Congratulations! You’ve made it through your AP U.S. Government course and are now ready to prepare for the AP Exam. These tips and strategies should help you in the final days or weeks before taking the exam. Remember that preparing for the Exam is a bit like training for a marathon—you won’t do as well if you wait and cram a lot of training into the day before the Exam. Working at a reasonable pace from now until test day will pay off in the end.

The Format of the Exam: Let’s begin by looking at a breakdown of how the AP US Government Exam is structured:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Time allowed</th>
<th>Percentage of grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55 multiple choice</td>
<td>1 hour &amp; 20 minutes</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 free response</td>
<td>1 hour &amp; 40 minutes</td>
<td>50%</td>
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</table>

The questions on the test will cover topics from the whole course. However, in the multiple-choice section, you’ll find that certain subjects come up more often:

Subject                                                                                           Percentage of the Test
Government Institutions                                                                                 (Congress, presidency, courts, bureaucracy)
Political Behavior of Individuals                                                                  (political culture, public opinion, voting)
Political Behavior of Groups                                                                            (political parties, elections, interest groups, PACs, and mass media)
Constitutional Foundations                                                                           (federalism, checks & balances, separation of powers, theories of democracy)
Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

There are 15 Required Supreme Court Cases:
Marbury v. Madison                                                                                     NY Times Co. v. US
McCulloch v. Maryland                                                                                  Wisconsin v. Yoder
Schenck v. US                                                                                           Roe v. Wade
Baker v. Carr                                                                                           US. v. Lopez
Engel v. Vitale                                                                                        McDonald v. Chicago
Gideon v. Wainright                                                                                   Citizens United v. FEC
Tinker v. DesMoines

Required Documents:
The Declaration of Independence
The Articles of Confederation
The Constitution of the United States
Federalist #10
Brutus #1
Federalist #51
Federalist #70
Federalist # 78
Letter from a Birmingham Jail
Unit 2: Interactions Among Branches of government
Because power is widely distributed and checks prevent one branch from usurping powers from the others, institutional actors are in the position where they must both compete and cooperate in order to govern.

The republican ideal in the U.S. is manifested in the structure and operation of the legislative branch.

**Describe** the different structures, powers, and functions of each house of Congress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Senate</th>
<th>House of Representatives</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Senate is designed to represent states equally, while the House is designed to represent the population.</td>
<td>How is representation decided in the Constitution?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different chamber sizes and constituencies influence formality of debate.</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>House of Representatives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Did you know**: The enumerated and implied powers in the Constitution allow the creation of public policy by Congress, which includes:

- Passing a federal budget, raising revenue, and coining money
- Declaring war and maintaining the armed forces
- Enacting legislation that addresses a wide range of economic, environmental, and social issues based on the Necessary and Proper Clause
**Explain** how the structure, powers, and functions of both houses of Congress affect the policy making process.

Though both chambers rely on committees to conduct hearings and debate bills under consideration, different constitutional responsibilities of the House and Senate affect the policymaking process.

**Identify and explain the four types of congressional committees:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chamber-specific procedures, rules, and roles that impact the policy making include: (Make sure you understand these procedures and their impact Define where necessary).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Number of chamber and debate rules that set the bar high for building majority support:

Roles of Speaker of the House, party leadership, and committee leadership in both chambers:

Filibuster

Cloture

Role of Rules Committee, Committee of the Whole, and discharge petitions in the House

Treaty ratification and confirmation role of the U.S. Senate
Congress must generate a budget that addresses both discretionary and mandatory spending, and as entitlement costs grow, discretionary spending opportunities will decrease unless tax revenues increase or the budget deficit increases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Define and provide an example:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discretionary spending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandatory spending</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pork barrel legislation and logrolling affect lawmaking in both chambers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Define and explain:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pork barrel legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logrolling</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Explain** how congressional behavior is influenced by election processes, partisanship, and divided government.

Congressional behavior and governing effectiveness are influenced by:

(Define and Explain)

- Ideological divisions within Congress
- Gerrymandering
- Redistricting
- Reapportionment
- Elections that have led to a “divided government”
- Congressional refusal to confirm appointments of “lame duck” presidents of the opposite party
Different role conceptions of … as related to constituent accountability in each chamber:

Trustee model

Delegate model

*These issue are partially addressed by such Court decisions:*

Baker v. Carr

Shaw v. Reno

**The presidency has been enhanced beyond its expressed constitutional powers.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explain how the president can implement a policy agenda.</th>
<th>Informal Powers</th>
<th>Formal Powers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presidents use powers and functions of the office to accomplish a policy agenda. <strong>Discuss</strong> the formal and informal powers of the president represented by:</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Explain how the president’s agenda can create tension and frequent confrontations with Congress. |               |               |

| **Discuss** the how the potential for conflict with the Senate depends upon executive appointments including: |               | Cabinet       |
|                                                                                             |               | Ambassadors   |
|                                                                                             |               | White House Staff |
Senate confirmation is an important check on appointment powers, but the president’s longest lasting influence lies in life-tenured judicial appointments.

