



Writing Section Benchmarks

2014

Writing Prompts

The three writing prompts on which the samples were written are shown below. Please refer back to these prompts when reviewing the samples.

Prompt 1

Most city residents would like to have an efficient public transportation system and a good network of roads. However, it is expensive to have both. Which do you think is more important: efficient public transport or good roads that allow people to drive easily around the city? Give reasons to support your opinion.

Prompt 2

Some people believe that arts such as opera, ballet, and classical music should be supported financially by the government. Others believe that spending public money on the arts is a waste of resources. How do you feel? Give reasons and examples to support your opinion.

Prompt 3

In some countries, workers are required by law to retire at a certain age. However, some people argue that workers should be allowed to work for as long as they want to. Do you think there should be a mandatory retirement age? Give reasons for your answer.

Nowadays, in today's "modernized" world of American football and night clubs, people have begun giving arts such as opera, ballet, and classical music less importance. Some people consider that these forms of arts are only for those "Vanilla" preemptions persons who enjoy sitting for long hours seeing a fat lady sing to one of Mozart's myriad operas. Others consider arts such as ballet to be useless. Nevertheless, these people fail to recognize all the complexity and genius behind the arts. Setting an opera or ballet play requires more than a fat lady in a dress. It requires lights, scripts, customs, scenery, makeup and a many hours of hard work. Thus, in order to do it appropriately expenses must be made. Sometimes, however, a company might need financial aid, and it is here where the government should give a step forward. Soending public money on the arts is not a waste of time.

As a person who practices ballet, it really hurts me when people speak of it and of other forms of art with distaste. Creating an artistic masterpiece is just as hard as winning a football game as running a successful business. It requires determination and even physical aptitudes. For instance, an opera singer must train daily in order to keep the vocal cords healthy and even speak in another language, as operas tend to be in German or Italian. In the same manner, a ballet dancer must spend hours walking on tiptoes, flexibility and strength in order to do outstanding lifts. The entire "behind the scenes" work is in itself a masterpiece. In the same way that the government gives financial aid to businesses and spends on sports teams, it should provide aid on the arts, which are as difficult to handle as any other regular company.

In addition to being a challenge, the arts are what preserve a history of culture. Years of music and plays are encased in these forms of art. They are a way of educating people, of showing the worlds that can only be seen through the expressions of singers and dancers, who reflect the mirror of the soul. This however, is hard to achieve when nobody wants to lend a hand. If the government would spend more money helping people who create art, the result would be these fantastical worlds where one sees the impossible come into existence thanks to these actors. That is why its important for the government to spend on arts, to help people see its true meaning and rejoice in its greatness.

Scores and Commentary on Writing Sample 1

Rhetoric	Grammar/Syntax	Vocabulary
5	5	5

Rhetoric: 5

The essay is richly, fully, and complexly developed. The writer addresses points someone on the other side of his or her argument might make and then refutes them, making comparisons to other types of leisure activities like sports and offering personal examples. The connection between each idea and paragraph is smooth and includes transition phrases and topic sentences, such as, “In addition to being a challenge, the arts are what preserve a history of culture.” This essay is a clear example of a rhetoric score of 5.

Grammar/Syntax: 5

The writer is able to use and control a wide range of syntactic structures. Complex sentences like “As a person who practices ballet, it really hurts me when people speak of it and other forms of art with distaste” contain multiple accurately used embedded clauses. The morphological control is nearly always complete, making 5 an appropriate score for grammar/syntax.

Vocabulary: 5

The writer uses a broad range of vocabulary, including some idiomatic expressions like the association with opera and “seeing a fat lady sing,” and the expression “singers and dancers, who reflect the mirror of the soul.” This range of vocabulary is nearly always appropriately used, such as when the writer refers to “Mozart’s myriad operas” or the way ballet dancers walk on their tiptoes. This essay clearly deserves a score of 5 for vocabulary.

People who live in big cities often have problems with transportation. Usually these issues affect all kinds of people, but the ones who suffer the most are the people who depend on public transportation. Bad traffic during rush hour and bad roads are examples of problems those people have to face everyday. Sometimes even simple things like driving to work or dropping your kid off at school can turn into nightmares.

