



GRADUATE RECORD EXAMINATIONS®

## **Practice General Test # 4**

Analytical Writing Sample Essays  
and Commentaries

Large Print (18 point) Edition



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## **The Graduate Record Examinations® Practice General Test #4**

### **Analytical Writing Sample Essays with Reader Commentaries**

The Analytical Writing portion of the GRE® General Test consists of two writing topics, an Issue topic and an Argument topic. This document contains the writing topics for Practice Test #4, the scoring guides for each section, and sample responses with commentaries for each topic.

Note: Sample responses are reproduced exactly as written, including misspellings, wrong choice of words, typographical and grammatical errors, etc., if any.

#### ***Analyze an Issue***

#### **Sample Issue Topic Directions**

You will be given a brief quotation that states or implies an issue of general interest and specific instructions on how to respond to that issue. Plan and compose a response in which you develop a position on the issue according to the specific instructions. A response to any other issue will receive a score of zero. Standard timing for an issue topic is 30 minutes.

Make sure that you respond to the specific instructions and support your position on the issue with reasons and examples drawn from such areas as your reading, experience, observations, and/or academic studies.

Trained GRE readers will read your response and evaluate its overall quality according to how well you do each of the following:

- Respond to the specific instructions on the issue
- Consider the complexities of the issue
- Organize, develop, and express your ideas
- Support your position with relevant reasons and/or examples
- Control the elements of standard written English

Before you begin writing, you may want to think for a few minutes about the issue and the instructions and then plan your response. Be sure to develop your position fully and organize it coherently, but leave time to reread what you have written and make any revisions you think are necessary.

## Sample Issue Topic:

Some people believe that corporations have a responsibility to promote the well-being of the societies and environments in which they operate. Others believe that the only responsibility of corporations, provided they operate within the law, is to make as much money as possible.

Write a response in which you discuss which view more closely aligns with your own position and explain your reasoning for the position you take. In developing and supporting your position, you should address both of the views presented.

## ***GRE® Scoring Guide: Analyze an Issue***

### **Score 6**

In addressing the specific task directions, a 6 response presents a cogent, well-articulated analysis of the issue and conveys meaning skillfully.

A typical response in this category exhibits the following characteristics:

1. It articulates a clear and insightful position on the issue in accordance with the assigned task.
2. It develops the position fully, with compelling reasons and/or persuasive examples.
3. It sustains a well-focused, well-organized analysis, connecting ideas logically.
4. It conveys ideas fluently and precisely, using effective vocabulary and sentence variety.
5. It demonstrates superior facility with the conventions of standard written English (i.e., grammar, usage, and mechanics) but may have minor errors.

## **Score 5**

In addressing the specific task directions, a 5 response presents a generally thoughtful, well-developed analysis of the issue and conveys meaning clearly.

A typical response in this category exhibits the following characteristics:

1. It presents a clear and well-considered position on the issue in accordance with the assigned task.
2. It develops the position with logically sound reasons and/or well-chosen examples.
3. It is focused and generally well organized, connecting ideas appropriately.
4. It conveys ideas clearly and well, using appropriate vocabulary and sentence variety.
5. It demonstrates facility with the conventions of standard written English but may have minor errors.

## **Score 4**

In addressing the specific task directions, a 4 response presents a competent analysis of the issue and conveys meaning with acceptable clarity.

A typical response in this category exhibits the following characteristics:

1. It presents a clear position on the issue in accordance with the assigned task.
2. It develops the position with relevant reasons and/or examples.
3. It is adequately focused and organized.
4. It demonstrates sufficient control of language to express ideas with acceptable clarity.
5. It generally demonstrates control of the conventions of standard written English but may have some errors.

### **Score 3**

A 3 response demonstrates some competence in addressing the specific task directions, in analyzing the issue, and in conveying meaning but is obviously flawed.

A typical response in this category exhibits ONE OR MORE of the following characteristics:

1. It is vague or limited in addressing the specific task directions and/or in presenting or developing a position on the issue.
2. It is weak in the use of relevant reasons or examples, or relies largely on unsupported claims.
3. It is limited in focus and/or organization.
4. It has problems in language and sentence structure that result in a lack of clarity.
5. It contains occasional major errors or frequent minor errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics that can interfere with meaning.



## **Score 2**

A 2 response largely disregards the specific task directions and/or demonstrates serious weaknesses in analytical writing.

A typical response in this category exhibits ONE OR MORE of the following characteristics:

1. It is unclear or seriously limited in addressing the specific task directions and/or in presenting or developing a position on the issue.
2. It provides few, if any, relevant reasons or examples in support of its claims.
3. It is poorly focused and/or poorly organized.
4. It has serious problems in language and sentence structure that frequently interfere with meaning.
5. It contains serious errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics that frequently obscure meaning.

## **Score 1**

A 1 response demonstrates fundamental deficiencies in analytical writing.

