



## Student Performance Q&A:

### 2006 AP® German Language Free-Response Questions

The following comments on the 2006 free-response questions for AP® German Language were written by the Chief Reader, Wiebke Strehl of the University of South Carolina in Columbia. They give an overview of each free-response question and of how students performed on the question, including typical student errors. General comments regarding the skills and content that students frequently have the most problems with are included. Some suggestions for improving student performance in these areas are also provided. Teachers are encouraged to attend a College Board workshop to learn strategies for improving student performance in specific areas.

#### Part A-1: Writing (Paragraph Completion)

##### *What was the intent of this question?*

This part of the exam is designed to elicit precise and accurate responses. Students demonstrate that they understand the text passage by inserting a correct German word or words in a blank. In developing passages, the German Development Committee often uses authentic material, slightly modified. In this case the committee opted for a letter composed specifically for the exam. The deletions for testing purposes offered students the opportunity to demonstrate a breadth of vocabulary, sensitivity to structure and idiom, and precision of spelling and capitalization, all within the context of the passage. The vocabulary and idioms required to fill in the blanks were all relatively high frequency.

##### *How well did students perform on this question?*

Compared with the same section on previous exams, the selection for 2006 yielded a lower average score. The tables on the following page give mean scores for the Standard Group\* and the Total Group in recent years.

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\* The Standard Group does not include students who speak the language at home or who have lived for more than two months in a country where German is the native language. Decisions on cutoff scores are based on the Standard Group.

<b>Standard Group</b>					
<b>Year</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>
Possible Points	20	20	20	20	20
Mean Score	11.39	12.59	9.29	10.88	8.55

<b>Total Group</b>					
<b>Year</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>
Possible Points	20	20	20	20	20
Mean Score	12.91	13.65	10.74	11.98	10.17

Readers felt that the passage was well designed, and scores reflected students' abilities. The lower mean score was a result of the inclusion of some lower-frequency expressions and vocabulary.

***What were common student errors or omissions?***

Capitalization or lack of capitalization was sometimes a cause for lost points. Problems on individual questions were as follows:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Correct Answers</b>	<b>Common Errors</b>
1	<i>den, diesen, meinen, unseren, unsren, kommenden, (den/diesen) kommenden, (den) nächsten</i>	Incorrect ending
2	<i>schreiben, berichten, erzählen, e-mailen, emailen, mailen</i>	Inappropriate item
3	<i>in</i>	Incorrect preposition
4	<i>der, einer, dieser</i>	Inappropriate item
5	<i>darauf, darüber, drauf, drüber, dadrauf</i>	Inappropriate item
6	<i>vorgestellt, gewünscht, erhofft, erträumt</i>	Inappropriate verb
7	<i>denn, weil, und</i>	Inappropriate conjunction
8	<i>dem, meinem, unserem, unsrem, ihrem</i>	Inappropriate item
9	<i>am</i>	Incorrect item
10	<i>mit, zusammen mit</i>	Inappropriate item
11	<i>halt, halte, hielt, fühle, fühlte, mache, machte, mach, finde, fand, trainiere, trainierte</i>	Incorrect verb
12	<i>sein, werden, bleiben</i>	Incorrect verb
13	<i>dass, daß, damit, so dass, sodass, so daß, auch wenn</i>	Inappropriate conjunction
14	<i>Uhr, sehr, ganz, immer, so, recht, auch, dann, noch, oft, besonders, ziemlich, nämlich, . . . +(viele), schon, an der Schule, für uns, für die Schuler, normalerweise, echt, furchtbar, Zeit für</i>	Inappropriate item
15	<i>aber, sondern, fahren, reisen, gehen, manchmal</i>	Inappropriate item
16	<i>Sehenswürdigkeiten, Gebäude, Stätten, Attraktionen (+ adjectives, e.g., schönsten), kulturellen Zentren, Kultur-Attraktionen, Kulturattraktionen, Bauten</i>	Inappropriate item, spelling
17	<i>mich, sie, alle, (die) Schüler, meine Schüler</i>	Inappropriate item
18	<i>habe, hätte, hatte, werde, würde</i>	Inappropriate verb