It is known that bad roads can make it very difficult to drive around town. They make the traffic go slower and sometimes they can even cause serious accidents. But the truth is that a bad network of roads isn't as serious as some other transportation related issues. Driving easily around the city isn't as important as having a good public transportation, for example.

One of the reasons that make a good public transportation so important is that it directly affects the people who can't afford to have their own vehicle. They really need buses and subways to get to work, to go to school, to go to grocery shop, to the doctor, or wherever else they need to go. These are people who need the support from the government to get on with their lives, and that includes being able to go from one end of the city to the other without having to sacrifice much to their own vehicle.

Another good reason is that public transportation is great for the environment. The better the public transport is, the less people will use their own private cars to get to places, and that means less pollution. The air in the city will be cleaner, and that benefits the whole population. It is proven that when good public transportation is available, people are less likely to go to work in their cars. Even if it is just to avoid traffic.

So, although at first a good network of roads may seem like a bigger issue, when we take a closer look, it is the quality of the public transportation that affects the most the lives of the people who live in the big cities. And though it may seem expensive to have that, it benefits so many people that it becomes a small price to pay.

Scores and Commentary on Writing Sample 2

Rhetoric	Grammar/Syntax	Vocabulary
5	4	4

Rhetoric: 5

This response is richly developed and clearly acknowledges the complexity of the prompt. The opening paragraph situates the context of the response naturally for the reader and the writer states a clear thesis in the second paragraph. The following paragraphs provide clear support for the writer's position and also touch on the opposing viewpoint. The topic is fully developed. Connection of ideas is smooth both within and across paragraphs. The writer does not rely on the use of mechanical transition markers to build cohesion but rather builds flow by smoothly presenting a logical development of ideas that are very easy for the reader to follow.

Grammar/Syntax: 4

The writer's generally strong control over grammar and syntax is exemplified in the first sentence of the third paragraph. The syntax is very well controlled in this sentence and the only error ("One of the reasons that make . . .") is a subject-verb mistake that a highly proficient user of English may make. The writer uses both simple and complex syntax and errors are few but occasionally distracting. The first sentence of the final paragraph is a good example. The writer attempts a very complex sentence structure and although it is largely accurate, the one error ("that affects the most the lives of the people") is distracting. Although the writer's control over syntax is generally good, there is still a sufficient quantity of distracting error to make a 4 the most appropriate score.

Vocabulary: 4

The vocabulary used within the response is very relevant to the prompt. However, there is relatively little low-frequency or idiomatic vocabulary used. The writer is typically able to make appropriate choices to express ideas clearly and without circumlocution. There are one or two examples of the writer omitting words that are quite distracting ("a good public transportation is important") and the occasional minor mistake that detract from the reader's impression of the response. Overall, these minor vocabulary mistakes, coupled with the relative absence of low-frequency or idiomatic vocabulary suggest that a 4 is the most appropriate score.

Many people are concerned about the age that they will retire after working for a long time. They feel that it is time to get some rest and spend their time doing things that they couldn't in the past. However, there is the opposite group of people who believe that work gives them energy and will to go on.

First of all, we hear everyday about the economical crisis in many countries and the unemployment which increases day by day. So it is obvious that if the workers do not come to retirement, the unemployed will not have the chance to find a job and the problem will get worse. Furthermore, there are people who argue that when you get old you can't be as effective as you were younger and this is significant for the company or the job you work for. The competition nowadays is hard so employees and employers need to do their best for services, production and more.

On the other hand, people who still work after the age that they should be retired feel energetic and willing to keep on working. They say that quit from work and retire is like quit at life so it makes them feel better and healthier. But they didn't answer to the question what about the other people who are still looking for a job and try to cover the basics like food, home or other necessary things. Undoubtly they have to think this issue more realistic and retire when the time comes.

All the people need to be ready to retire when the law and of course their age requires it. There are advantages to keep on working but there are many disadvantages in the society when we see old people working and young people stressed and dissapointed of not finding a job.

Scores and Commentary on Writing Sample 3

Rhetoric	Grammar/Syntax	Vocabulary
4	3	3

Rhetoric: 4

The writer articulates and organizes a number of points related to the topic, to some degree addressing the topic's complexity. These points are clear, cohesive and supported. However, the prompt's question is not addressed as directly as it could be, and the essay does not fully consider the complex reasons people may continue working beyond retirement age. Therefore, the most appropriate score for rhetoric is 4.

