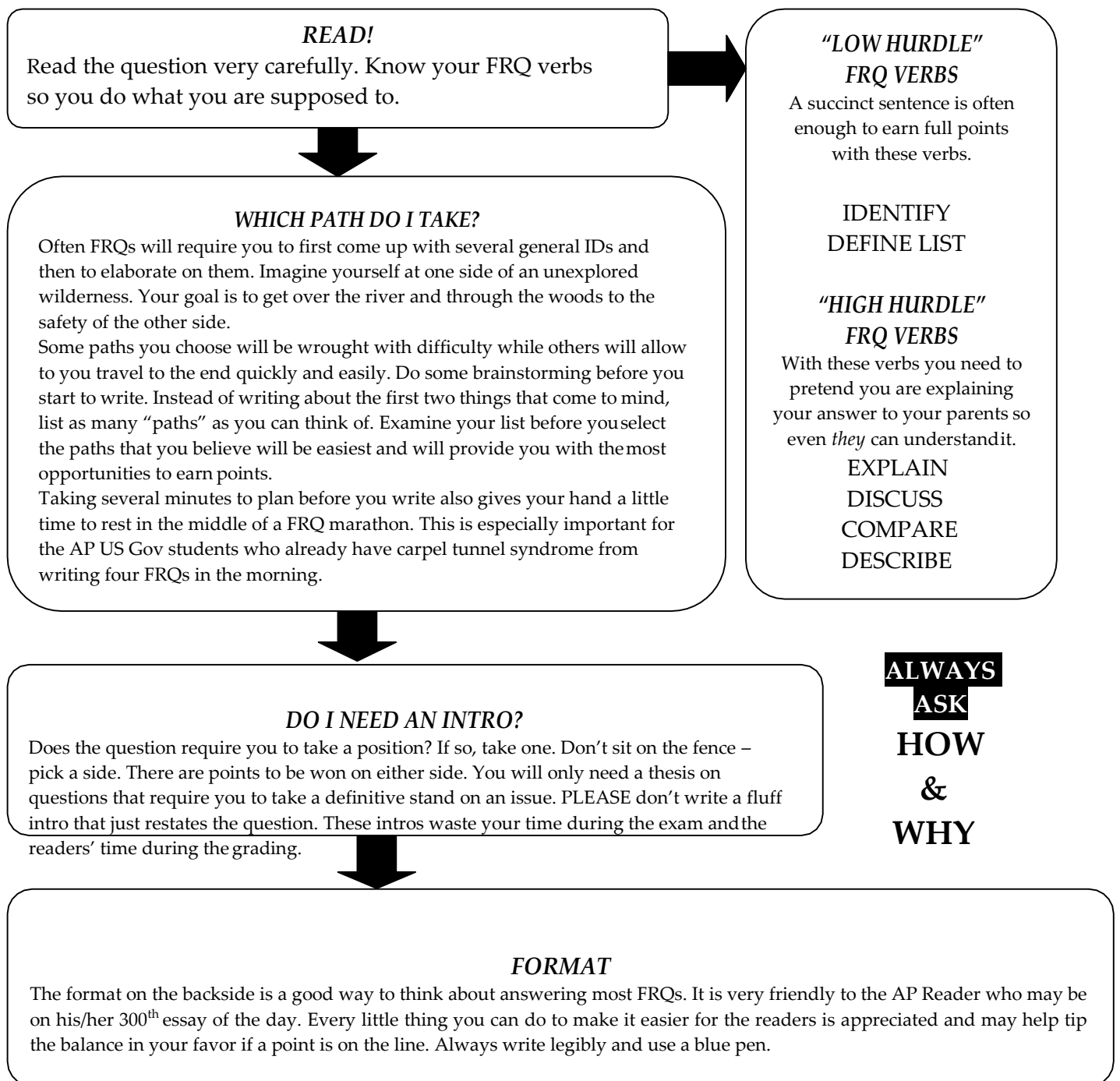


HOW TO WRITE THE FRQ

Over 500 college professors, AP teachers, and graduate students sit around tables in groups of six and are surrounded by stacks of boxes each filled with hundreds of AP exams. There are enough boxes to hold over half a million free response questions. It is 4:15 in the afternoon on the fifth day of the reading. The readers are exhausted and let out a collective groan when it is announced they are behind schedule and will have to read for an additional 45 minutes. The readers have been grading the same exact essay, eight hours a day, for the past five days. They've already read over one thousand essays and the last thing they want to do is read another. That's when they pick up *your* AP booklet...