19	<i>Geld, Gehalt, meiste, Meiste, Einkommen, verdiente Geld</i>	Inappropriate item
20	<i>Dein, dein, Dein Enkel, dein Enkel, Dein Enkelkind, dein Enkelkind, von, vom, der + masculine first names, dein + masculine first names, dich liebender + masculine first names</i>	Inappropriate item

**Based on your experience of student responses at the AP Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that might help them to improve the performance of their students on the exam?**

Teachers who afford students more practice with this type of exercise should expect better results on the paragraph-completion section of the exam, as one factor in student performance is familiarity with the task at hand. It is not especially helpful for teachers to devise cloze passages that focus on particular points of grammar and vocabulary—it is more important that they provide extensive practice with this form. A reasonable strategy is for teachers to do a similar exercise each week by selecting a text, simply removing every eighth or ninth word regardless of its form, and then having the students fill in the missing words. All kinds of language acquisition will lead to better scores on paragraph-completion questions.

## **Part A-2: Writing (Composition)**

### ***What was the intent of this question?***

In selecting topics for compositions, the German Development Committee looks for areas of relevance and interest to AP students. Topics and subtopics are chosen to allow students to demonstrate a broad range of vocabulary and structure. To earn higher-range scores, students must write a good answer to the question and show a sustained control of structural features of German. High-scoring compositions normally employ complex sentences linked by cohesive discourse strategies.

The 2006 question asked students to address the experience of living in another country. First, they had to talk about where they would choose to live, then about why they would want to live there and what they would like to do in that country; they also had to describe how their lives would be different. The exact wording was as follows:

*Sie haben die Chance, ein Jahr lang in einem anderen Land zu wohnen. Beantworten Sie die folgenden vier Fragen in Ihrem Aufsatz.*

1. *Welches Land ist das?*
2. *Warum möchten Sie dort wohnen?*
3. *Was möchten Sie in dem Land machen? Erzählen Sie!*
4. *Wie wäre Ihr Leben dort anders? Beschreiben Sie!*

### ***How well did students perform on this question?***

The question for 2006 generated compositions that were scored higher than those of 2005 and lower than those of 2004, as shown in the tables on the following page.

<b>Standard Group</b>					
<b>Year</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>
Possible Points	9	9	9	9	9
Mean Score	6.22	5.60	6.32	5.16	6.00

<b>Total Group</b>					
<b>Year</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>
Possible Points	9	9	9	9	9
Mean Score	6.70	6.16	6.76	5.64	6.50

Students related easily to the context of the question, and there were very few performances that simply missed the mark. Virtually all students, even the weaker ones, understood the language contained in the prompt. Consequently, the scores reflect what students did with what they knew. Since this is a subject often discussed in similar ways in the classroom, students had sufficient vocabulary to address the issue. The difficulty in reaching a score of 9 in this higher-order cognitive task was that the language used in the essays was often the same, so it was harder for the best students to show off what they knew.

***What were common student errors or omissions?***

This year no pattern of common errors was detected. Some of the really weak students did not understand the topic and compared country living with city living. They clearly understood that a part of the question had to do with where they wanted to live and simply reproduced what they had practiced in the classroom.

***Based on your experience of student responses at the AP Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that might help them to improve the performance of their students on the exam?***

The most productive classroom strategy in preparation for the composition is to conduct frequent, timed, in-class writing sessions, evaluated according to the same standards that are used at the Reading. These scoring guidelines are available on AP Central® (<http://apcentral.collegeboard.com>). To ensure that all students are familiar with the assessment scale, many teachers sometimes involve them in scoring according to these guidelines, either in groups or pairs. Samples from recent exams may be used to familiarize students with the scale of expectations. Especially good practice is derived from prompts that ask for arguments *and* counterarguments and those that require a coherent narrative.

**Part B: Speaking (Directed Responses)**

In this section, students listen to six questions in German, responding in German after each one. Discussion of the individual prompts follows the tables on the next page.

Students did well on these items. Inspection of the mean totals for the six questions indicates that the overall performance on directed responses was somewhat higher than in previous years (note that the scoring scale changed in 2004).