A typical response in this category exhibits ONE OR MORE of the following characteristics:

1. It provides little or no evidence of understanding the issue.
2. It provides little or no evidence of the ability to develop an organized response (e.g., is disorganized and/or extremely brief).
3. It has severe problems in language and sentence structure that persistently interfere with meaning.
4. It contains pervasive errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics that result in incoherence.

## **Score 0**

A 0 response is off topic (i.e., provides no evidence of an attempt to respond to the assigned topic), written in a foreign language, merely copies the topic, consists of only keystroke characters, or is illegible or nonverbal.

## **Sample Responses to the Issue Topic, with Reader Commentaries**

The following are sample responses and commentary on those responses, which explain how each response was scored. There are responses and scoring comments for essays with scores of 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1.

**Reminder:** Sample responses are reproduced exactly as written, including misspellings, wrong choice of words, typographical and grammatical errors, etc., if any.

**The following sample issue response received a score of 6:**

It is not uncommon for some to argue that, in the world in which we live, corporations have a responsibility to society and to the environment in which they operate. Proponents of this view would argue that major environmental catastrophes (e.g., the oil spill in the Gulf) are key examples of the damage that can be wrought when corporations are allowed to operate unchecked. Yet within that very statement lies a contradiction that undermines this kind of thinking--it is necessary for outside forces to check the behavior of corporations, because we do not expect corporations to behave in such a manner. In fact, the expectation is simply that corporations will follow the law, and in the course of doing so, engage in every possible tactic to their advantage in the pursuit of more and greater profit. To expect otherwise from corporations is to fail to understand their purpose and their very structure.

The corporation arose as a model of business in which capital could be raised through the contributions of stockholders; investors purchase shares in a company, and their money is then used as the operating capital for the company. Shareholders buy stock not because they are hoping to better make the world a better place or because they have a desire to improve the quality of life but because

they expect to see a return in their investment in this company. The company may itself have generally altruistic goals (perhaps it is a think tank that advises the government on how to improve relations with the Middle East, or perhaps it is a company built around finding alternative forms of energy), but the immediate expectation of the investor is that he himself will see dividends, or profits, from the investment he has made. This is even more true in the case of companies that are purely profit driven and which do not have goals that are particularly directed toward social improvement--a description that applies to the vast majority of corporations.

Is it a bad thing to have a corporation negatively affect the environment (and by extention, its inhabitants)? To pump noxious fumes into the atmosphere as a by-product of its manufacturing processes? Of course, and this is why agencies such as the EPA were established and why governments--federal, state, and local--are expected to monitor such companies to ensure that such practices fall within the boundaries of legal expectations. Any and all corporations should be expected to temper their pursuit of profit with the necessity of following those safeguards that have been legislated as protections. But the assumption that corporations have

an inherent obligation or responsibility to go above and beyond that to actively PROMOTE the environment and the well-being of society is absurd.

Engaging in practices to adhere to legal expectations to protect society and the environment is costly to corporations. If the very purpose of a corporation is to generate profits, and the obligation to adhere to safety expectations established by law cuts into those profits, then to expect corporations to embrace such practices beyond what is required is to presume that they willingly engage in an inherently self-destructive process: the unnecessary lowering of profits. This is antithetical to the very concept of the corporation. Treehuggers everywhere should be pleased that environmental protections exist, but to expect corporations to “make the world a better place” is to embrace altruism to the point that it becomes delusion.

This is not to say that we should reject efforts to hold corporations accountable. In fact, the opposite is true--we should be vigilant with the business world and maintain our expectations that corporations do not make their profits at the EXPENSE of the well-being of society. But that role must be fulfilled by a watchdog, not the corporation itself, and those expectations must be imposed UPON the corporations, not expected FROM them.

## **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 6:**

This response receives a 6 for developing an insightful position on the issue in accordance with the assigned task, skillfully weaving a position that takes into consideration both of the statements in the prompt. Beginning in the first paragraph, the writer rejects the idea that corporations themselves “have a responsibility to promote the well-being of the societies and environments in which they operate.” In the second paragraph, the writer offers compelling reasons for this rejection by discussing the purpose and structure of corporations. The writer then considers the role of government in promoting corporations’ social and environmental responsibility, developing the position fully. A cogent statement of the writer’s position appears at conclusion of the response: “we should be vigilant with the business world and maintain our expectations that corporations do not make their profits at the EXPENSE of the well-being of society. But that role must be fulfilled by a watchdog, not the corporation itself.” The response as a whole is logically organized, with each paragraph serving as a stepping stone in the development of the writer’s position. It also demonstrates the writer’s ability to convey ideas fluently and precisely, using effective vocabulary and sentence variety. This sentence demonstrates the level of language facility seen throughout the response: “If the very purpose of a corporation is to generate

profits, and the obligation to adhere to safety expectations established by law cuts into those profits, then to expect corporations to embrace such practices beyond what is required is to presume that they willingly engage in an inherently self-destructive process: the unnecessary lowering of profits.” Here the writer has skillfully maintained control of complex syntax and diction while making a logically compelling point. The sentence demonstrates the outstanding nature of this response.