Grammar/Syntax: 3

The writer demonstrates some ability to use long sentences, and both simple and complex syntax is present. However, the writer demonstrates inconsistent morphological control, especially as the essay progresses. Errors such as "They say that quit from work and retire is like quit at life" do not necessarily detract from meaning or cause confusion but are nevertheless distracting.

Vocabulary: 3

The writer uses a range of vocabulary that is adequate for responding to the prompt, such as referring to people who work after a typical retirement age feeling "energetic and willing to keep on working." However, there is little low-frequency or idiomatic language used, and the vocabulary is sometimes inappropriately used, as in "Undoubtly they have to think this issue more realistic and retire when the time comes." The writer has sufficient lexical control to receive a score of 3 but does not demonstrate a very broad vocabulary.

It is undeniable that an efficient public transport system and a good network of roads altogether ensure that transportation to go smoothly and be able to satisfy all the needs! However, when it comes to practice, you'll never have that much. all you can do is to choose one of the two options mentioned above. As a matter of fact, a good network of roads seems preferable for the following reasons:

Firstly, road network always needs improving whether the government wants it or not. The upgradation is a must otherwise many consequences would come: traffic jam, people being late for work and work being delayed as a result. That could affect the economy as well as the society severely. Thus, it is the government's responsibility to maintain and improve the quality of the road a network in order to keep the transportation under control.

Secondly, it is very extravagant to spend such a lot of money on improving the public transport system comparing to the money used to upgrade the net work of roads, not to mention it may not draw much attention from the citizens who tend to use their own means of transport. And if the worst comes, (which means people pay no attention to the efforts of upgrading the public transport) ; it will be total failure when large sums of money spent on the upgradation finally ends up being useless!

Thirdly, or public transport system can't do without a good amount of roads. Speaking of which, the upgradation of road network should be done before the upgradation of public transport system takes place.

In conclusion, as more and more problems of environment are being discussed, there have been many efforts to encourage the citizens to use the public transport instead of theirs. However, raising people's awareness is still a long way to go. For the time being, it is well-advised to maintain and upgrade the road network. It should be the first priority Just when the government has enough potential should the improvement of public transport system be taken into consideration.

Scores and Commentary on Writing Sample 4

Rhetoric	Grammar/Syntax	Vocabulary
3	3	3

Rhetoric: 3

This essay is well organized and the development of the argument is easy for the reader to follow. The writer adopts a standard five paragraph format and consistently supports the clear opinion that is stated in the opening paragraph. The writer only addresses one side of the issue, however, which indicates that the topic is not developed in depth. The third supporting paragraph is brief and adds little to the topic development. The ideas within the response are generally well connected but the reliance on very mechanical transition markers at the start of each paragraph is not helpful for the reader.

Grammar/Syntax: 3

The writer demonstrates the ability to control complex syntax (see, for example, the last sentence of the second paragraph), but this control is not consistent. The syntax is typically quite ambitious in this response and although there are numerous minor errors, these do not cause confusion for the reader. Overall, despite the ambition shown by the writer the insufficient control over grammar and syntax make 3 the most appropriate score for grammar/syntax.

Vocabulary: 3

The response indicates that the writer has an adequate vocabulary to respond to the prompt. The repeated use of the nonword “upgradation” is distracting but other vocabulary misuses are not distracting (“otherwise many consequences would come”). The writer does use some low-frequency or idiomatic language successfully (“extravagant”; “draw attention”; “ends up in being useless”; “speaking of which”), but the insufficient consistent control over lexical resources within the essay make 3 the most appropriate score.

Nowadays, standards of living are in high level. As a result, people have to work more than before in order to have a normal life. As we know, humans with the help of medicines are used to live more than any time before so they work more too. These problem solved in some countries because workers have to be required at a certain age, but on others they are free to work as long as they want to

My opinion is that there should be a retirement age so that young people will have the chance to work and start their own life law from their parents home. In the countries that don't provide such a law, the problem is getting bigger day by day Companies don't required new workers because they prefer their already old experienced staff. As we can see in order to have some older people a good salary young ones they are out in streets asking for help

As far as I'm concerned, all countries must have a retire age so that graduated and young people with a good will will hit the workplace. In my opinion that is a loop for all of us and it have to remain the same. Secondly I think companies should get new staff and leave the old one in periods.

