Ms. Frates

AP Language

**AP English Language Multiple Choice Strategies**

The multiple choice section of the AP English Language and Composition Exam, which counts for 45% of your overall score on this AP Exam, consists of 52-54 questions centered around 5-7 passages (between 5 and 15 multiple choice questions per passage). Although multiple choice questions intimidate some students and seem easy to others, every student should practice for the AP English Language multiple choice section because knowing the material and the types of questions the examiners will ask will improve your score more than anything else you can do. Here are some strategies to keep in mind for practicing and finally taking the test:

**1. Decide well in advance whether to read the questions or the passages first.**

When practicing questions like those you will see in the AP English Language multiple choice section, whether in class or at home, try reading all the questions associated with a particular passage before reading the passage itself. Some students find this very helpful in clarifying the meaning of the passage and in that it tells them in advance what they need to look for. However, other students find it disorienting or distracting.

There is no right or wrong way to take the test; you need to find what makes you most comfortable and produces the best results. Take a few AP-style tests during which you read the passages first and then read the questions first while taking the next few. Think about your feelings during each test and/or compare the scores from the two groups. Get this done well before you take the exam so you can keep practicing with your preferred strategy and use it during the test.

**2. DON’T feel obliged to do the test in order.**

There is no rule saying that you have to start with the first question and end with the last, and the questions and passages that make up the AP English Language multiple choice section do not get progressively easier or harder. Rather, easy, medium, and hard questions are sprinkled randomly throughout, and the difficulty each student will have with each passage often has more to do with his or her reading preferences and styles than with any measurable “difficulty level.”

All questions for all passages count the same, though, so it’s often best to scan through the test, skimming passages and/or questions, before setting pencil to paper – that way, you can start with the easiest questions or the passages that interest you most and get them out of the way before those that will take more time. This will boost your confidence (as you see correct answers piling up) and keep you from missing out on easy points because of time constraints.

If you don’t feel you have time to scan, at least mark questions you think will take a while as you come across them, then skip them and come back later. Again, all the questions are worth the

same number of points, and because there are up to 54 questions to be answered in an hour, you have only a little over a minute for each question. Don’t let one doozy cause you to miss out on three or four easy questions’ worth of points!

## 3. Use everything at your disposal.

When taking the AP English Language Exam, use context clues from the passages to help you with more difficult questions – this means reading the whole sentence a question is concerned with, and even the sentence around it, to help make things clearer. Sometimes, even other questions will contain hints or jog your memory!

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!

**4. Don’t guess wildly, but think critically to give yourself the best chance.**

Use the process of elimination – using what you’ve learned and your context clues, you will probably be able to eliminate at least a few choices from each of the tough questions. If you can’t get a question down to two decent choices, skip it and don’t come back until the end, when you will have more time to think. There is no penalty for guessing.

**5. Breathe easy.**

Nervousness often gets in the way on major tests, even for fairly confident students. Don’t let it get you down! This test, though it is important, will not permanently decide your path in life. Besides, if you keep practicing and using every resource you have at your disposal, you can do well – and rationalize yourself out of your fears. Don’t just practice putting down answers; practice feeling your way through the test and staying calm too. Good luck!

Adapted from *Learnerator*