<b>Standard Group</b>					
<b>Year</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>
Possible Points	30	30	36	36	36
Mean Score	20.29	21.53	26.13	23.61	23.67

<b>Total Group</b>					
<b>Year</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>
Possible Points	30	30	36	36	36
Mean Score	22.54	23.31	28.46	26.04	26.23

Mean scores for the individual prompts in 2006 are given in the following table, along with those from the two previous years. The maximum score for a response was 6. From this table it is clear that this year the third prompt was overall the most challenging and that the fifth was the easiest.

<b>Standard Group</b>			
Directed Response	2004 Mean Score	2005 Mean Score	2006 Mean Score
1	4.21	4.50	4.10
2	3.63	3.89	3.93
3	4.53	3.98	3.65
4	4.55	4.08	3.92
5	4.44	3.51	4.17
6	4.76	3.64	3.91

<b>Total Group</b>			
Directed Response	2004 Mean Score	2005 Mean Score	2006 Mean Score
1	4.61	4.79	4.47
2	4.19	4.33	4.37
3	4.89	4.39	4.14
4	4.90	4.46	4.37
5	4.83	3.97	4.55
6	5.05	4.11	4.34

**1. *Du siehst so glücklich aus! Was ist denn passiert?* (You look so happy! What happened?)**

***What was the intent of this question?***

The first prompt is meant to be a relatively simple task designed to ease students into this part of the exam. Often a list is acceptable as an answer. In this case, students could have given a list of reasons for their happy looks.

***How well did students perform on this question?***

The question fulfilled its function of beginning this section with a task that was not unduly stressful, and students performed well. The item turned out to be the second easiest after question 5.

***What were common student errors or omissions?***

Some weaker students did not understand *passiert* and went off topic.

**2. Du! Du musst dich beeilen, sonst kommen wir zu spät zum Konzert. Warum bist du noch nicht fertig? (Hey! You'd better hurry or we'll be late for the concert. Why aren't you ready yet?)**

***What was the intent of this question?***

The prompt was intended to elicit an excuse for why the student was not ready.

***How well did students perform on this question?***

This prompt provided a greater opportunity to elaborate than did the first one. Students who fully comprehended the question performed well overall. The strongest among them were able to come up with a number of events that made them late.

***What were common student errors or omissions?***

Students had no problem understanding and answering this prompt.

**3. Ich will nach dem Schulabschluss nicht sofort auf die Universität gehen, sondern erst mal arbeiten. Was denkst du darüber? (After graduation I don't want to go to the university immediately; I would rather work. What do you think about that?)**

***What was the intent of this question?***

This prompt was designed to be the most challenging one, and it turned out to be so. It provided an opportunity for students to hypothesize and possibly use the subjunctive. The topic is a familiar one for teenagers, and most had something to say.

***How well did students perform on this question?***

Most students started out by either voicing agreement or disagreement with the first statement. Many then went on to talk about what they will do after graduation. Others gave possible alternatives of what to do after graduation, often in the subjunctive.

***What were common student errors or omissions?***

Weaker students had problems with the switch from *Ich* to *Was denkst du darüber?*

**4. Dein Zimmer ist immer noch nicht aufgeräumt! Darf ich mal fragen warum nicht? (Your room is still not picked up! May I ask why not?)**

***What was the intent of this question?***

This question was very much like question number two. It asked the student to make an excuse. Many teenagers seem to be quite used to this question and had no problem finding excuses.

***How well did students perform on this question?***

Statistically the outcome was the same as for question 2. Student performance was better than expected. Most were able to give a good answer, and few had any difficulty inventing reasons.

***What were common student errors or omissions?***

Although most students gave ample reasons for the untidiness, the weakest described their rooms rather than giving an excuse.

**5. *Frau Schulz hat in der Lotterie 100 000 Euro gewonnen und hat eine Weltreise gemacht. Was würdest du mit so viel Geld machen?* (Mrs. Schulz won 100,000 euro in the lottery and took a trip around the world. What would you do with so much money?)**

***What was the intent of this question?***

The prompt offered an opportunity to hypothesize, possibly by using the subjunctive.

***How well did students perform on this question?***

The question was easily understood by most students, and it generated the highest mean score of the six.

***What were common student errors or omissions?***

Even if students understood only half of the question—either the part about what they would do with a lot of money or the part about someone who won money and took a trip—they responded with something that had to do with spending money. It is not certain that all of the weaker students really answered the question, but they certainly had ideas about how to spend money.