Last but not least, all people should have the chance to work because there are such a big economical and social problems

Scores and Commentary on Writing Sample 5

Rhetoric	Grammar/Syntax	Vocabulary
2	2	2

Rhetoric: 2

The writer is able to organize thoughts into paragraphs and use transition sentences to connect them, but ultimately the essay is underdeveloped. Essentially, only one point is made; that older workers should leave the work force to make room for younger workers. Because the topic development is clear but simple and repetitive, 2 is the most appropriate score.

Grammar/Syntax: 2

A few complex sentence structures are present, but with a limited amount of control. For instance, in the sentence “Companies don’t required new workers because they prefer their already old experienced staff,” the word “because” is used accurately, but “require” is conjugated incorrectly and there is also a word order problem in “their already old experienced staff.” A few complex structures are successful but there are frequent morphological errors—even in simple sentences. Overall, the errors do not cause confusion but are sufficiently serious for this essay to receive a 2 for grammar/syntax.

Vocabulary: 2

The vocabulary the writer uses is limited and simple. Phrases such as “humans with the help of medicines are used to live more than any time before” suggest the writer may not have the language resources required to address the prompt in a more sophisticated manner. In other sentences, such as “companies should get new staff and leave the old one in periods,” this lack of resources leads to confusion for the reader. Therefore, for vocabulary this essay received a 2.

good network: is a solution?

Nowadays, it seems that most city residents would like to have an efficient public transport system and a good network of roads. However, is difficult to have both because it is expensive.

Knowing the fact that efficient public transport is not very good for most cities, they must be replaced by new. But dont you ever think the reason of car accidents that have increasingly rappidly?

In my opinion I believe that good network on roads is more important than efficient public transport. And this because allow to people to drive more easy around the city and with safe.

Moreover, a good network on roads also provides good citizens with polite. Also the city will be safe without traffic jams. My viewpoint is that we all have to make this become possible because is for our good.

Dont you ever want a city that will be safe and more easy, without problems and delays? With a good network on roads we will be able to go on our jobs quicer than in the past. And as the time laps, citis become more and more bigger and the problems still increased. Lets help to make our lifes better. its for our own good.

I remain firm that efficient public transport is less important than a good network on roads. Dont forget that most people today take their car, and dont care about public transports. Dont you agree? I still believe in my viewpoint that it will help us in our daily time. if you are still think about it then have a though on the car accidents, and in people who losts their lifes.

Scores and Commentary on Writing Sample 6

Rhetoric	Grammar/Syntax	Vocabulary
2	1	2

Rhetoric: 2

The organization of this essay is quite easy to understand. The writer's viewpoint is stated clearly in the third paragraph and supported consistently throughout the response. The second paragraph, however is confusing for the reader and negatively affects the cohesion of the response. Organization can be said to be partially controlled, with the issues within the second paragraph detracting from the otherwise fairly clear development of the argument.

Grammar/Syntax: 1

The writer demonstrates consistently poor control over grammar and syntax. There are errors in almost every sentence and these errors can cause confusion for the reader ("If you are still think about it then have a though on the car accidents, and in people who losts their lives"). Although not all these errors within the response cause this level of confusion for the reader, the quantity of distracting error prevents this essay from bring scored above a 1 for grammar and syntax.

Vocabulary: 2

The response does not indicate that the writer is able to use a broad range of vocabulary, including idiomatic or low-frequency vocabulary. There is the occasional misuse of a word that causes confusion for the reader ("Moreover, a good network on roads also provides good citizens with polite."). The combination of a relatively limited range of vocabulary with the occasionally misused word make a 2 the appropriate rating for vocabulary.

Is it a vehicle of vice or virtue? As many things in life there is no easy answer.

Strong arguments exist in support of both sides which would be a terribly unwise to blindly support or adamantly repudiate such issue without standing the full impact.

Exhaustive research, thereby, should be carried out before we pass judgement.

