ALBERT

The Ultimate AP® English Language Claims and Evidence Cheat Sheet

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3.A / 4.A Claims

What a Claim Is

Claim: a statement that requires defense w/ evidence; arguments = 1+ claims supported by evidence & reasoning.

Defensible = a reasonable person could disagree; facts alone ("Paris is in France") aren't claims at all.

Thesis = the main, overarching claim; **subclaims** (topic sentences) each prove 1 piece of the thesis.

Types of Claims

Type	Asks	Example
Fact	Is it so?	Phones ↓ focus
Definition	What is it?	Graffiti = art
Cause	Why?	Ads drive debt
Value	Good/bad?	Zoos are cruel
Policy	What to do?	Ban leaf blowers

Policy claims use should/must/ought; they usually rest on value & cause claims underneath them.

Implied claim: satire, story or irony may never state the claim outright; infer it from choices & tone used.

Find the Claim in a Passage

Look for: should, must, therefore, clearly, the truth is, I believe, in short, rhetorical questions.

Location: often in the 1st or last paragraph, or after a turn ("But," "Yet," "Still") where the writer pivots.

Test: ask "What does the writer want me to believe or do?" Answer in 1 sentence = the main claim.

Claim vs. evidence: the claim is the point; evidence is the proof. Ask "Is this the point or the support?"

⚠ Topic ≠ claim. "Social media" is a topic; "Social media weakens teen friendships" is a claim.

✓ On reading MCQs, predict the claim in your own words before you look at the answer choices.

3.A Evidence Types

Evidence Supports a Claim

Evidence: facts, data, examples, details & testimony a writer uses to make a claim believable to readers.

Type	Best for	Risk
Statistics	Scale, trends	Cherry-picked
Expert opinion	Authority	Bias, outdated
Anecdote	Emotion, face	1 case ≠ rule
Example	Concrete proof	Too narrow
Analogy	New ideas	False match
Personal exp.	Ethos, voice	Not general
Historical ex.	Precedent	Different era
Testimony	Firsthand view	Memory, motive
Experiment	Cause & effect	Small sample

What Evidence Does

Functions: evidence can illustrate, clarify, set a mood, exemplify, associate or amplify a point.

Illustrate: make an abstract idea concrete. **Amplify**: stack examples to show the size or force of a problem.

Associate: link the claim to a value or figure the audience already respects (allusion, analogy, hero).

Qualitative vs. quantitative: stories & quotes show human impact; numbers show scale & frequency.

Mixing Types

Best arguments pair a statistic (scale) w/ an anecdote (human face) so logos & pathos work together.

Match the audience: experts want data & sources; a general audience trusts vivid, relatable cases.

⚠ An anecdote proves only that 1 case happened; never call it proof of a general trend on its own.

✓ On reading MCQs, name the evidence type AND its job: "The statistic establishes the scale of..."

4.A Choosing & Using Evidence

Strong Evidence Is...

Test	Ask
Relevant	Does it prove THIS claim?
Sufficient	Enough to convince?
Credible	Who says so? Expert?
Recent	Still true now?
Representative	Typical, not outlier?

Relevance beats impressiveness: a vivid fact that proves a different point weakens the paragraph.

Sufficiency: 1 example rarely proves a broad claim; scale the evidence to the size of the claim made.

Source Credibility

Check: author's expertise, publisher, date, purpose & bias (who paid, who benefits from this claim?).

Bias ≠ useless: a biased source can still show what one side believes; name the bias when you use it.

Integrating Evidence

Sandwich: set up the source (who, why trust them) → quote or paraphrase → commentary on its meaning.

Embed short quotes in your own sentence: Thoreau calls the state a "*machine*" that grinds dissent.

Paraphrase data & long passages; quote only memorable wording you plan to analyze afterward.

Writing MCQs (4.A)

Stem: "Which choice provides the most effective evidence to support the claim in sentence 3?" (common)

Method: restate the claim in sentence 3, then pick the choice that proves exactly that, no more, no less.

⚠ The most dramatic or detailed choice is a trap if it supports a nearby idea rather than the stated claim.

✓ Match key words: if the claim says "cost," the right evidence names money, not convenience or safety.

4.A Commentary

What Commentary Does

Commentary: explains the significance & relevance of evidence to the claim; it links proof → point.

Evidence alone never speaks for itself; commentary says HOW it proves the claim & WHY it matters.

Ratio: aim for ≈ 2 sentences of commentary per quote or fact; analysis earns the points, not quotes.

Weak vs. Strong Commentary

Weak	Strong
Restates the quote	Explains its effect
"This shows that..."	"By calling X Y, she..."
Summarizes plot	Links to the claim
Vague ("powerful")	Names the effect
Ends at evidence	Ends at so-what

Build It

Template: "This [evidence] reveals ___ because ___, which proves [claim] since [audience] values ___."

Ask why: Why this example? Why here? Why this word? Each answer = a sentence of commentary.

So what?: end each paragraph by tying the point back to the thesis or a larger stake for real readers.

Verbs that analyze: reveals, exposes, underscores, reframes, complicates, implies, challenges, links.

Example

Evidence: 1 in 3 teens says they feel "constantly" online.
Commentary: "Constantly" shows no off-switch, so...
Avoid: "powerful," "effective," "impactful" w/o saying HOW.

⚠ "This quote shows that..." followed by a restatement of the quote is summary, not commentary.

✓ FRQ Row B rewards commentary that explains how evidence supports a line of reasoning: 3–4 pts.

