Tips for Answering Open Response Questions (adapted from Cliffs AP)

1. Remain calm.
   1. The open response section is actually EASIER than multiple choice!
   2. You can get an excellent score without having to write every relevant piece of info.
2. Be specific!
   1. Answering too generally doesn’t say anything and won’t earn you points.
   2. Use proper terminology and explain processes.
   3. Give detail when you know it, and tell how things are related.
3. Answer each part separately.
   1. Organization helps your grader easily identify each part of your answer.
   2. Clearly label the different sections of your answer (A, B, C…).
4. Answer all parts of the question.
   1. Each part has a certain point value.
   2. Spending too much time on one part limits you to that point value (often 2-3 points).
5. Budget your time.
   1. It’s better to partially answer all questions than to leave some blank.
   2. You’ll probably know something about every question.
   3. 1 or 2 points is a LOT better than a zero!
6. Don’t worry about incorrect facts.
   1. Graders only look for CORRECT information.
   2. You will NOT have points deducted for wrong names or facts.
7. Don’t worry about grammar, spelling, etc.
   1. There is no penalty for mistakes in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or bad handwriting.
   2. BUT you will not earn points if the grader doesn’t know what you’re trying to say!
8. Don’t write an “essay”.
   1. Don’t use standard format: introduction, support paragraphs, conclusion.
   2. Just answer the question directly, using complete sentences.
9. Drawings can help!
   1. You can earn additional points for information in drawings.
   2. BUT they must be labeled and explained in your essay.
10. Pay attention to direction words.
    1. These words tell you what you need to say about the subject
    2. DISCUSS = consider/examine various aspects of a subject/problem.
    3. DESCRIBE = characterize or give an account in words.
    4. DEFINE = give the precise meaning for a word/phrase.
    5. EXPLAIN = clarify or make understandable.
    6. COMPARE = discuss 2+ items with emphasis on their similarities.
    7. CONTRAST = discuss 2+ items with emphasis on their differences.