

## Papers 2 and 3

### Argumentative Writing Guide

Papers 2 and 3 of your IB Diploma Programme/ Career-related Programme history examination are assessed through essay writing, so a large part of your history course will be devoted to practicing essay writing, both in non-timed and in timed conditions.

Why is so much weight put on this particular form of assessment? Because the essay is the key for demonstrating your historical knowledge and understanding along with your ability to analyze and form a judgment.<sup>1</sup>

IB essays assess:

1. **Knowledge and Understanding** – This means that you have detailed and accurate historical knowledge, and that you're able to discuss this knowledge in context and with an understanding of the Six Concepts of History.
2. **Application and Interpretation** – This means that you're able to state a clear and coherent argument, and you can support that argument by using relevant historical information.
3. **Synthesis and Evaluation** – This means you can combine #1 and #2 above (knowledge and a clear argument) to write a logical and consistent response. It also means showing that you can weigh or judge multiple perspectives and discuss these perspectives in your essay.
4. **Use of Historical Skills** – For essays, this means your ability to structure your essay effectively so that it addresses the question using the skills described in #1-3.

A good essay will:

- Indicate a firm historical knowledge and evidence of wide reading
- Include a relevant selection of information
- Analyze the key points
- Reach a judgment on the question set
- Be clearly structured

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<sup>1</sup> Much of the text in this guide has been adapted from: Rogers, K., & Thomas, J. (2012). *History: For the IB diploma*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## Steps to Writing a Good Essay

*“History essays are an artform, but they also benefit from an underpinning of scientific method: that is, they benefit from your development of a logical and reasoned approach to writing, construction and organization.”*

*– Jeremy Black and Donald MacRaild, Studying History*

### Step 1. Selecting the question

You have the ability to choose the question(s) that would allow you to demonstrate your knowledge of the topics which were covered in class and that you know the best.

When you choose a question:

- Make sure you understand the **terms** in the question (the [Glossary of Common History Terms](#) may help you with this)
- Make sure you understand the **scope** of the question (the range of time or topics your essay should address)
- Make sure you have appropriate **historical evidence** (including key details, events, examples, case studies, references to sources, etc.) to support your response
- You should feel **confident** with the question you choose

### Step 2. Understanding the question

Your first task in writing an essay is to understand what the question is asking. You have to “deconstruct” the question. This means focusing on each part of the question:

- **Topic** – What overall issue or topic is the question focused on?
- **Dates** that are given – What time frame must your answer address?
- **Key concepts or specific factors** – These may need defining to make sense of your answer.
- **Command words** – These give you the instructions of what you have to do. Be aware that sometimes you may have two sets of instructions in one question.

Each part is vital to understanding what the question is asking. If you misunderstand any of the components, you may start off on the wrong track.

Here are some examples of “**deconstructing**” the question:

<b>Paper 2: In what ways and with what results was Berlin the focus of Cold War problems between 1948-1961?</b>	
Topic	Berlin
Dates	1948-1961
Key concepts or specific factors	Cold War problems
Command words	In what ways... ...with what results...

<b>Paper 3: Contrast the roles and policies of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X in the development of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States.</b>	
Topic	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X
Dates	[1954-1968]*
Key concepts or specific factors	Development of the Civil Rights Movement
Command words	Contrast

\* Sometimes the dates will not be explicitly stated. In this case, the scope of the question is the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S., which took place between 1954 and 1968.

You may have the extra challenge of having to choose your own examples (and therefore your own dates). In addition, your case studies may have to be taken from different regions. For example:

<b>Paper 2: Analyze the importance of air power in two wars, each chosen from a different region.</b>	
Topic	Air power in war
Examples	Wars from two different regions
Key concepts or specific factors	Air power
Command words	Analyze the importance of

You may also be given a quotation to comment on. Break it down the same way you break down a question. For example:

<b>Paper 2: ‘The overthrow of Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe would not have succeeded without strong, charismatic leaders.’ With reference to two leaders, to what extent do you agree with this statement?</b>	
Topic	Overthrow of Communist regimes in Europe
Dates	[1989-1990]
Examples	Two leaders
Key concepts or specific factors	Strong, charismatic leaders
Command words	To what extent...?

