AP English Language and Composition

Revision Sheet · 考前速记

Learn these by heart before the exam. 考试前把这些内容背熟。

The Rhetorical Situation

Rhetorical situation 修辞情境: exigence, purpose, audience, writer, context, message - the six parts every text answers to

Exigence 写作动因: the problem or occasion that makes the writer speak NOW; name it and the purpose becomes obvious

Purpose is a verb, not a topic: to persuade, to warn, to celebrate, to justify, to satirise. Write it as an infinitive and your thesis writes itself.

Audience is defined by beliefs, values and needs, not by age. Ask what the audience already accepts, and what it must be moved from.

Context is what the audience knows and feels at that moment. A speech after a disaster and the same words a year later are different texts.

Ethos, logos, pathos 人格、逻辑、情感诉求: credibility, reasoning, emotion; name the appeal only alongside the specific move that creates it

Claim, Thesis and Line of Reasoning

A claim is arguable. If nobody could disagree, it is a fact and cannot anchor a paragraph.

Defensible thesis 可辩护的论点: a single sentence stating a position that the essay can actually support; may preview the reasoning, but never lists devices

Do not write 'the author uses ethos, pathos and logos'. Write what the author is DOING and to what end; the devices belong in the body.

Line of reasoning 论证脉络: the ordered chain of claims that carries the thesis; each paragraph is one link, not a separate essay

Evidence types: facts, statistics, anecdote, expert testimony, analogy, historical example. Choose by what the audience will accept.

Commentary 阐释分析: the sentences explaining HOW the evidence proves the claim; this is where marks live, not in the quotation

Ratio rule: for every line of quoted evidence, write two or more lines of commentary. Quotation without explanation scores as summary.

Methods of development: definition, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, narration, exemplification, classification, process analysis, description.

Style, Syntax and Devices

Diction is word choice: formal or colloquial, abstract or concrete, connotation versus denotation. Describe the effect, not the label.

Syntax moves: short sentence for emphasis, periodic sentence delays the point, cumulative sentence piles detail after it, parallelism creates rhythm, antithesis balances opposites.

Juxtaposition 并置对照: placing two unlike things side by side so the contrast itself makes the argument

Repetition family: anaphora (start), epistrophe (end), asyndeton (no conjunctions, speed), polysyndeton (many conjunctions, weight).

Figurative: metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, understatement, irony, satire, allusion. Always ask what the comparison lets the writer claim without stating it.

Tone 语气: the writer's attitude to the subject, carried by diction and syntax; a shift in tone is a structural signal worth analysing

Concession and rebuttal: grant the opposing point, then limit it. This raises ethos rather than weakening the argument.

Qualifiers (often, in most cases, arguably) make a claim defensible. Absolutes (always, never, everyone) make it easy to refute.

Coherence and Editing

Transitions signal the RELATION, so pick by meaning: however (contrast), therefore (consequence), moreover (addition), for instance (example), nevertheless (concession).

Unity means every sentence serves that paragraph's claim. Coherence means the reader can follow how each sentence connects to the last.

Introduction: context, then narrow to the issue, then the thesis. Conclusion: extend the argument's significance - never a restatement in new words.

Punctuation that earns marks: colon introduces evidence or a list; semicolon joins two related independent clauses; dash inserts emphasis.

Common errors: comma splice, dangling modifier, vague pronoun reference, shifting verb tense, subject-verb disagreement across a long phrase.

Logical Fallacies

Ad hominem attacks the person, not the claim. Straw man refutes a weakened version of the opposing view.

Hasty generalisation reasons from too few cases. Post hoc treats sequence as cause. False dilemma offers two options where more exist.

Slippery slope chains unproven consequences. Circular reasoning assumes what it must prove. Appeal to authority cites someone outside their field.

Bandwagon appeals to popularity. Red herring changes the subject to something easier to defend.

Exam technique

Three free-response tasks: synthesis (argue using provided sources), rhetorical analysis (explain how a writer builds an argument), and argument (defend your own position).

Synthesis: cite at least three sources by their labels, and USE them as evidence for your own claim. A source-by-source summary is not an argument.

Rhetorical analysis explains WHY a choice works on that audience for that purpose. Naming devices without effect is the single most common low score.

The argument essay wants your own specific evidence: history, literature, science, current events, personal observation. Specific beats general every time.

Plan for a few minutes: circle the exigence, write the thesis, list the paragraph claims in order. An unplanned essay loses the line of reasoning.

Sophistication comes from a genuine complexity: naming tension, acknowledging limits of your own claim, or situating the argument in a wider context. It is not decorative vocabulary.

In multiple choice, read the line references in context and eliminate answers that are true of the passage but do not answer the question asked.

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