

How to Write a Continuity and Change Over Time (CCOT) Essay

Background: The Rubric

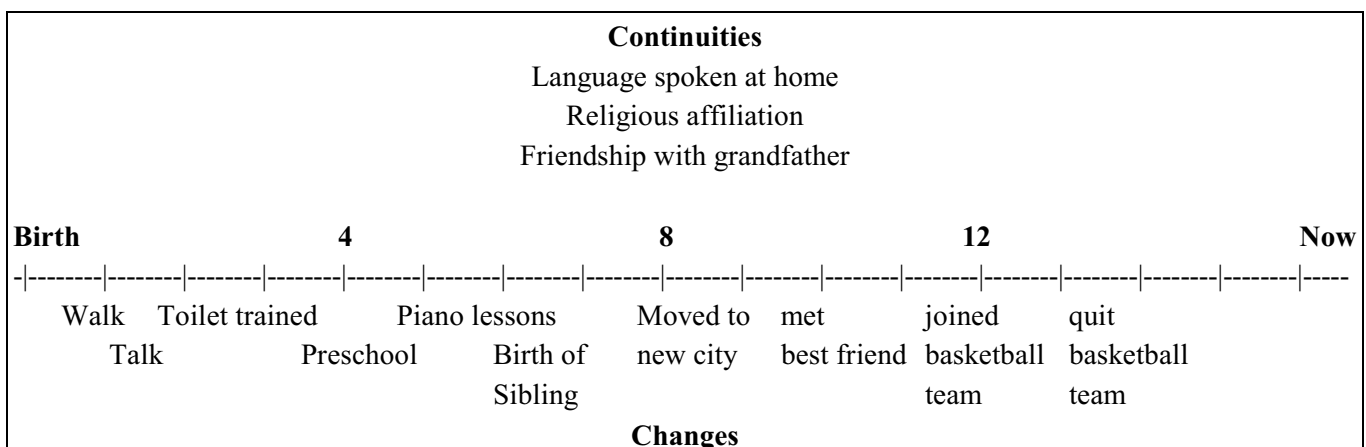
Like the DBQ and Comparative essays, the CCOT is scored according to a rubric. The rubric is structured into “Core” characteristics and “Expanded Core” (extra credit) characteristics. If an essay earns all 7 “Core” rubric points it is eligible to earn up to an additional 2 points, for a maximum score of 9.

The CCOT “Core” Rubric

	Official Description	Points	Plain English Description
1	Has an acceptable Thesis	1	Thesis
2	Addresses all parts of the question, though not necessarily evenly or thoroughly.	2	Addresses Parts of the Question
	Addresses most parts of the question: for example, addresses change but not continuity.	1	
3	Substantiates thesis with appropriate historical evidence.	2	Evidence
	Partially substantiates thesis with appropriate historical evidence.	1	
4	Uses relevant world historical context effectively to explain continuity and change over time.	1	Global Context
5	Analyzes the process of continuity and change over time.	1	Analysis

The Complexity of Change and Continuity

Imagine a simple timeline that represents your own life. If you were to note the 10-12 most important events on your timeline, what might that timeline look like, and how would you analyze the changes and continuities of your own life? Consider the hypothetical example below.



At first glance this timeline appears fairly simple. Events happen. Things change. But if you look more carefully you should begin to notice that each event and change listed has very different characteristics.

change relevant to the question. The more specific you can be about these characteristics, the better your score. So how does one do this?

Step 1: Read the Question

You'd think this is an obvious recommendation, but unfortunately the biggest mistake that thousands of students make each year on the APWH is that their essay does not *specifically* answer the question. Why not? Usually because their response is *closely related* to the question, but is off topic in one or more significant ways. Consider the sample CCOT question below.

Analyze the continuities and changes in South Asia's relationship to global trade patterns from 600-1450 C.E. Be sure to describe South Asia's involvement in global trade patterns 600 C.E. as your starting point.

What is the question asking you to *do*? (What's the *verb* in the question? Restate the verb(s) in your own words.)

O.K., now what is the object of the verb? (Analyze *what? where? when?*) Make sure you focus your essay so that it answers ALL of these key characteristics.

What _____

Where _____

When _____

Step 2: Brainstorm Evidence

Now begins the hard part of recalling information that will answer the question. Here is a generic template that you can use to help you organize your essay. Write any Continuities above the timeline, Changes below.

Timeline

Continuities	
Beginning Date	End Date
Changes	

Characteristics at beginning of Time Period	Examples of Significant Changes, Turning Points, or Developments <i>Note type of change (sudden, gradual, developmental)</i>	Characteristics at end of Time Period
	1	
	2	
	3	
	Significant Continuities	
	1	
	2	
3		
Reasons <i>Why</i> Changes & Continuities Occurred	1 2 3	

Step 3: Organize Evidence by Paragraphs

The next step is to choose an essay structure to answer the question. What is the “best” structure to use? There is no single “best” structure for a CCOT essay. Students should be flexible, choosing an essay structure that reflects the nature of the continuities and changes specific to the question. One question may require one type of structure, while a different question lends itself better to a different structure.