## Command terms

When you deconstruct the question, you must understand the meaning of the command words. Here are some examples of command words and what they expect you to do:

<i>Explanation questions</i>	
<b>Why?</b>	Give the causes of an event
<b>Explain / account for...</b>	Give reasons for the causes or results of an event
<b>Define</b>	Give the precise meaning of a word, phrase or concept
<b>Describe</b>	Give a detailed account
<i>Evaluative or assessment questions</i>	
<b>To what extent...? How far do you accept the view that...?</b>	Examine the merits of a particular view or argument and weigh this against an alternative view or argument, finally reaching a conclusion
<b>Analyze...</b>	Examine in detail the different elements or factors
<b>Assess the influence of...</b>	Make a judgment as to the influence of an event or person
<b>How successful...?</b>	Make a judgment as to how successful an event or person was
<b>Discuss</b>	Examine in detail an issue or argument presenting a range of arguments and evidence
<b>Compare and contrast</b>	Examine the similarities and differences between two or more people or events
<b>Consider the validity of...</b>	Examine the argument and decide whether it can be justified based on the evidence
<b>Evaluate...</b>	Reach a judgment by examining strengths and limitations
<b>Examine</b>	Consider an argument or concept in a way that uncovers the assumptions and interrelationships of the issue
<b>Justify</b>	Give valid reasons or evidence to support an answer or conclusion

See the [Command Terms Primer](#) for more detailed breakdowns of common command terms.

### More tips:

- Read the question three or four times. Make sure you know what it's asking.
- Answer the question as it is, not as you want it to be.
- Do not just blindly agree with whatever the question asks.
- Don't be afraid to challenge any built-in assumptions.

### Step 3. Planning

Why is a plan so important?

- You need to have a **clear argument** sorted out in your head before you start writing the essay.
  - You will need to set this argument out in your introduction and state it again in your conclusion.
- A plan will allow you to see if your argument works – to see if you have enough **evidence** to support it.
- It will allow you to organize your arguments or paragraphs into suitable **themes** to avoid producing a narrative/ descriptive account.
- It will allow you to sort out your key paragraphs and decide in which order to present them.
- It will make writing your essay faster.
- It will help cut out repetition and prevent your words from wandering around without purpose.
- It will help you **organize** your thinking and your time under pressure.

The detail included in a plan will change according to whether you are writing the essay for a class assignment, as a review exercise, or as a timed essay in examination conditions.

See the [Outline Templates](#) for examples of how an essay may be planned.

### Step 4. The Introduction

This is a key part of your essay. Your introduction will show that you understand the question, indicate the scope of your essay, set out your line of argument, and provide a transition to the first paragraph of your essay. After reading your introduction, the reader should feel that you have a good grasp of the key issues connected to the question and a clear line of argument.

In your introduction you want to be sure to:

- Set the historical **context**
- **Clarify** any terms from the question (success, ideology, propaganda, total war, guerrilla warfare, circumstances, etc.)
- Your introduction should narrow from a broad overview of the historical context to a **thesis**, which directly answers the question

See the [General Essay Writing Guide](#) for information on how to develop a strong thesis statement to communicate your argument.

## Step 5. Write the Body Paragraphs

Your essay will probably contain around six paragraphs. Each paragraph should include:

- A clear **opening sentence** (sometimes known as “signpost” or “topic” sentences) which links to the question and states the key point or argument of the paragraph.
- **Evidence** which supports the point given in the first sentence
- A **final sentence** which sums up the argument of the paragraph and leads on to the next paragraph.

Your opening sentence should set out the argument for your paragraph. You then need to develop this idea further and **support it with evidence**. Selecting the appropriate evidence is key. Only include information that supports your claim – don’t leave it for the reader to work out. You need to include “analytical links” to show how your evidence links to the question.

*“..this is a history examination and not an invitation to unleash a torrent of generalities.”*  
– History subject report (May 2010)

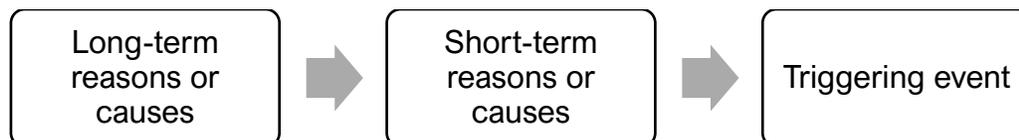
The **sequence** of your paragraphs should lead the reader through a clear line of argument and also show that you are being analytical rather than just describing or telling a story. Different types of questions suggest different ways to organize and structure your argument. For example:

### **“Why?” or explanation essays**

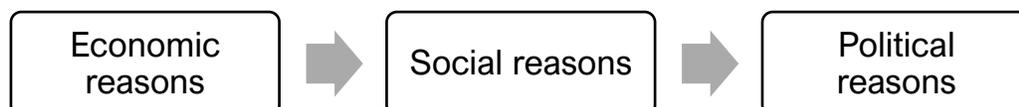
To ensure an analytical approach you may consider one of these three approaches:



