A Short Guide to Short Answer Questions

**General Goal**: Demonstrate to the teacher that you understand the question and can

1. **Answer the question entirely**. If the question asks for 3 items, include 3 items in your answer. Make sure also that these 3 items are distinct answers—crime, drugs, and gangs are all very similar, for instance.

2. **Be specific**. The more vague your response is, the less clear it is that you know the material. One or two word responses often oversimplify a much more complex answer and simply show that you know a word that might be the answer rather than true understanding. For instance, saying there are “environmental probl

3. **Add details**. Illustrate your understanding by including details, such as specific countries or cities or features. Include additional examples, if need be. Show that you are not simply memorizing things you saw on a screen or sheet, but that you understand

4. **Show evidence of higher-level thinking**. For instance, if you are advocating a policy, what might the effects of that policy be? If you advocate for more police, how much would that cost? How would you pay for it? What might be the consequences of more police on the streets? Always think about the “why” of a question too. For instance, if you say that two countries are different, speculating as to why they are different shows that you’re thinking at a higher level as well.