You need to do everything in your power to make the readers happy. "Insider information" can help you earn a passing score on the AP exam and make the readers' job a *lot* easier.



Some of you are exceptional writers. If you are more comfortable writing a traditional essay – write an essay. Well-written and organized essays that lead the reader from one point to the next are also appreciated.

SAMPLE RESPONSE FROM THE 2005 EXAM

Words in this font are explanations of the thoughts behind the answer.
As you read this sample, highlighted words are the sample response.

Question: Explain how two factors work to keep the US Supreme Court from deviating too far from public opinion. (1 point for each factor)

Clearly label each section of the FRQ to make it easy for the reader to navigate through it. FRQs with good “signposts” make readers happy.

1. *The question asks for two factors so I'm clearly labeling where my first one begins. Presidents nominate SC justices so they can't deviate too far from public opinion. This does not earn any points. The question asked me to EXPLAIN and all I've done so far is to IDENTIFY a factor. I also need to clearly link how public opinion can constrain the court. Since the president is elected, the general public shares his opinion on a lot of issues. When there is a vacancy on the Court, the President wants to make a choice that the people agree with, especially if he plans to run for re-election. If he nominates a person who deviates too far from public opinion, there will be a backlash in his approval rating and also the Senate might not confirm the justice which would be a major embarrassment which the president wants to avoid. Now I've earned my point because I've clearly linked the President nominating justices to the power of public opinion. Just because to you don't need to write a five-paragraph essay, doesn't mean you can answer the question with just a handful of words.*
2. *I clearly label where my second factor begins. I've left several lines above this so I would have space to edit or add information.*



“COMPLETE THE LOOP”

Readers are looking to see if you are “completing the loop,” i.e. they are examining your answer for its **completeness** to determine if you should receive credit. Consider the following question: *Explain how two measures taken by some states prior to the 1960s affected voter turnout among African American citizens.*

Suppose the first part of a student's answer includes the following: **One measure that states took was to impose poll taxes, which required citizens to pay a tax prior to registering to vote. African Americans tended to be poor, and many could not afford to pay the poll tax.**

See the problem? The student has not **COMPLETED THE LOOP**. The student *described the poll tax*, but *did not explain how it affected VOTER TURNOUT among African American citizens*, which is what the question called for. If the student had **COMPLETED THE LOOP**, the answer would have looked like this: **One measure that states took was to impose poll taxes, which required citizens to pay a tax prior to registering to vote. African Americans tended to be poor, and many could not afford to pay the poll tax. Since the poll tax in effect denied them suffrage, voter turnout among African American voters was low.**

See? The student went the extra mile and firmed up the answer by linking it to what the question called for, i.e., the effect of these measures on voter turnout among African Americans. It was not enough to merely describe a measure; it was necessary to explain how the measure affected voter turnout among African Americans.

Don't be in a rush to turn in your exam. Typically, students leave points on the table because they didn't pay enough attention to the verbs in the question and don't complete the loop. If you think of an additional point or forgot to reference the question, add the information and arrow it into the right spot. You have to remain in the examination room until 100 minutes has passed so you might as well use all your time.

You are allowed ‘spare tires’ on your FRQs. For example, if the question asks you to describe two main duties of the President in his role as Head of State, you can provide the required two PLUS a third (a spare tire). AP Readers are required to read all three and give you credit for the best two (but you can't earn extra credit). This gives you a huge advantage over other students who don't know that this is ‘legal.’