3.B / 4.B Thesis Statements

A Strong Thesis

Thesis: the writer's main claim; it must be defensible, require proof & answer the prompt's question.

May preview the line of reasoning: "Because X, Y & Z, the town should..." maps the body paragraphs.

Placement: usually early in your essay; in published texts it may be delayed, implied or at the end.

Weak thesis	Why it fails
Restates prompt	No position taken
Plain fact	Nothing to defend
"Uses ethos, pathos..."	List, no purpose
Too broad	Can't prove in 40 min
Both sides, no stance	Fence-sitting

Open vs. Closed Thesis

Closed: lists the reasons ("...b/c of cost, safety & fairness"); clear map, but it locks your body order.

Open: states the claim w/o listing reasons; flexible & often reads as more mature to AP readers today.

Thesis by Essay

Synthesis: take a position on the issue the sources address; don't just summarize what sources say.

Rhetorical analysis: name the writer's choices AND their purpose for this audience: "To rally..., X uses..."

Argument: take a clear position on the prompt's claim; qualifying it ("only when...") is allowed.

Ex: "Schools should start after 8:30 a.m. b/c teens' sleep cycles shift later, not b/c they're lazy."

⚠ Row A is 0 or 1 point: a thesis that only restates the prompt or summarizes earns 0, every time.

✓ Test your thesis: could someone smart write a full essay arguing the opposite? If yes, it's defensible.

3.C / 4.C Qualifying Claims

Qualify w/ Modifiers

Qualifier: a word or phrase that limits a claim's scope so it's accurate & harder for critics to attack.

Absolute	Qualified
always	often, usually
all	most, many, some
never	rarely, seldom
proves	suggests, indicates
will	may, might, could
everyone	most students

Conditions: unless, when, if, only if, in most cases, for now; each names the limits of the claim's reach.

Counterarguments

Counterargument: an opposing view a reasonable reader might hold; raising it shows fairness (ethos).

Concede: grant what's true ("Admittedly, bans are costly").
Refute/rebut: show why the claim still holds.
Alternative perspective: a different angle (not the opposite) that complicates or extends the claim.

Moves & Signal Words

Concession cues: granted, admittedly, of course, while it is true that, some argue, critics claim that.

Rebuttal cues: however, yet, but, still, nevertheless, even so; the writer's own view usually follows.

Reading MCQs: "The writer mentions X primarily to..." → often "acknowledge a counterargument."

Ex: "Most cities should..." beats "All cities must..."

⚠ Qualified ≠ weak. Over-hedging ("maybe, in some ways, perhaps") hides the claim; qualify once, precisely.

✓ Conceding & then refuting a strong objection can help earn the FRQ sophistication point (Row C).

Claims & Evidence on the MCQ

Reading Questions (Skill 3)

Weight: Claims & Evidence = reading 13–16% + writing 11–14% of the 45-question MCQ section.

Stem says	You do
"main claim"	Predict 1-sentence claim
"serves to" / "function"	Name evidence's job
"primarily to"	Purpose of the part
"qualifies"	Find the limit word
"assumption"	Unstated belief

Function Qs: ask what the example DOES for the claim (illustrate, concede, contrast), not what it says.

Assumption: the unstated belief the claim needs to be true; if it's false, the whole argument collapses.

Writing Questions (Skill 4)

Revision stems: add, keep or delete a sentence; best evidence for a claim; best qualifier for a claim.

Keep/delete: keep if it supports the paragraph's claim; delete if it drifts to a side point, even if interesting.

Thesis Qs: "Which version of sentence 1 best establishes the writer's position...?" → most specific stance.

Elimination

Cut choices that are too broad, too extreme (always, never) or true but unrelated to the stem's goal.

Strengthen / weaken: a choice that adds a credible fact for the claim strengthens; a counterexample weakens.

Line by line: in reading sets, mark claim (C), evidence (E) & concession (Q) in the margin as you read.

⚠ Reading choices often quote the passage; a familiar phrase can still name the wrong function.

✓ Underline the stem's goal (claim, evidence, qualify) & reject any choice that serves a different goal.

Claims & Evidence on the FRQs

Rubric Rows (all 3 essays)

Row	Points	Rewards
A: Thesis	0–1	Defensible claim
B: Evidence & Commentary	0–4	Support + analysis
C: Sophistication	0–1	Complex thinking

Row B, 4 pts: specific evidence for all claims + commentary that consistently explains a line of reasoning.

Row B, 2 pts: some evidence, but commentary mostly summarizes or doesn't connect to the claim.

Evidence by Essay

Synthesis (Q1): use 3+ of the sources; cite each (Source A) & add commentary, not just strings of quotes.

Rhetorical analysis (Q2): evidence = quotes from the passage that show the writer's choices.

Argument (Q3): your own examples: history, current events, literature, science, personal experience.

Specific beats general: "the 2010 Deepwater Horizon spill" beats "many oil spills happen all the time."

Sophistication (Row C)

Earn it: explain tensions or complexities, situate the argument in a broader context, or qualify w/ nuance.

Synthesis move: put 2 sources in conversation: Source C's data complicates Source A's claim b/c...

Ex commentary: "Source B's survey shows cost, not distance, keeps families away, so free fares matter most."

Time: ≈ 40 min per essay; spend 5 min planning claims & evidence before writing a single paragraph.

⚠ Dropping a quote w/o explanation ("plop quote") keeps Row B low, no matter how good the quote is.

✓ Each body paragraph: claim → evidence → 2+ sentences of commentary → link back to the thesis.