

Study Skills and Test Taking Tips

Foreign Language

Listening

Listen carefully to your teacher and to others who are fluent in the language who speak at different speeds and with different accents. Tune in to foreign TV and radio programs whenever possible, and use recorded material such as DVDs and CDs. Even better, try to attend undubbed foreign films in commercial theaters. A school's language laboratory will also provide aural training, and should be used regularly.

Speaking

Many students feel natural inhibitions and hesitations in speaking, but try not to worry about how others may perceive you if you make a mistake. It is only with continued practice that you will begin to speak with facility. Therefore, participate in debates, discussions, dialogues, and skits as much as you can. In addition, practice in a language laboratory gives you the opportunity to compare your speech with that of a model speaker.

The importance of thorough preparation for the speaking part of the exam should not be underestimated. You need to be familiar with the operation of recording equipment, and to practice recording your answers to questions. Ask your teacher or AP Coordinator to provide at least one trial run of the examination recording equipment and procedures before the actual test administration.

Reading

You should read a wide variety of materials, such as literary prose, essays, poems, dramatic works, dialogues, cartoons, advertisements, book reviews, and journalistic material, including editorials. For the literature course, be sure to read and study all the works on the required reading list.

When you read, look out for the grammatical cues of the text, such as verb tenses, and pay attention to factual information in the text (understanding who, what, when, where, why, and how). For the literature course, practice doing a close reading of selected passages for linguistic as well as stylistic analyses, such as recognition of register, tone, humor, irony, and narrative techniques.

Writing

Of all the language skills, writing is considered by many teachers and students to be the most sophisticated. Unlike listening and speaking—which may be facilitated by having another person present—writing is usually practiced alone on subjects you have already discussed, heard, or read about. Because writing can be revised numerous times—and therefore progressively improved—in your classroom writing you may be expected to exercise greater accuracy, precision, and clarity than in oral performance.

General Tips for Exam Day

Pay close attention to accuracy. You will be penalized for incorrect spelling on the fill-in questions.

When composing an essay, organize your thoughts and make a brief outline first. (Organizational notes will not be scored.) The final essay should have a clear focus, logical development, appropriate details, and supporting materials that reinforce and enhance the ideas in the essay.

When recording answers in the speaking section, speak as extensively and appropriately as you can within the allotted time.

If you are asked to give an account of a picture sequence, remember that there is no single correct interpretation. Any recounting of the story is acceptable as long as it is relevant. If you don't know specific vocabulary, try circumlocution to explain what you mean.