**Explain this statement:**

Summarize Federalist No. 70

Term-of-office and constitutional-power restrictions, including the passage of the 22nd Amendment, demonstrate changing presidential roles.

**22nd Amendment**

Discuss how the communication impact of the presidency can be demonstrated through such factors as:

1. Modern technology, social media, and rapid response to political issues

2. Nationally broadcast State of the Union messages and the president’s bully pulpit used as tools for agenda setting

**HOW THE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT ARE ELECTED**

The Electoral College Timeline

| General Election Day – voters cast ballot for electors (First Tuesday after the first Monday in November in years divisible by four) | Electoral College meets in respective State Capitals – electors cast ballot for president and VP (First Monday after second Wednesday in December) | Electoral votes are counted by Congress (January 6th) | President is inaugurated (January 20th) |

The Electoral College as established by the Constitution and the 12th Amendment

Top presidential candidate receives 270 votes or more

All 538 electors cast a vote for president and a vote for vice president as established in the 12th Amendment

Top vice presidential candidate receives 270 votes or more

What happens if the top presidential and vice presidential candidates receive fewer than 270 electoral votes?
The decisions are made in the House and the Senate based on the 12th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution
The federal bureaucracy is a powerful institution implementing federal policies with sometimes questionable accountability.

**Explain how the bureaucracy carries out the responsibilities of the federal government.**

Tasks performed by departments, agencies, commissions, and government corporations are represented by:

**Explain how the bureaucracy interacts with the president and congress by:**

- Writing and enforcing regulations
- Issuing fines
- Testifying before Congress
- iron triangles

**Define and explain** how political patronage, civil service, and merit system reforms all impact the effectiveness of the bureaucracy by promoting professionalism, specialization, and neutrality.

- civil service
- merit
- Pendleton Act

**Explain how the federal bureaucracy uses delegated discretionary authority for rule making and implementation.**

Discretionary and rule-making authority to implement policy are given to bureaucratic agencies such as:

- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of Transportation
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Department of Education
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Federal Elections Commission (FEC)
- Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Executive Agency</th>
<th>Independent Regulatory Commission</th>
<th>Government Corporation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Define:</td>
<td>Define:</td>
<td>Define:</td>
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<td>Example:</td>
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<td>Example:</td>
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</table>
**Explain** how Congress uses its oversight power in its relationship with the executive branch. Oversight and methods used by Congress to ensure that legislation is implemented as intended are represented by:

- Committee hearings
- Power of the purse

**Discuss**: As a means to curtail the use of presidential power, “congressional oversight” serves as a check of executive authorization and appropriation.

**Explain** how the president ensures that executive branch agencies and departments carry out their responsibilities in concert with the goals of the administration.

**Explain** the extent to which governmental branches can hold the bureaucracy accountable given the competing interests of Congress, the president, and the federal courts.

**Judicial Branch**: The design of the judicial branch protects the court’s independence as a branch of government, and the emergence and use of judicial review remains a powerful judicial practice.

**Explain** the principle of judicial review and how it checks the power of other institutions and state governments.
The foundation for powers of the judicial branch and how its independence checks the power of other institutions and state governments are set forth in:

**Article III of the Constitution**

**Federalist No. 78**

**Marbury v. Madison (1803)**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Explain how the exercise of judicial review in conjunction with life tenure can lead to controversy about the legitimacy of the Supreme Court’s power.</th>
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Precedents and stare decisis play an important role in judicial decision making.

**Define:**

- **Stare Decisis**
- **Precedent**

**Discuss** how ideological changes in the composition of the Supreme Court due to presidential appointments have led to the Court’s establishing new or rejecting existing precedents.
Controversial or unpopular court decisions can lead to challenges of the court’s legitimacy and power which Congress and the president. **Discuss** how the President and Congress can change unpopular decisions…

future appointments

legislation changing the Court’s jurisdiction refusing to implement decisions

**Constitutional Amendment**

**Political discussion about the Supreme Court’s power is illustrated by the ongoing debate over judicial activism versus judicial restraint.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Define and provide an example:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Judicial Activism</td>
<td>Judicial Restraint</td>
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</table>

**Explain** how other branches in the government can limit the Supreme Court’s power.

What are the functions of *amicus curiae* briefs?

**What is the difference between:**

majority opinion
Define:

Writ of Certiorari

Rule of Four

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURT</th>
<th>NUMBER OF COURTS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF JUDGES</th>
<th>JURISDICTION</th>
<th>POLICY IMPLICATIONS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Court</td>
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<td>Courts of Appeal</td>
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<td>Supreme Court</td>
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