OR



OR

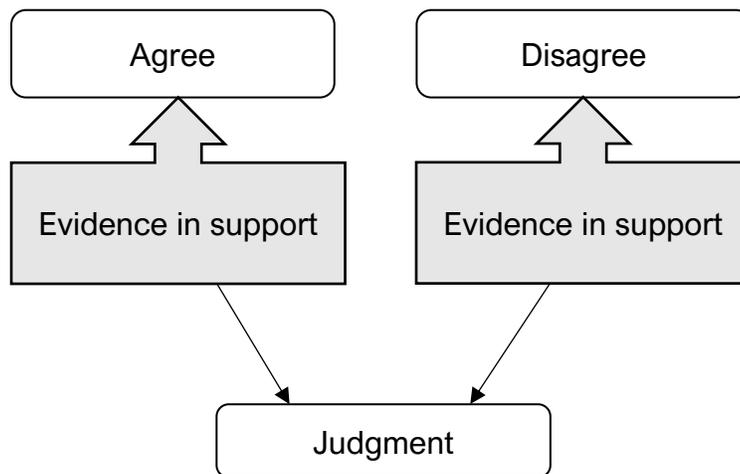


### “How far...?” or “To what extent...?” essays

Here you need to present one side of the argument first and then give the other side of the argument. You should always start with the side that is presented in the question.

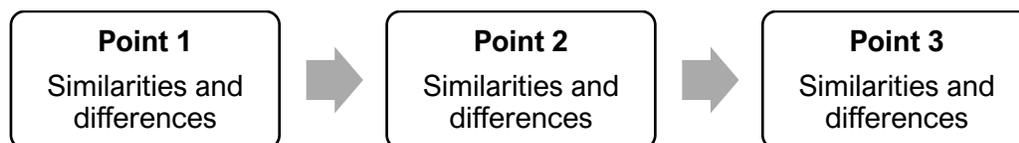
For example, for the question “To what extent was the Tet Offensive a turning point in the Vietnam War?”, start by explaining why it can be seen as a turning point and then present the alternative side of the argument.

You will need to reach a judgment as to which side you agree with the most; this should be stated in your introduction when you give your overall argument and then restated in your conclusion.

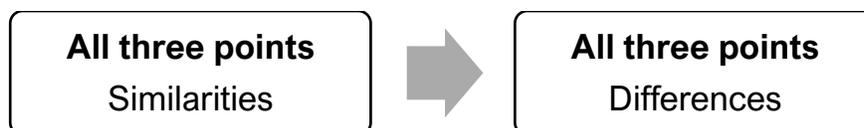


### “Compare and contrast” essays

Whenever you are comparing, for example, two people, wars or factors, make sure that you do this throughout your essay. Avoid writing about each factor separately and then having a paragraph at the end summarizing the comparisons. For example, if you are comparing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X (example question above), make sure you make comparisons between the two men in each paragraph. If you devote one paragraph to each man, what you are doing is describing – your writing must be analytical rather than descriptive or narrative. Consider one of these two approaches.



OR



## Use of historiography

Part of your evidence may include the views of historians or even direct quotes from historians. It is good to show knowledge of historical debate. However, you must ensure that your essay is not an essay *about* historians' views; your aim is to use historical debate as evidence for your *own* argument.

*"Historiography should not be a substitute/ replacement for solid factual knowledge, accurate chronology and sequencing which must form the basis of any effective essay."*  
– History subject report (May 2010)

Here's a student example of how to use historiography in an essay answering the question "To what extent was Stalin responsible for the purges?":

Although it is clear that Stalin had many motives for carrying out the purges, there are other factors that also help to explain the devastating scope of the mass killing. One of these factors is the difficulty faced by the central government of getting regional party bosses to carry out their demands. Quite often, local parties were unwilling to hunt down kulaks or to arrest specialists in industry. Thus party leaders encouraged the lower levels of the party to criticize their superiors. This meant that accusations and the terror tended to get out of control. Figes talks of a terror which "erupted from below".

The student above refers to a historian of the Russian Revolution, Orlando Figes, and briefly quotes his interpretation of the purges as having "erupted from below". The student also supports their writing with other pieces of evidence that demonstrate that other factors help explain the purges. The reference to a historian's view does not stand alone. Instead it is used to support the student's own argument.

In response to the same question, another student wrote:

Historians are in disagreement over whether Stalin was actually responsible for the terror. Robert Conquest follows the totalitarian line which argues that Stalin's personality was key for the terror and calls it "Stalin's personal achievement". On the other hand, revisionist historians, such as J. Arch Getty, argue that the story is much more complicated; the purges were due to other factors and were largely initiated and sustained from below – at local levels.

This student does not present an argument of their own. They simply summarized some of the historical debate surrounding the issue of Russian purges. Do not do this.

