**Cracking the DBQ**

**Planning and Prewriting (15 minutes)**

1. Read the question carefully to determine what is being asked. Look for key words to assist in directing your response. Is there more than one part to the question? Re read the question.
2. Think of the question as a standard free response essay. Quickly brainstorm anything you know about the topic and write out a list of these facts in the margin.
3. Now read the documents. Look at the author and the date and get an idea of what the document is about. Are the documents able to remind you of additional supporting information? Underline key words or phrases. Jot notes in the margin.
4. Re read the question again to make certain you completely understand what is being asked. Focus in on all parts of the question.
5. Now go back and carefully review each of the documents. How are they related to each other? What is the main point of each one? Jot notes in the margin.
6. Now outline your answer using your outside information along with topics pulled from the documents. Formulate your thesis based on this information. Now you are ready to write your essay.

**Writing the Essay (45 minutes)**

1. Do not paraphrase the documents. Put the information in your own words and do not use direct quotes. Evaluate the evidence and use it to prove your thesis.
2. Do not “laundry list” the documents. Organize them in paragraphs along with supporting outside information to prove your thesis. Remember to be analytical in your response – explain **why** your information supports your thesis.
3. Make your thesis specific. Make certain that it represents the complexity of the question and do not include any information in the essay that does not support the thesis (do not bird walk!).
4. Refer to the documents by title, if you can. “George Washington stated in a letter to Thomas Jefferson . . .” Do not begin by saying, “Document A says . . “ At the end of a reference, you can refer again to the document by writing (Doc. A).
5. If an opinion expressed in a document is questionable, then challenge it. Again, who is the author? Is there bias? Look at the date of the document – could this impact the author’s opinion?
6. Do any of the documents contradict each other? If so, make mention of this in your essay and explain why this discrepancy exists and how it relates to what you are proving.
7. You should use all of the documents unless you cannot figure one out. Better to delete it than to misinterpret it and flag your essay. Take a close look at tables, graphs, cartoons, pictures, maps, statistics, etc. These can contain a lot of information.
8. You cannot receive a good score if your do not include outside information. Do not allow your essay to be totally document driven. Pull in that outside information.
9. Write as neatly as possible using a dark blue or black pen. Handwriting that is difficult to read may cause some important information to be missed.
10. Avoid excessive scratch outs. Proofread if time permits.