**Tips for Writing AP Biology Essays.**

**DO**

1. The first thing that you should do is to carefully read the question. The second thing that you should do is to carefully read the question. The third thing that you should do is to carefully read the question. Be sure to answer the question asked and only that question; answer all parts of it.

2. Outline the answer to avoid confusion and disorganization. Thinking ahead helps to avoid scratch outs, asterisks, skipping around, and rambling. If you do not outline well, list the major areas you will cover in your essay. Check with your outline or list once you've finished writing.

3. Write an essay. Outlines and diagrams, no mater how elaborate and accurate, are not essays and will not get you much, if any, credit by themselves. Reference any diagrams in the body of your essay.

4. Define your terms. Say something about each of the terms that you use.

5. Answer the question parts in the order called for. It is best to not skip around within the question. The four essay questions do not have to be answered in any particular order.

6. Write clearly and neatly. It would be crazy to antagonize the reader with lousy penmanship

7. Go into detail that is on the subject and to the point. Be sure to include the obvious. Answer the question **thoroughly.**

8. Use a black or blue ballpoint pen with dark ink.

9. Remember that no detail is too small to be included as long as it is to the point.

10. Carefully label your diagrams (they get no points otherwise) and place them in the text at the appropriate place- not detached at the end. Unlabeled diagrams aren't even looked at by scorers. Explain your diagram in your essay. Diagrams alone receive no points unless they are referred to in your essay.

11. Widen your margins a little. This will make the essay easier for most folks to read.

12. Bring a watch to the exam so that you can pace yourself. You have four essays with about 22 minutes for each answer.

13. Practice outlining your essay answers on your test during the year.

14. Understand that the exam is written to be hard. The average will be about 50% correct, or 5 out of a possible 10 on an essay. It is very likely that you will not know everything. It is

expected, so relax and write thorough answers.

15. If you can’t remember a term or concept, include a complete description. The scoring guides occasionally award points for details and descriptions in addition to defining and explaining specific vocabulary. When you lose the specific vocabulary, don’t panic. Just keep writing about it.

16. If the essay deals with designing an experiment always:

1. include a hypothesis
2. include and identify these variables: independent variable, dependent variable, controls
3. describe your procedure (please don’t write 1. Gather materials.),
4. describe how you will collect and record data
5. describe how you will graph and/or analyze data
6. explain you will compare results to your hypothesis
7. explain you will repeat your experiment several times and use large sample sizes

17. If you are creating a graph always:

1. include a title (DV vs IV/ Y vs. X are good standards)
2. label both axes (include relevant units)
3. evenly divide and distribute the units on your axes
4. plot points and sketch the curve or line of fit that is relevant

**DON'T**

1. Don't waste your time on background information unless the question calls for historical development or historical significance. Answer the question.

2. Don't ramble---get to the point. Don't shoot the bull--say what you know and go on to the next question. You can always come back if you remember something later.

3. Don't use a pencil or a pen with an ink color other than black.

4. Don't use a felt -tip pen because the ink seeps through the page and makes both sides of the paper hard to read.

5. Don't panic or get angry because you are unfamiliar with the question. You probably have read or heard something about the subject--be calm and think.

6. Don't scratch out excessively. One or two lines though the unwanted words should be fine.

7. Don't write more than a very few words in the margin.

8. Don't worry about spelling every word perfectly or using exact grammar. These are not a part of the standards the graders use. It is important for you to know, however, that very poor spelling and grammar will hurt your chances that the reader will understand you.

9. Don't write sloppily. It is easy for a grader to miss an important word when he/she cannot read your handwriting.

10. Don't leave questions blank. Remember that each point on an essay question is the equivalent of about three of the multiple choice questions and there is no penalty for a wrong guess. **Make an effort on every question!**

11. If you are given a choice of parts (e.g. discuss photosynthesis or respiration), select the one you know best and write as completely as possible. Do not change your mind; readers are old to follow your first choice through the answer.

12. Don't Waste your time with creative writing. Skip the clever introductory paragraphs and jump straight to answering the question. You don’t have time to ramble.