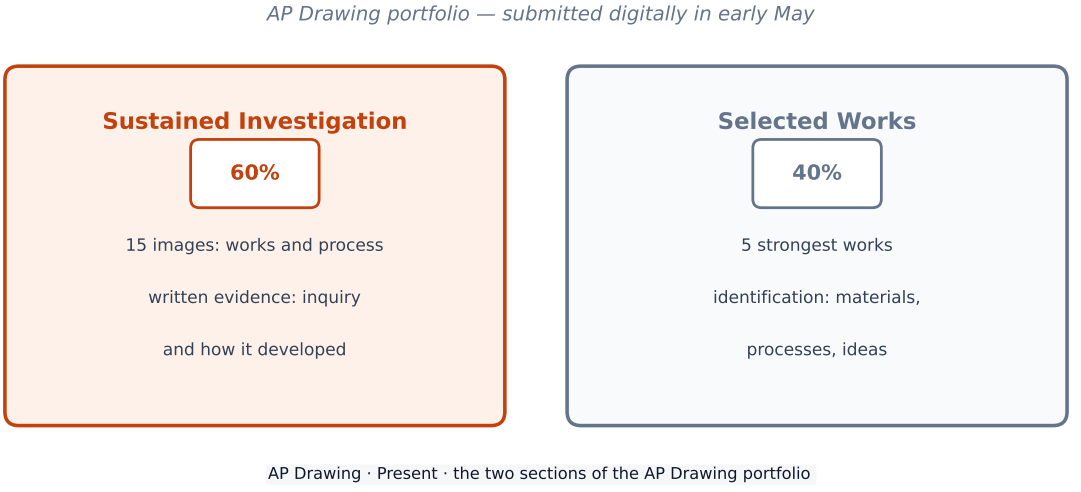
# Present: Communication and the AP Drawing Portfolio

AP Drawing

## The AP Drawing Portfolio

The AP exam is a **portfolio**, not a written test – two sections submitted digitally in early May. (CED Big Idea 3)




*Two sections: the Sustained Investigation carries 60% of the score, the Selected Works 40%*

- **Sustained Investigation**: 15 images of works and process, plus written evidence – 60% of the score.
- **Selected Works**: 5 works demonstrating skilful synthesis of materials, processes, and ideas – 40%.
- Selected Works may come from inside or outside the investigation. Choose your strongest five, wherever they came from.
- Everything uploads through the **AP Digital Portfolio**; your teacher reviews before final submission.
- Drawing, 2-D, and 3-D Art and Design are separate portfolios – submit work made for the Drawing skill set.
- Plan backwards from May: photography, writing, and selection all take real calendar time.

## Sustained Investigation: Images and Written Evidence

The SI section pairs 15 images with short **written evidence** – the images show, the writing states. (CED 3.A/3.B)

- The writing answers two prompts: state the inquiry, and describe how the investigation developed – about 1,200 characters in total.
- Every image carries caption fields: **materials**, **processes**, dimensions, and citations where needed.
- Choose images that *prove* the writing: question stated, tests shown, development visible.
- Process images – journal spreads, in-progress states, detail shots – count among the 15. Use several.
- Order the images deliberately: scorers read them as a sequence, so build a narrative arc.
- Write plainly and concretely, naming skills and components in CED vocabulary.

*Sustained Investigation rewards visible inquiry: studies, process shots, and development over time*

## Selected Works: Demonstrating Skills

The Selected Works are your five strongest statements – each judged on written evidence, drawing skills, and synthesis. (CED 3.C)

- Pick for range *and* strength: together, the five should cover the whole drawing-skills list.
- Each work carries an **identification**: materials, processes, ideas – about 100 characters per field, so make every word count.

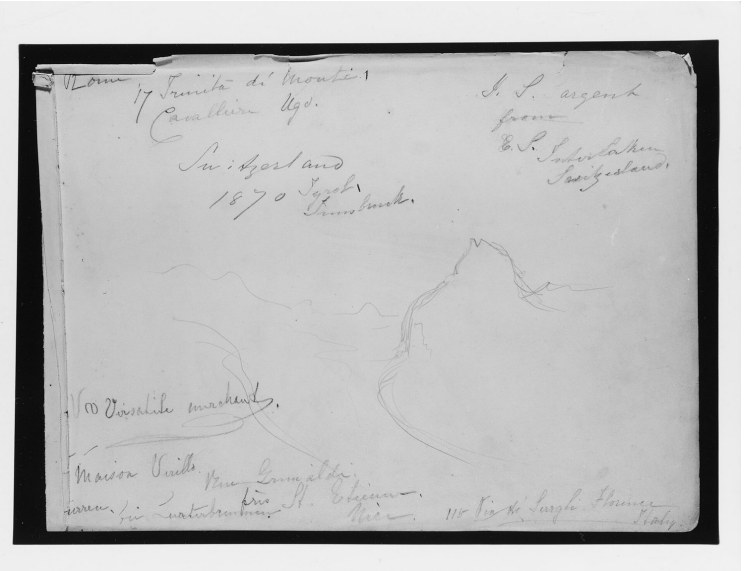
- Quality beats concept here: flawless craft and a full value range are what a 5 looks like.
- Strong candidates: the observational tour de force, the chiaroscuro drama, the expressive figure, the synthesis piece.
- Details matter at scoring size. View each candidate as a small thumbnail and at full zoom before choosing.
- Ask three viewers to rank your top eight; the overlap usually finds the true five.

