximum mark for this paper is 30. The paper is marked using generic mark bands and a paper-specific mark scheme.

1. Selecting the Question

- Read all the questions from the topics you have covered in class.
- The first step in writing a good paper is choosing an appropriate question.
- When you choose a question make sure you understand the terms in the question and the scope of the question, and that you have appropriate historical evidence to support any response.
- You should feel confident with the question that you choose.

2. Understanding the Question

“Question analysis means reading the entire question, breaking down the task into constituent parts or themes and then avoiding the temptation to reproduce an avalanche of information whose relevance to the specific demands is quite marginal.” - May 2009 History Subject Report

“Understanding the task (question analysis) is essential for success in the examination. Candidates need to be aware of the demands of the command terms and to take note of any dates provided in the question.” - May 2010 History Subject Review

- Read the question three to four times. Make sure that you know what it’s asking:
 - What type of a response does the command term demand?
 - What are the terms in the question that need to be understood and clarified?
 - What is the scope of the question?
- Answer the question as it is, not as you want it to be!
- Do not just blindly agree with whatever the question asks. (“To what extent were dandelions important in Hitler’s rise to power?”)
- Don’t be afraid to challenge any built in assumptions (Why were the intentions of those responsible for treaties rarely fulfilled?)

3. Planning the Essay

“A thematic approach to essays, when appropriate, usually provides a more successful outcome. The chronological narrative often tends towards descriptive writing and curtails analytical treatment of topics.” - May 2010 History Subject Report

- Begin by planning the essay question that you are most confident with.
- Take 3-to-6 minutes to plan each essay.
- Write your planning on a spare sheet of paper that you will attach to the back of your essay.
- Organize your arguments/paragraphs into suitable themes to avoid producing a narrative/descriptive account.
- After you have established your arguments, write down related key names, policies, dates, events, key historical characters, statistics and names of historians plus thesis in point form.
- Use pertinent and appropriate information only. Make sure that your arguments and historical knowledge are relevant to the question. This will avoid your writing going off on a tangent.

Command Terms

Analyze - Break down in order to bring out the essential elements or structure.

Assess - To estimate the value, or significance, of the something to historical study.

Compare - Give an account of the similarities between two (or more) items or situations, referring to both (all) of them throughout.

Compare & contrast - Give an account of similarities and differences between two (or more) items or situations, referring to both (all) of them throughout.

Contrast - Give an account of the differences between two (or more) items or situations, referring to both (all) of them throughout.

Define - Give the precise meaning of a word, phrase, concept or physical quantity.

Describe - Give a detailed account.

Discuss - Offer a considered and balanced review that includes a range of arguments, factors or hypotheses. Opinions or conclusions should be presented clearly and supported by appropriate evidence.

Distinguish - Make clear the differences between two or more concepts or items.

Evaluate - Make an appraisal by weighing up the strengths and limitations.

Examine - Consider an argument or concept in a way that uncovers the assumptions and interrelationships of the issue.

Explain - Give a detailed account including reasons or causes.

Identify - Provide an answer from a number of possibilities.

Justify - Give valid reasons or evidence to support an answer or conclusion.

To what extent - Consider the merits or otherwise of an argument or concept. Opinions & conclusions should be presented clearly & supported with appropriate evidence & sound argument.

Introduction

“Higher awards also tended to go to those candidates who were able to effectively define/explain key terms at the outset.” - May 2009 History Subject Report

- ✓ In your introduction you want to be sure to:
 - ✓ Set the historical context
 - ✓ Clarify any terms from the question (success, ideology, brinkmanship, Cold War, Detente, impacts, etc.)
- ✓ Your introduction should narrow from a broad overview of the historical context to a thesis, which directly answers the question

Thesis

- ✓ The thesis should be the last sentence of your introduction
- ✓ It should directly answer the question by using the language of the question
- ✓ It should state the main idea that you plan to prove; it is the one statement that you would make if you could only make one statement about the essay question
- ✓ An ideal thesis not only directly answers the question but also specifies the arguments that will be presented in the essay

Body

“The best responses revealed command of chronology, task identification, structure and above all the provision of relevant historical detail. It cannot be emphasized enough that answers must be supported by reference to historical knowledge.” - May 2010 History Subject Report

“Too many responses suffered from a great [lack] of sufficient, relevant, accurate historical knowledge. Sweeping generalizations devoid of convincing historical substantiation seemed to characterize too many responses.” - May 2010 History Subject Report

- ✓ “Hit ‘em hard” - Start your body paragraphs with your strongest argument
- ✓ Each body paragraph should begin with a topic sentence that introduces the argument
- ✓ The use of topic sentences ensures that you are answering the question and supporting your thesis statement, while avoiding heading off on a tangent
- ✓ Everything in the paragraph should support the topic sentence
- ✓ The best support is in the combined form of explanation and historical knowledge
- ✓ Avoid narrative or descriptive accounts
- ✓ Use dates to demonstrate you understand chronology and the historical context
- ✓ Be specific in your responses; avoid generalizations
- ✓ Avoid using non-academic language: slang, colloquial expressions, or charged words
- ✓ Use a concluding sentence that summarizes the paragraph and ties it back to your thesis

Using Historical Vocabulary

Try to incorporate the language of a historian into your essay,

An Easy Guide to Body Paragraph Writing

Statement - introduce the paragraph with your topic sentence

Explanation - develop the idea put forward in your topic sentence. “Flesh it out”

Example - provide historical knowledge, examples, details, statistics and historiography to support your argument

Concluding statement - restate your argument and link it back to your thesis statement, demonstrating how the paragraph serves to prove your thesis

Conclusion

- ✓ Briefly summarize your arguments, draw them together and demonstrate how they support your thesis (two - three sentences)
- ✓ Aim to include some big picture thinking in your conclusion that touches on the historical significance of the question/event under consideration
- ✓ Your conclusion should not be more than five sentences

At the End of 90 Minutes

- ★ **Make sure the question numbers are in the left hand margin, and your candidate and page numbers are filled in**
- ★ **Cross out your planning and affix to the back of your essays**

Historiography

“Historiography is not the be-all and end-all of history essay writing: it should not be a substitute/replacement for solid factual knowledge, accurate chronology and sequencing which must form the basis of any effective essays.” - May 2009 History Subject Report

“Candidates throw around terms like revisionist, intentionalist, structuralist, orthodox, etc. without real understanding of the terms and without any real appreciation of the basis of evidence which each of these schools uses in their argumentation.” - May 2010 History Subject Report

- Historiography is useful but should be used to support arguments, not in lieu of them
- Avoid name dropping schools of thought (orthodox, revisionist, post-revisionist schools) without demonstrating some understanding of how/when/why they developed
- **Quoting, academic historians is much more appropriate and fruitful than quoting historical schools of thought**
- The markband awards students who evaluate different approaches to historical events and use historiography to support their argument (13 - 15) more than students who summarize the views of historians and use them as a substitute for the development of their own argument (10 - 12)

General Tips

- ◆ Avoid using the first or second person
- ◆ Do not use white out. Cross out unwanted words by drawing a line through them
- ◆ Don't spend more than 50 minutes on one essay as you risk not having enough time for the other essay
- ◆ Put planning on a separate answer sheet, attached to the back of your essays

Coping with Stress

- ◆ Get a good night's sleep before your exam
- ◆ Be confident entering the exam knowing that you have done all that you can do to prepare
- ◆ Take a series of deep breaths while closing your eyes
- ◆ Use positive silent self talk (“I know this”, “I am smart”, “I am going to be fine”)
- ◆ Put things in perspective