**The following sample issue response received a score of 5:**

In order to survive, corporations must make money. Successful corporations try and make as much money as possible. Yet this incentive to make money does not mean that a corporation can be a detriment to the society in which it operates. Corporations have a duty and a responsibility to ensure the well being of the society in which they are a part.

Contributing to the well being of a society is actually beneficial to a corporation in many cases. One of these is making sure that workers are well taken care of. Absenteeism and neglect while on duty are a big problem for corporations, as is attracting the best workers, who hopefully will lower the risks caused by absenteeism and neglect.



One way that corporations can attract these workers is by offering them generous benefits. If, for example, an employer includes with employment a good health care plan, they will be able to attract better workers than one that does not, and that will aid the corporation greatly. Health care plans provided by employers mean that these people have at their disposal health coverage, which means that they have the care they need if they get sick. This also might encourage preventive care, something that has been shown to reduce the cost and risk of developing other major ailments.

Another area where corporations providing support for themselves and society is in the creation of human capital. Globalization and increased education means that employers need a better educated workforce more than ever. One way that employers can contribute to this is by sponsoring worker training programs, or paying for their employees to return to school. This creates a more educated workforce for employers, as well as may increase the loyalty of employees to an employer. An employee who received an education sponsored by an employer may be thankful for receiving that education, and may work harder for that employer. This creates a benefit for employers and employees.

The main reason that corporations have a duty to contribute to the well being of society is that they are a part of the society. Even though they have an economic desire to make a profit, corporations also should think long term about actions they take which could hurt their company. A good example of this is BP, after the recent oil spill in the gulf. Their desire to make a profit meant that they did not keep up on all of their safety regulations and standards, and the result of the then faulty equipment caused a massive spill. This cost them huge amounts of money to clean up, as well as the fines they had to pay for causing this. The biggest loss for BP however is that their brand name will be associated in the US and abroad as the company that caused this giant oil spill. As the spill was happening, many people boycotted the company, resulting in lost potential revenue. They may realize that as they lose business to people upset by the spill, that making sure a spill didn't happen in the first place was cheaper.

Another reason corporations have to ensure the well-being of a society is that by making a society better off, a company may have more consumers. This is especially true for corporations that sell goods for middle and upper class consumers. If a corporation tries to bring people up and increase the overall economic well being of society, they may find that more and more people have the ability to

afford their goods. This could generate huge new profits for this corporation, since their pool of potential consumers has gone up considerably. Concentrating on the long term here means that corporations can increase their pool of potential consumers.

By denying responsibility to a society, a corporation is only looking at the possible short term profits, not the potential long term ones. While in the short term it may work for a corporation to ignore their societal responsibility, it is advantageous in the long term for the entire corporation to make sure society is getting better. The potential for new markets, products, production processes and other beneficial factors that come from promoting well being is quite large. This is something that corporations should be ready and willing to take advantage of, and something that society should hold them accountable for.

### **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 5:**

This strong response receives a 5 for its thoughtful, well-developed analysis of the issue. In this case, the writer argues that corporations do indeed have a responsibility to promote the well-being of the societies and environments in which they operate, offering several reasons and well-chosen examples to explain why it is in the interests of corporations to fulfill these responsibilities. The writer

clearly follows the task directions by addressing the two views provided by the prompt, both explicitly in the opening paragraph and more subtly throughout the response. While the writer clearly signals at the beginning his or her alignment with the first position (“Corporations have a duty and a responsibility to ensure the well being of the society of which they are a part”), the paragraphs that follow in fact acknowledge the writer’s opening statement (“In order to survive, corporations must make money”). In areas such as employee health-care and education, as well as in relation to broader issues such as the environment and the general level of prosperity in society, the writer argues that corporations should strive to meet their social obligations because in the long term, it is economically advantageous to do so. The various reasons and examples offered are brought together to support a thoughtful position that implicitly suggests that the two views are not as mutually exclusive as they might first appear. The response also demonstrates considerable facility with language. There are some minor errors, but overall the writer’s control of language is strong, demonstrating sentence variety and appropriate use of vocabulary. The response lacks the superior fluency and precision of a 6, but nevertheless conveys meaning clearly and well. Discernibly stronger than the adequate level of analysis in a 4, the response has thoughtful, nuanced analysis of the issue that earns it a score of 5.

**The following sample issue response received a score of 4:**

While some people may believe that corporations have a responsibility to protect society, others believe that the only purpose of a corporation is to make money. I agree that making profits is important. In the grand scheme of things, though, all companies have a responsibility to watch out for their customers. Their customers are how they make their money. If they're not watching out for their customers, they obviously will see a drop in their profits.

Consider light bulbs. This is an invention that has all kinds of potential for serious accidents. It is basically just a glass globe with electricity running through it! If a bulb gets too hot, it could potentially start a fire. Similarly, if someone removed the glass from around the tungsten wire, you'd basically have an exposed electrical wire that could hurt anyone who touched it. Makers of light bulbs know and understand all these dangers. They want consumers to purchase their products, so the first and smartest way to make that happen is to ensure that the products are safe and thus more attractive to the customer base. If everyone who used light bulbs was afraid of getting zapped profits would obviously go down and light bulbs would not be a very profitable enterprise.