Here are two possible and common essay structures. Note how each structure contains the same *content*. The only difference is the organization each structure uses to present the evidence.

Chronological Essay Structure

Thesis Paragraph

- Background (Optional)
- Thesis Statement (1-2 sentences)
- “Road Map” of later paragraphs

Body Paragraph #1: Early/Beginning Time Period

- Beginning Situation (start with “changing *from what?*” so the reader can recognize the later changes in the paragraph)
- Change(s) at/near beginning date, including description of the type of change (sudden, gradual, etc.)
 - Evidence of change (if possible, name a specific example that represents this change)
 - Analysis of the *process* of change (What *caused* the changes? What were the later *effects*? How did these changes propel history into the next chronological era?)
- Comparison to the larger Global Context (How do the examples in this paragraph compare to the larger world context during the same time period or during the next time period?)

Body Paragraph #2: Middle Time Period. (same characteristics as above)

Body Paragraph #3: Late/Ending Period (same characteristics as above)

Body Paragraph #4: Continuities

- What characteristics exist throughout the entire time period?
- Analysis of the continuities (What *caused* the continuities?)
- Global Context (How do these examples of continuities compare to the larger world context during the same time period?)

Concluding Paragraph (recommended, but optional)

Restatement/summarization of Thesis

Here’s a table that graphically represents the same organizational content printed above.

Chronological Structure			
Topic	Paragraph #1 Beginning/Early	Paragraph #2 Middle	Paragraph #3 End/Late
Topic #1:			
Topic #2:			
Topic #3:			
Advantage(s)		Disadvantage(s)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure provides easy organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paragraph #1 = Early • Paragraph #2 = Middle • Paragraph #3 = Late 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to mention changes, but omit “motion,” No change over time, merely three “snapshots” rather than “motion picture” that shows <i>how</i> ‘Early’ <i>became</i> ‘Middle’ which then became ‘Late.’ • Historical evidence doesn’t always conform to ‘Early/Mid/Late’ structure • Easy to forget/omit Continuities 	

Topical Structure

Thesis Paragraph

- Background (Optional)
- Thesis Statement (1-2 sentences)
- “Road Map” of later paragraphs

Body Paragraph #1: Topic #1

- Beginning Situation (before you begin to describe changes, start with “changing *from what?*” so the reader can recognize the later changes in the paragraph)
- Change(s), including description of the type of change (sudden, gradual, etc.)
 - Evidence of change (if possible, name a specific example that represents this change)
 - Analysis of the *process* of change (What *caused* the changes? What were the later *effects*? How did these changes propel history into the next chronological era?)
- Continuity (What characteristics of this topic exist throughout the entire time period?)
- Comparison to the larger Global Context (How do the examples of continuity and change in this paragraph compare to the larger world context during the same time period or during the next time period?)

Body Paragraph #2: Topic #2 (same characteristics as above)

Body Paragraph #3: Topic #3 (same characteristics as above)

Body Paragraph #4: Topic #4 (same characteristics as above)

Concluding Paragraph (recommended, but optional)

Restatement/summarization of Thesis

Here’s a table that graphically represents the same organizational content printed above.

Topical Structure			
Topic	Beginning/Early	Middle	End/Late
Paragraph #1			
Paragraph #2			
Paragraph #3			
Advantage(s) of Structure		Disadvantage(s)/Dangers of Structure	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodization of ‘Middle’ section in each paragraph can easily change from paragraph to paragraph. • Organizing each paragraph by topic encourages analytical cause-effect statements <i>within</i> each paragraph. (Why did A cause B?) • Easy to include continuities in each paragraph. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires students to know chronological order • Difficult to make cause-effect analysis <i>between</i> paragraphs. (Why did A in the last paragraph cause B in this paragraph?) 	

No matter which essay structure you choose, you must make sure to compensate for the likely disadvantages of that structure. For the purpose of this example, we’ll choose the Topical structured essay.

Step 4: Write the Thesis Paragraph

Using your Evidence notes from Step 2, here's a blank Thesis paragraph "template."

Background / Introduction (Optional)

Some people prefer to write a "warm up" sentence rather than starting immediately with their thesis.

Feel free to "set the context or background," but do NOT take more than one sentence to do so.

My Thesis (1-2 sentences)

Suggestion: Begin your thesis sentence with "While," "Although," "Despite," or "In spite of."

The rest of the Thesis Paragraph ("Road Map")

Now summarize the main points that you'll use to support or prove your thesis. The second part of the Thesis Paragraph should preview the topic sentences of your later paragraphs. By the time your reader finishes the Thesis Paragraph, s/he should know what your thesis is, and have an idea of what evidence you will use to prove it. How do you know what evidence you'll use to support your thesis? Look back at your notes on the last page. Those document characteristics that are shared by more than one document now become a "Road Map" previewing the topic sentences of your body paragraphs.

Main Point/Body Paragraph #1

Main Point/Body Paragraph #2

Main Point/Body Paragraph #3

Main Point/Body Paragraph #4 (as needed)