## Transitions

Do you have enough analysis? In order to clearly transition between ideas, you may consider using these phrases:

<b>Introducing a topic</b>	<b>Linking cause and effect</b>	<b>To discuss a sequence of events or points</b>
<p>There were several reasons why this happened</p> <p>There were several results...</p> <p>There were many factors that contributed to...</p> <p>It is often argued that...</p>	<p>As a result of...</p> <p>This means that...</p> <p>Due to the fact that...</p> <p>This caused...</p> <p>Therefore,</p> <p>Thus...</p>	<p>First, <i>or</i> Firstly,</p> <p>Second, <i>or</i> Secondly,</p> <p>Third, <i>or</i> Thirdly,</p> <p>Finally,</p>
<b>To emphasize a point</b>	<b>To add information</b>	<b>To make a contrasting point</b>
<p>Moreover,</p> <p>Significantly,</p> <p>Another key point is...</p> <p>Surprisingly,</p> <p>On the negative side,</p> <p>On the positive side,</p> <p>In fact,</p> <p>It is important to realize,</p> <p>Indeed,</p>	<p>Additionally,</p> <p>In addition,</p> <p>Moreover,</p> <p>Equally important is...</p> <p>Furthermore,</p> <p>Likewise,</p> <p>For example,</p> <p>Another point/piece of evidence is...</p> <p>Not only... but also...</p> <p>While it is true that...</p> <p>Despite the fact that...</p>	<p>Although,</p> <p>Conversely,</p> <p>In spite of this,</p> <p>On the other hand,</p> <p>However,</p> <p>On the contrary,</p> <p>Nevertheless,</p>
<b>To make a similar point or to compare</b>	<b>To conclude or summarize</b>	
<p>Similarly,</p> <p>Likewise,</p> <p>In both situations...</p> <p>In neither situation...</p> <p>Compared with...</p> <p>In the same way...</p> <p>Equally...</p> <p>As with...</p> <p>...are similar in that...</p>	<p>As a result,</p> <p>Consequently,</p> <p>Accordingly,</p> <p>Thus,</p> <p>Therefore,</p> <p>In conclusion,</p> <p>To conclude,</p>	

## Step 6. The Conclusion

As the final paragraph of your essay and the last bit that your teacher or examiner will read, it is important that your conclusion leaves a good impression. Try to make enough time in an examination to reach your conclusion as it gives you the chance to remind the reader of your argument.

In your conclusion it is important to:

- Restate your main point or argument
- Link back to the question to show that your argument answers the question
- DO NOT introduce any new points or evidence in your conclusion
- Keep it brief (approx. five sentences or less)

### General Do's and Don'ts

- DON'T use the first person.
  - Although you are using your personal judgment, this should be based on an objective examination of the evidence. Using expressions such as “I think...” do not give the impression that you are being objective.
- DO make sure that you have the correct spellings for key historical figures, events and concepts.
- DO use appropriate historical vocabulary.
  - Avoid colloquial language or slang.
- DO use dates to show that you understand the chronology of the events you are discussing.
- DON'T use informal abbreviations. Only use official abbreviations
  - While abbreviations are useful when writing notes, an essay is a formal piece of writing and so all words must be written in full – “Br.” for Britain or “FR” for French Revolution are not acceptable.
- DON'T end a sentence with “etc.” or “so on”.
  - It sends a clear message that you have run out of ideas or that you cannot be bothered to write down more points.

### Difference Between Paper 2 and Paper 3

**Paper 2** consists of answering two essay questions, taken from two different topics related to 20<sup>th</sup> century world history.

**Paper 3** consists of answering three essay questions related to the regional option, i.e. History of the Americas. Paper 3 must show in-depth knowledge of the Americas and an understanding of historical processes. This is an HL (higher level) paper – you will be expected to synthesize and critically evaluate knowledge.

## How to write a paragraph:

### The Jane Schaffer Two-Chunk Paragraph (8 – 11 sentences)

**TS** (Topic sentence/Thesis statement)—informs the reader what the paragraph/essay will **prove**; **restates** the writing prompt

**LEAD-IN** and **CD** (Concrete detail)—**evidence** for TS (quote, paraphrase, fact, description, evidence, support, example, illustration, proof, or plot reference from the novel)

**CM** (Commentary)—**explains** the CD and adds **support** to TS (analysis, interpretation, evaluation of CD)

**CM** (Commentary)—adds **more support** to the TS and explains the **importance** of the CD (analysis, interpretation, evaluation of CD)

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**CM** (Commentary)—adds **more support** to the TS and explains the **importance** of the CD (analysis, interpretation, evaluation of CD)

**CS** (Concluding statement)—**restates** the TS and provides **closure** to the paragraph