This same thinking applies to all major products. The automobile is one of the most dangerous tools man uses. Tens of thousands of automobile drivers die every year in accidents. Insuring that the vehicles contain designs and parts that promote customer safety is a main focus of car manufacturers. Certain parts of cars were built with promoting driver's well-being in mind. For instance, air bags, anti-lock braking systems, online crash reporting. These features are considered standard now, and they were all developed to increase the safety of consumers. These features were not cheap to develop, but car manufacturers improved their profits anyway because they developed products with public safety in mind, which is what customers expect. If this symbiosis relationship wasn't true, then we would still have cars without airbags or even seatbelts. Worrying about the safety and actually improving it for customers is not just a basic responsibility of corporations, but it drives their profits, too.

In conclusion, it's pretty clear that a corporation's desire to make more profits is in line with a corporation's responsibility to consumers. Increasing the focus on consumers, worrying about taking care of them and the environment, can only lead to bigger profits and success for corporations in the long run.

## **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 4:**

This adequate response follows the task directions and presents a clear position on the issue. It supports and develops its position competently, using relevant examples. In accordance with the assigned task, the response addresses both of the competing positions. Specifically, its position and the examples it develops argue that businesses can both care about profits and ethical responsibility through the ways they develop products. The development of examples and ideas, while adequate, is not as thoughtful or compelling as would be needed to earn higher scores. For example, both of the examples the response uses are about product safety; the discussion of automobile design does not advance the position much more than the prior discussion of light bulb production. Language control in the response is also competent. It demonstrates sufficient control of the conventions of standard written English, and its main points are made with acceptable clarity. The response features a few grammatical and mechanical errors (e.g., “Certain parts of of cars...” and “symbiosis relationship”) and some awkward sentences. However, for the 4 range, GRE raters allow for minor errors in responses like this one that holistically demonstrate sufficient clarity and control. Overall, then, this response demonstrates adequate development and control of language, making the score of 4 appropriate.

**The following sample issue response received a score of 3:**

Corporations can be viewed as both beneficial and bad. This statement addresses both views that many people have about corporations. Views come from personal experiences and is the reason why some people like corporations and why some people do not.

Half of this argument deals with people that like the idea of corporations. Some people believe that corporations help stimulate societies and promote the well being of society. These people are ones that have never encountered a corrupt corporation. Just like in any other aspects of life, people can get images of something as being good if they only brush the outside. It isn't until they are being faced with a problem within a particular corporation where they either work for them or have just dealt with them. Also, people that are benefited from corporations are obviously going to like the idea of an corporation.

The other side of this argument is that many people believe corporations are just money hungry. This can be seen in many corporations throughout America. Many small business owners will side with this argument. The problem lies that this is corporate America and the little businesses are being taking over by larger



corporations. As Mark Twain once said, "The vast amount of money is only in a couple of hands". This statement still lies true today. In addition, corporations are large and with that being said they lead to more lines of corruption. In small businesses, the owners can oversee their store entirely. Can these corporation owners really oversee everything that is going on? Ask any employee at a corporate office if they believe their workplace is being ran how they think the corporation would want it. One is likely to find the answer that it is not.

Just like any other issue there are two sides to the story. The problem with this issue is that most will agree that corporations are only there to make money. They don't care about the people that are helping them make money. They only care at the end of the day how much money they made.

### **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 3:**

This response receives a score of 3 primarily because it is limited in focus. Rather than addressing the conflicting views of corporate responsibility given in the prompt, the response instead incorrectly casts the two positions as “people that like the idea of corporations” and people who “believe corporations are just money hungry.” The writer proceeds to develop an explanation of these two positions,

citing the various qualities that lead each group of people to their beliefs, but the response concludes by declaring that “there are two sides to the story” without adopting any position of its own. This highlights another limitation of the response, the fact that it does not completely address the specific task directions. Although the response does discuss the two opposing positions, it never discusses which view more closely aligns with the writer’s own. The response does contain adequate organization, and the writing demonstrates a sufficient control of language. Sentences such as “Just like in any other aspects of life, people can get images of something as being good if they only brush the outside,” are typical of the writing in this response and, despite the presence of some errors, demonstrate a sufficient control of the conventions of standard written English. However, even though the response demonstrates some qualities of a 4, its problems with focus and its failure to develop a clear position on the issue in accordance with the assigned task mean that it merits a score of 3.

**The following sample issue response received a score of 2:**

I think corporations have a responsibility to not only follow the law but also work with the societies and environments they are in. Our societies and environments in this age are affected by corporations' operations. An example of this is BP's accident

in the Gulf of Mexico -- they might have been following the law and regulations, but once an accident happens, our societies and environments are affected. Many fishermen and businesses around the area have been affected by the accident. Now BP faces so many liabilities and needs to pay money. As a result, they are losing more than they made in the past.