**6. *Ich habe gehört, du hilfst deiner Oma jeden Mittwoch im Haushalt. Was machst du für sie?* (I heard that you help your grandmother every Wednesday with her household chores. What do you do for her?)**

***What was the intent of this question?***

The final question was intended to give students a positive conclusion to the section; however, this item caused problems for many students. Readers expected a list of chores students performed for their grandmother, but many students did not fully understand the question.

***How well did students perform on this question?***

Students who did not address what they did *for* their grandmother but rather described what they did *with* her were considered not to have answered the question, which turned out to be the second hardest of the group.

***What were common student errors or omissions?***

Students often did not understand the concept of helping their grandmother with household chores. A decision was made to accept only answers that showed the student was doing chores or other things *for* her.

***Based on your experience of student responses at the AP Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that might help them to improve the performance of their students on the exam?***

Teachers can expect the highest performance from their students if they have helped them to achieve mechanical mastery of the actual equipment that will be used during the exam, maximized

practice time with this particular exercise in the classroom and lab, and fostered familiarity with the scoring guidelines used at the Reading (available on AP Central). The essence of the directed-response exercise—a spontaneous oral response to an aural prompt—can be employed in a variety of classroom settings. Even practice with the entire class has some advantages, as students must cope with the pressure to perform under very limited time constraints (as is required on the AP Exam), and because some may gain confidence by hearing others (so that more hesitant students can think to themselves, “Oh, I can do that!”). Creative teachers may also find ways to practice in small groups and pairs, with and without the application of recording systems.

## Part B: Speaking (Picture Sequence)

### *What was the intent of this question?*

This section is designed to elicit a student narration based on six pictures. Unlike the directed responses, in which spontaneous creativity is sometimes required to come up with answers to the questions posed, this section requires students to tell the story after a period of reflection. The exercise presupposes an ability to name objects in the pictures, describe activities depicted, and use cohesive discourse strategies to form a narrative. The vocabulary needed to explain the 2006 sequence—which concerns a boy who believes he has locked his key inside his house and after an unsuccessful attempt to break in discovers that it had been in his pocket all along—was almost all relatively high frequency and allowed students to show how they could deal with structure without fumbling for obscure words. The better students had a chance to shine through circumlocution, due to the more complicated middle part of the story.

### *How well did students perform on this question?*

The story was basically well understood and generated acceptable responses. Students in 2006 did not perform as well as in previous years.

<b>Standard Group</b>					
<b>Year</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>
Possible Points	6	6	6	6	6
Mean Score	3.99	3.66	4.17	3.53	3.44

<b>Total Group</b>					
<b>Year</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>
Possible Points	6	6	6	6	6
Mean Score	4.43	4.13	4.57	3.98	3.97

Although most of the vocabulary needed to narrate the story was readily accessible to students, pictures 3 and 4 made it harder for them to create a rich narrative, as the words required to talk about the boy climbing the tree to get into the house, falling, and then throwing a rock through the window, (tree, branch, breaking, falling, throwing) were very low frequency. Only the particularly well-trained and strongest students could demonstrate their knowledge of advanced vocabulary and structures.

***What were common student errors or omissions?***

There were some problems with vocabulary resources. Students could almost always find appropriate words to express the content of the first two pictures and the last one. Those who had mastered the art of circumlocution got a chance to show what they could do.

The least coherent recordings offered the listener no help in connecting individual utterances into a sensible narrative. The lack of temporal adverbs, gender agreement across picture frames, and logical connectors was characteristic of performances with the lowest scores. The weak students usually ran into trouble when they reached picture 3 and could not recover.

Very few students dramatized the picture sequence. There is continued improvement in this regard, as teachers encourage their students to narrate and avoid an overuse of direct speech. Naming the characters did not seem to help the students to narrate, but the names some chose provided Readers with moments of levity.

***Based on your experience of student responses at the AP Reading, what message would you like to send to teachers that might help them to improve the performance of their students on the exam?***

As in the directed-response section, familiarity with the equipment used during the exam will aid students' confidence in this exercise. Most important is the actual experience of producing oral narratives of the prescribed length. Frequency of practice and familiarity with the scoring guidelines will pay large benefits. Additionally, teachers are advised to give specific attention to lexical items and grammatical markers that lend cohesion to narratives.