***Keys for Success on the AP U.S. Government***

***and Politics Exam***

AP U.S. Government and Politics textbooks are very thick and contain hundreds of terms, acts of Congress, and Supreme Court decisions. If all of these facts had an equal chance of appearing on the AP exam, studying would be a nightmare. Where would you begin? What would you emphasize? As you prepare for this exam, is there any information you can safely omit? Or must you study everything?

1. **Understanding the AP Govt. and Politics Scale**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Score Range | AP Grade | Minimum % Right |
| 90-120 | 5 | 75 percent |
| 75-89 | 4 | 62 percent |
| 60-74 | 3 | 50 percent |
| 36-59 | 2 | 30 percent |
| 0-35 | 1 | 29 percent |

1. **Understanding the AP Exam Curriculum Outline**

AP test writers use a detailed curriculum outline that tells them the topics that can be tested. Here are the six major topics and the percentage of multiple-choice questions devoted to each topic.

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| --- | --- |
| The Constitution and Federalism | 5-15 percent |
| Political Beliefs, Public Opinion and Voting | 10-20 percent |
| Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Mass Media | 10-20 percent |
| The Three Branches of the Federal Gov & the Bureaucracy | 35-45 percent |
| Public Policy and the Budget | 5-15 percent |
| Civil Liberties and Civil Rights | 5-15 percent |

1. **Understanding the Importance of Key Topics**

AP U.S. Government and Politics topics are not all covered equally. Some topics are far more important than others. A detailed analysis of the released multiple-choice and free-response questions reveals the following three key clusters of questions:

1. Congress and the Presidency: These are by far the two most important topics tested. Taken together they generate almost 33% of the multiple choice questions and 40% of all free-response questions. It is important to note that every exam since 1999 has had at least one free-response question devoted to Congress and/or the President.
2. The Supreme Court, Civil Liberties, and Civil Rights: These three topics form a very cohesive unit. Taken together, they generate 20% of all multiple-choice questions and 15% of all free-response questions. Supreme Court cases play a very important role in this topical package. It’s not necessary to memorize lengthy lists of Supreme Court cases. There are actually only about 30 cases you absolutely, positively have to know.
3. The Top Twenty Topics. Taken together, these topics generate almost 33% of all multiple-choice questions and 25% of all free-response questions. A careful review of these topics will help you build a coalition of points that will make an important contribution to your goal of earning a 4 or 5 on the exam.

**The Top 20 Topics**

1. The incumbency advantage
2. Federalism
3. Selection of Supreme Court Justices
4. The Electoral College
5. African American Voting Patterns
6. Voter Turnout
7. Divided Government
8. Political Action Committees (PAC’s)
9. The Veto Power
10. The President and the Cabinet
11. Presidential Primaries
12. Standing Committees and the Seniority System
13. The Federalist Papers (No. 10)
14. The Fourteenth Amendment and Selective Incorporation
15. Political Socialization
16. Critical Elections
17. The selection of Supreme Court Cases
18. The Mass Media
19. The Articles of Confederation
20. The role of State Legislatures