It is also important that corporations make as much as money possible. If they do well, there might be more employment opportunities for people and more taxes for the city, states and federal which help our country's economy better.

However, there are always choices that corporations can take and they can make money by promoting the well-being of the societies and environments. It might cost them more but it will also help to save their expenses.

### **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 2:**

This seriously flawed response attempts to address the task directions by considering both of the views presented in the prompt. The first paragraph seems to embrace the first view given in the prompt when it asserts that “corporations have a responsibility to . . . work with the societies and environments

they are in.” The writer uses the example of the BP oil spill in Gulf of Mexico to demonstrate that “our societies and environments in this age are affected by corporations’ operations,” but, apart from restating these same claims, the paragraph provides no real support for this position. Instead, the writer moves on to a discussion of the financial implications of the oil spill for BP. The second paragraph then makes an abrupt transition to a discussion of the prompt’s second view, and again seems to embrace this position when it claims that “it is also important that corporations makes as much as money as possible.” This position is supported with a single relevant but undeveloped reason. Although the writer attempts to reconcile the two positions in the last paragraph by arguing that “there are always choices that corporations can take and they can make money by promoting the well-being of the societies and environments,” the response provides no support for this position beyond its unsupported and contradictory claim that “it might cost them more but it will also help to save their expenses.” Overall, then, this response provides few examples in support of its claims. The response’s poor focus and its very limited support, then, warrant a score of 2.

**The following sample issue response received a score of 1:**

It is certainly true that some people believe that corporations have a responsibility to promote the well being of societies and environments. On the other hand, some other people argue that the only responsibility of corporations, provided they operate within the law, is to make as much money as possible. It is easy to see why it would be difficult for some people to decide between these two positions.

The responsibility of all citizens of a society, including corporate citizens, is ultimately to further the well being of the society as a whole. It takes little more than examining the recent United States financial crisis to see the ill effects suffered by society at large when corporations focus on maximizing profits.

**Comments on sample essay receiving score of 1:**

This response earns a score of 1 because it provides little evidence of the ability to develop an organized response. The first paragraph begins with a nearly word-for-word restatement of the prompt, which increases the length of the response but does not demonstrate the ability to develop a position on the issue in relation to the specific task instructions. The final sentence in the first paragraph

is analytically empty in that it could be applied to any prompt that asks writers to discuss two competing positions. The writer does nothing to relate that sentence to this specific prompt. The second paragraph, then, is all that the writer has provided in terms of original analysis of the issue. Although it does demonstrate understanding of the issue, it fits the “extremely brief” description from the Scoring Guide description of a 1. Because of the extreme brevity of its analysis, then, this response merits a score of 1.

## *Analyze an Argument*

### **Sample Argument Topic Directions**

You will be given a short passage that presents an argument, and specific instructions on how to respond to that passage. Plan and compose a response in which you analyze the passage according to the specific instructions. A response to any other argument will receive a score of zero. Standard timing for an argument topic is 30 minutes.

**Note that you are NOT being asked to present your own views on the subject.** Make sure that you respond to the specific instructions and support your analysis with relevant reasons and/or examples.

Trained GRE readers will evaluate your response for its overall quality based on how well you do each of the following:

- Respond to the specific task instructions
- Identify and analyze features of the argument relevant to the assigned task
- Organize, develop, and express your ideas

- Support your analysis with relevant reasons and/or examples
- Control the elements of standard written English

Before you begin writing, you may want to think for a few minutes about the argument passage and the specific task instructions and then plan your response. Be sure to develop your position fully and organize it coherently, but leave time to reread what you have written and make any revisions you think are necessary.



### **Sample Argument Topic:**

The argument to be analyzed is as follows:

The following appeared in a memorandum from the owner of Movies Galore, a chain of video rental stores.

"In order to reverse the recent decline in our profits, we must reduce operating expenses at Movies Galore's ten video rental stores. Since we are famous for our special bargains, raising our rental prices is not a viable way to improve profits. Last month our store in downtown Marston significantly decreased its operating expenses by closing at 6:00 P.M. rather than 9:00 P.M. and by reducing its stock by eliminating all movies released more than five years ago. Therefore, in order to increase profits without jeopardizing our reputation for offering great movies at low prices, we recommend implementing similar changes in our other nine Movies Galore stores."

Write a response in which you discuss what questions would need to be answered in order to decide whether implementing the recommendation is likely to have the predicted result and explain how the answers to those questions would help to evaluate the recommendation.

## ***GRE® Scoring Guide: Analyze an Argument***

### **Score 6**

In addressing the specific task directions, a 6 response presents a cogent, well-articulated examination of the argument and conveys meaning skillfully.

A typical response in this category exhibits the following characteristics:

1. It clearly identifies aspects of the argument relevant to the assigned task and examines them insightfully.
2. It develops ideas cogently, organizes them logically, and connects them with clear transitions.
3. It provides compelling and thorough support for its main points.
4. It conveys ideas fluently and precisely, using effective vocabulary and sentence variety.
5. It demonstrates superior facility with the conventions of standard written English (i.e., grammar, usage, and mechanics) but may have minor errors.