*A finished drawing for Selected Works: craft, composition and skill must read clearly in the image*

## Writing About Your Work

The written evidence is short, factual, and load-bearing – it directs the scorer's attention. (CED 3.D/3.E)

- State the inquiry as a question or a clear statement in the first sentence.
- Use concrete nouns and verbs: "compressed charcoal on gessoed cardboard, lifted with erasers" beats "mixed media".
- Connect writing to *visible* things: if you claim experimentation, the images must show it.
- Writing completely unrelated to the works caps the Selected Works score – relevance is a rubric rule.
- Draft early and cut hard: character limits reward the specific and punish the vague.
- Have someone read the writing *while* viewing the images. Wherever they ask "where?", revise.



*Written evidence starts in the journal: notes next to studies become portfolio text*

## Presentation and Image Quality

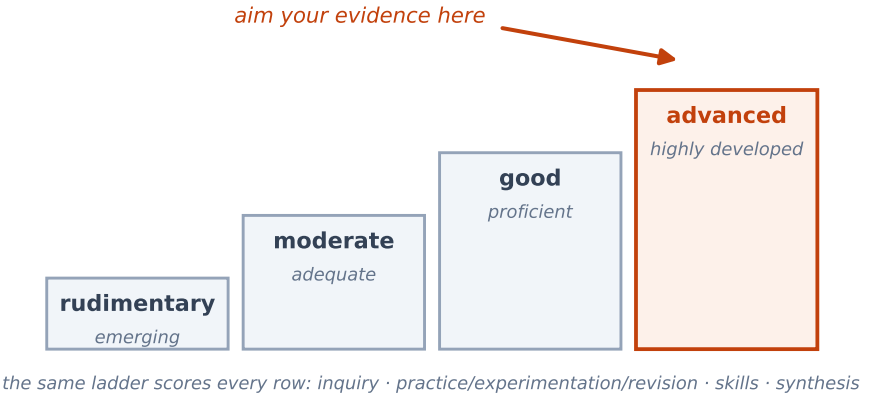
Scorers see **photographs** , not originals – photography quality *is* portfolio quality. (CED 3.F)

- Shoot in even, indirect daylight or a two-lamp setup. Avoid glare, shadows across the work, and **keystone distortion** .
- Fill the frame, crop to the work's edges, and keep verticals vertical.
- Check values on screen: a washed-out photo erases the light-and-shade skill you spent weeks building.
- A **detail shot** is allowed and powerful – a close-up of mark-making proves what a full view only suggests.
- Consistent, neutral backgrounds make a sequence read professionally.
- Photograph each work as it is finished, not all in April: fixative first, then shoot, then store flat.

*A working studio: document process, process photos, and finished pieces carefully for the portfolio*

## Understanding the Scoring Guidelines

Both sections are scored against published **scoring guidelines** – knowing the rows lets you build toward them.




AP Drawing · Present · the scoring guidelines' language ladder

*The rubric's language ladder: aim every piece of evidence at the top descriptors*

- Sustained Investigation rows: inquiry evident; practice, experimentation, and revision; materials, processes, and ideas; drawing skills; synthesis.

- Selected Works criteria: written evidence identifies components; drawing skills; synthesis – scored 1-5 by **preponderance of evidence** .
- The rubric's language ladder runs *rudimentary, moderate, good, advanced* – aim your evidence at the top descriptors.
- Score your own mock portfolio against the rubric each term; the gaps write your to-do list.
- Scores 1-5 arrive in July, and college credit policies vary – but the rubric habits are the real prize.
- Every rubric row asks for visual evidence. The recurring answer: show it, then name it.

## Academic Integrity and Citing Sources

The portfolio must be your own work. Borrowed images and AI tools have strict rules.

- Working from someone else's photograph or artwork requires a **citation** in that image's materials/processes fields.
- Substantially copying another artist's work – even cited – cannot demonstrate *your* idea development.
- Draw from life and from your own reference photos wherever possible; it also simply teaches more.
- **Generative AI** may not make your work: AP policy allows it only as a documented exploration tool, never as the artwork.
- **Plagiarism** cancels scores. The College Board checks, and teachers must certify originality.
- Integrity is also artistic self-interest: your own seeing is the only truly unique material you have.

## Exam tips

- **Photograph like it matters, because it does** – a 5-level drawing shot with glare and keystone reads as a 3. Reshoot anything you hesitate over.
- **Fill every caption field with specifics.** "Willow charcoal, subtractive erasing, on toned Ingres paper" does scoring work; empty or vague fields waste free marks.
- **Check the relevance rule**: if your written evidence could sit under someone else's portfolio unchanged, it is too generic – tie every sentence to your images.
- **Select the five with fresh eyes**: thumbnail-size printouts on a table, three trusted viewers, overlap wins.
- **Cite every reference photo you did not take** – one missing citation risks the whole portfolio; thirty seconds of typing removes the risk.