First and foremost, advocates of spending public money on the arts deem it policy to embrace such process since they create a lot of different performance in public areas.

Superficial, though it may sound to some, leaving aside the all-too common apprehension about the potential dire effects that such issue implies the fear to give the money of the financial aforementioned wrong acts, even the most skeptical must admit that the arts are the response to the envelopment of ethnics. On due reflection it is reasonable to assert that it would be a grave error to adamantly repudiate such process overlooking thus the immeasurable benefits people gain such as those of education not to mention culture.

In all fairness, it would be lamentable to omit to mention that people take the chance to use the money of government in a wrong way.

To put it simply, they

What is the verdict on this? On all probability I feel that it cannot align myself completely with either side. It is a matter of degree: spending public money on the arts was borne to stimulation yet, I retain the right to cast

Scores and Commentary on Writing Sample 7

Rhetoric	Grammar/Syntax	Vocabulary
1	1	2

Rhetoric: 1

This essay is difficult to process for meaning. The opening sentences do little to clarify for the reader what the context of the response is. The response suffers from a lack of focus. It is difficult for the reader to follow the development of the argument because the sentences are hard to parse for meaning. These problems mean that the response cannot be awarded a score above 1 for rhetoric.

Grammar/Syntax: 1

The difficulty the reader has parsing the sentences for meaning makes it hard to judge the accuracy of the grammar and syntax in this response. This issue is typified in the sentence beginning, “in all fairness . . . ,” which is very confusing for the reader to understand. The level of confusion caused by many of the sentences means that the response should be awarded a score of 1 for grammar and syntax.

Vocabulary: 2

The writer uses a large amount of low-frequency vocabulary (e.g., “adamantly,” “superficial,” “apprehension,” “lamentable”) in the response. The use of these words suggests that the writer has a very broad vocabulary; however, much of the vocabulary is misused and only serves to confuse the reader and makes the response hard to follow. The writer’s issues with spelling and vocabulary misuse also create confusion for the reader (“adjudgement,” “ethnics”). Therefore, although the reader has attempted to demonstrate his or her lexical resources, the net result is confusion for the reader. The most appropriate score is a 2 for vocabulary.

The art is a waste of time or not?

In our century people have different ways to see the live, we have a lot of good and bad influency in our lives, some people are inclinate in the passive live, who live to go to the museaum, theathers operas, they rather listen classic music.

this kind of people has been educated, the way to think is diferent, they always are thinking in the future and if they have a problem, the'd prefer solve it fast and sophiticate.

However they are people so freedom, the point how they think the live is different, they like to go out to night club, have a lot of fun. they always are looking lot new friends, this kind of person are very sociable he likes the easy life, they don't have good supports to improve their options.

they are not well-educated, sometimes they fix their problem making iT bigger.

Overall they have different lives, opposed and we need people reasonable who best our generation and make good things with the ideologist. the goverment should support financially the art we have to improve our culture, we can make a good money, Nowaday people like to see asuntion we have to take advantage of this

the goverment should start creating new local to help this project.

We have to persist in teach the poeple to make a good culture, starting with childhood.

Scores and Commentary on Writing Sample 8

Rhetoric	Grammar/Syntax	Vocabulary
1	1	1

Rhetoric: 1

For the most part, this essay is not relevant to the topic; it is about how some people prefer classical art and music while others prefer to “have a lot of fun.” In the part of the essay that does turn to answering the prompt, topic development is limited. The writer does clearly state the opinion that the government should support art but doesn’t explore reasons other than the very simple response, “to improve our culture.” For these reasons, the essay was given a 1 for rhetoric.

Grammar/Syntax: 1

The sentences are sometimes long, but lack control, and contain multiple errors. A sentence such as, “However they are people so freedom, the point how they think the live is different . . .” causes considerable confusion for the reader due to the quantity and severity of the errors. These pervasive errors make 1 the most appropriate score for grammar/syntax.

Vocabulary: 1

The writer employs only limited vocabulary and words are often misused. The second sentence of the essay is an example: “We have a lot of good and bad influency in our lives, some people are inclinate in the passive live.” The word choices and incorrect usage of “influence” and “inclination” cause confusion for the reader. The quantity of error means this essay can only be awarded a score of 1 for vocabulary.