## **Score 5**

In addressing the specific task directions, a 5 response presents a generally thoughtful, well-developed examination of the argument and conveys meaning clearly.

A typical response in this category exhibits the following characteristics:

1. It clearly identifies aspects of the argument relevant to the assigned task and examines them in a generally perceptive way.
2. It develops ideas clearly, organizes them logically, and connects them with appropriate transitions.
3. It offers generally thoughtful and thorough support for its main points.
4. It conveys ideas clearly and well, using appropriate vocabulary and sentence variety.
5. It demonstrates facility with the conventions of standard written English but may have minor errors.

## **Score 4**

In addressing the specific task directions, a 4 response presents a competent examination of the argument and conveys meaning with acceptable clarity.

A typical response in this category exhibits the following characteristics:

1. It identifies and examines aspects of the argument relevant to the assigned task but may also discuss some extraneous points.
2. It develops and organizes ideas satisfactorily but may not connect them with transitions.
3. It supports its main points adequately but may be uneven in its support.
4. It demonstrates sufficient control of language to convey ideas with acceptable clarity.
5. It generally demonstrates control of the conventions of standard written English but may have some errors.

### **Score 3**

A 3 response demonstrates some competence in addressing the specific task directions, in examining the argument, and in conveying meaning but is obviously flawed.

A typical response in this category exhibits ONE OR MORE of the following characteristics:

1. It does not identify or examine most of the aspects of the argument relevant to the assigned task, although some relevant examination of the argument is present.
2. It mainly discusses tangential or irrelevant matters, or reasons poorly.
3. It is limited in the logical development and organization of ideas.
4. It offers support of little relevance and value for its main points.
5. It has problems in language and sentence structure that result in a lack of clarity.
6. It contains occasional major errors or frequent minor errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics that can interfere with meaning.

## **Score 2**

A 2 response largely disregards the specific task directions and/or demonstrates serious weaknesses in analytical writing.

A typical response in this category exhibits ONE OR MORE of the following characteristics:

1. It does not present an examination based on logical analysis but may instead present the writer's own views on the subject.
2. It does not follow the directions for the assigned task.
3. It does not develop ideas, or is poorly organized and illogical.
4. It provides little, if any, relevant or reasonable support for its main points.
5. It has serious problems in language and sentence structure that frequently interfere with meaning.
6. It contains serious errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics that frequently obscure meaning.

## **Score 1**

A 1 response demonstrates fundamental deficiencies in analytical writing.

A typical response in this category exhibits ONE OR MORE of the following characteristics:

1. It provides little or no evidence of understanding the argument.
2. It provides little evidence of the ability to develop an organized response (e.g., is disorganized and/or extremely brief).
3. It has severe problems in language and sentence structure that persistently interfere with meaning.
4. It contains pervasive errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics that result in incoherence.

## **Score 0**

A 0 response is off topic, written in a foreign language, merely copies the topic, consists of only keystroke characters, or is illegible or nonverbal.

## **Sample Responses to the Argument Topic, with Reader Commentaries:**

The following are sample responses and commentary on those responses, which explain how each response was scored. There are responses and scoring comments for essays with scores of 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1.

**Reminder:** Sample responses are reproduced exactly as written, including misspellings, wrong choice of words, typographical and grammatical errors, etc., if any.



**The following sample argument response received a score of 6:**

One question which needs to be addressed before implementing the recommendation is whether there are not other ways to improve profits besides cutting operating expenses. Without proof, the author decides, first, that there are only two viable options for increasing the profits of Movies Galore: raising rental prices, and cutting costs. He rules out the first course, and hence claims the second option must be chosen. But it seems there may be alternative methods of increasing profits, such as initiating advertising campaigns or closing unprofitable Movies Galore locations.

Even if it is granted that there are only two options for increasing profitability—cutting costs, and raising rental prices—one might wonder why raising rental prices is so unthinkable. The author implies that because Movies Galore is famous for special bargains, raising the rental prices would eliminate this competitive advantage and decrease profitability. However, in making this conclusion, he makes several assumptions without considering questions that need to be addressed. First, he assumes that there is no room to raise current prices and yet maintain lower prices than competitors. One would need to ask if prices could be increased slightly, while keeping them cheap. Even if there is no room for such a strategy, the author assumes that Movies Galore's reputation for bargain

pricing would evaporate if they increased their prices slightly. Perhaps such a reputation would be widespread enough to persist despite a slight increase in prices. And thirdly, even if the reputation for bargains would be eliminated by an increase in prices, the author assumes that Movies Galore cannot change course and be successful in some other way. Perhaps it could instead become known as the store with the friendliest employees. Perhaps it already is, and the author is wrong to believe that a causal relationship between bargain prices and success exists, when the real cause of Movies Galore's good reputation is entirely independent of its prices. The author needs to answer these questions to convince us that profits are caused by bargains, and not by the other factors that may be involved.

Another question that needs to be raised is whether or not the downtown Marston store is truly analogous to the other nine Movies Galore stores. The author seems to assume that because the cost-cutting measures worked at the Marston location, it will work at the others, but this is far from clear. Perhaps the patrons of the other Movies Galore locations would resent such changes in the hours and stock of their local stores.

Perhaps the most important question that needs to be asked is whether the Marston location's changes truly increased profitability. The author writes that the Marston store decreased operating expenses by closing earlier and cutting its stock, but he makes no mention of increased profitability. It is quite possible that the Marston location's profits decreased as a result of their cost cutting, and this is a question that needs to be addressed. The author then jumps to the conclusion that taking similar measures would increase profitability at other locations, though such a connection has not even been established at the Marston store.

Even if the cost-cutting measures increased profitability at the Marston store last month (and a causal relationship, though presumably assumed, is still far from evident), there is no guarantee that such measures would continue to increase profitability over time. One would need to ask: Why not observe how the Marston location's action affect profitability over several months, before implementing such sweeping changes at every store? A single month is a very short time span, and the habits of customers may change slowly. As word gets around that the Marston store has cut their hours and their selection, they may in fact jeopardize their reputation for offering "great movies at low prices." After all, the name of the franchise is Movies Galore, and by drastically reducing

the available selection, they may alienate their customer base. If, as mentioned above, Movies Galore is famous for more than its great bargains—if customers prefer Movies Galore because of its selections, as well—then such a move may drastically reduce profits over time. It seems extremely rash to implement such a new and relatively untried strategy at every Movies Galore location, before the effects can be fully observed and interpreted.

### **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 6:**

This outstanding response clearly addresses the specific task directions and presents a cogent, insightful analysis by discussing specific questions that need to be addressed in order to analyze the argument presented. It is worth noting that although the directions ask for questions, it is not necessary that these be phrased in question form. The response articulately discusses the information needed to evaluate whether the recommendation is likely to have the predicted result and demonstrates how this information would help to evaluate the recommendation. There are many examples of ways in which the writer addresses questions without putting them in question form (e.g., “he assumes that there is no room to raise current prices and yet maintain lower prices than competitors. One would need to ask ....” or “it seems there may be alternative methods of increasing profit”). Throughout this response, the writer

provides the cogent development typical of a 6 response. For example, the discussion of Movies Galore's reputation in paragraph 2 gets at a number of flaws in the argument's reasoning, making nuanced points (e.g., "Perhaps it could instead become known as the store with the friendliest employees. Perhaps it already is...") that create a compelling case for the writer's objections. Transitions are natural, and the paragraphs build on one another, succinctly and completely developing the writer's points. Because of its compelling and insightful development and fluent and precise language, this response fits all of the bullet points for a score of 6.

**The following sample argument response received a score of 5:**

Management's prediction that declining profits could be reversed by reducing operating hours and reducing stock seems to be rash since there is little evidence that proper research has been conducted. It may be true that profits could be restored by cutting operating costs, but management needs to ask whether making these changes would have a negative impact on its best sources of revenue.

The management states that the downtown Marston store "significantly decreased its operating expenses by closing at 6:00pm rather than 9:00pm." It is reasonable to think that closing

at 6:00pm rather than 9:00pm would decrease operating expenses, but the business is concerned with renting movies and these may be the busiest and most profitable hours of operation. Could it be that most people renting movies have normal working hours and have leisure time at night and to fill that time they turn to renting movies? If management researches its daily rental history, it may discover that its peak rental hours are between 6:00pm and 9:00pm. If this is the case, the store could lose significant income or even go out of business altogether. If management wants to reverse a decline in profits by cutting hours of operation and thereby reducing expenses, it would be advantageous to determine through research which block of time during the day is the least profitable and then cut those hours of operation. For instance, if it is found that profits are lowest during the morning hours or around noon, it would be better to close the store during those hours rather than during the hours that bring in the greatest profits.

The management then states that operating expenses will also be cut "by eliminating all movies released ore than five years ago." Again, more research is needed in order to determine if this would indeed help reverse the decline in profits that Movies Galore is experiencing. Is it possible that the success of a movie rental business is based on its ability to provide customers with a wide

array of movie selections, both new and old? It could be dangerous for this business to eliminate its stock of older movies without first determining the percentages of income that come from each product. Management should research its history of movie rentals in order to determine if a significant percentage of its profits come from the rental of older movies. Even if little profit does come from older movies, it may still be unwise to eliminate the stock of older movies. If Movies Galore maintains a variety of movies, a person searching for a current movie may decide to rent an older movie as well. This may be especially relevant in the case of a new movie that is a sequel to an older movie or part of a trilogy. Reducing movie variety may also damage the reputation of the stores. The management states that Movie Galore already has a "reputation for offering great movies." If movie variety is suddenly reduced, the stores may gain a negative reputation.

Overall, the management makes a prediction that is untrustworthy and potentially damaging. More research should be conducted to see if indeed such changes to cut operation costs will be effective, and if not, what should be done instead. If the proper investigation is implemented by the management, Movies Galore stores may reverse the recent decline of profits.

## **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 5:**

This strong response presents a generally thoughtful and well-developed analysis of the argument, and it follows the specific task directions clearly. The response approaches the task by asking questions which seek to understand whether the management of Movies Galore truly understands where its greatest profits are generated. It first questions whether closing the stores between 6:00 and 9:00 pm would be optimal since that is when people with “normal working hours” might have the leisure to rent movies, and, then, it questions whether eliminating movies released more than five years ago would be prudent since it is possible that profits rely on carrying “a wide array of movie selections, both new and old.” In both cases, the writer indicates the specific kinds of information that management would need to gather (e.g., “If management researches its daily rental history, it may discover that its peak rental hours are between 6:00pm and 9:00pm”) in order to determine whether its prediction is valid. Likewise, in both cases, the writer also analyzes the ways that this specific information would impact the predicted result (e.g., “If this is the case, people may stop coming to the store if they cannot come at other times during the day, and the store could lose significant income or even go out of business altogether.”) In general, then, development of the points the writer makes is thorough, but it is not as compelling as



that required for a 6. Also, the response, on the whole, demonstrates facility with written English; however, it lacks the fluency necessary to merit a score of 6. In general, writing skills, in spite of a few spelling errors and some repetitious sentence structuring (several sentences in both the second and third paragraphs depend upon an “if...then” construction) are strong, as evidenced by the following characteristic sentence: “It is reasonable to think that closing at 6:00pm rather than 9:00pm would decrease operating expenses, but the business is concerned with renting movies and these may be the busiest and most profitable hours of operation.” In terms of writing skill and analysis, then, this response earns a score of 5.

**The following sample argument response received a score of 4:**

The owner of Movies Galore is proposing a reduction in operating expenses in all of its chain stores. This reduction would consist of closing the stores 3 hours early and reducing its stock to include movies released only within the last 5 years. To determine if this proposition would be effective in increasing profits across the chain, several pieces of additional information would be needed.

First, it is necessary to ask if the Marston store is similar to the other Movies Galore stores. If this is not the case, the proposition

might have quite the opposite of the intended effect. The performance of the other stores would be a critical piece to this proposition since what works for one store, may not work for another.

Second, what effect did the reduction in operating expenses had on store profits in Marston? Because the declines in profit are termed to be "recent" and that the reduction of operating expenses happened within the last month, this is unclear. It is possible that only a brief period of low profits, consistent with variability in the market, spurred the reduction and this actually caused a greater decrease in profits. It is also possible that no improvements have been seen in profits since the reduction, rendering it ineffective. Data regarding profits from several months before and several months after the reduction in operating expenses would be necessary to determine if this reduction was at all helpful.

Finally, to what degree did each of the two changes made, closing early and getting rid of older movies, affect profits? To determine if such a change would be helpful, it is important to understand how each variable contributed to the end result, assuming that it was effective. Perhaps closing early resulted in such a decline in the operating costs as employees did not have to be paid, that the reduction in their stock was unnecessary. It could

be the the stock reduction actually decreased profits but this was masked by the increased profits caused by closing early. A more in depth analysis of the variables involved is necessary.

To accept such an extreme change in the practices of these stores, the preceeding recommendations should be followed. Specifically, the necessity of the reduction in other stores should be determined, data regarding the effectiveness of the reduction in operating expenses in the Marston store should be analyzed, and an analysis of the components of this reduction should be completed.

#### **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 4:**

This adequate response presents a competent examination of the argument and conveys meaning with acceptable clarity. In accordance with the task directions, the response raises appropriate questions that could help to evaluate the recommendation and its predicted result. Unlike the thoughtful development of a 5-level response, however, this response develops its ideas (i.e., answers to the questions it raises) unevenly, sometimes under developing key claims. For example, the relatively brief second paragraph supports the assertion that the downtown Marston store may not be comparable to the chain's other stores, but does so with minimal reasoning. Other body paragraphs more satisfactorily develop

questions about the timing of the recommendation and the profits that have actually been generated, while the conclusion merely recapitulates the assertions made earlier. A basic organizational structure, aided by the use of simple transitions between paragraphs and sufficient sentence variety within paragraphs, are other qualities of this response that underscore its adequacy. The language control is also adequate, demonstrating control, but not facility, with the conventions of standard written English. There are some minor grammatical errors and typos (e.g., there is a tense error in paragraph 3: "what effect did the reduction in operating expenses had on store profits in Marston?"; there is also vague diction in the same paragraph: "Because the declines in profit are termed to be 'recent' and that the reduction of operating expenses happened within the last month, this is unclear"), but the response manages to convey ideas with acceptable clarity overall. Because of its adequate analytical development and language control, this response earns a score of 4.

**The following sample argument response received a score of 3:**

It is imperative that "Movies Galore" must find a way to reduce operating expenses without jeopardizing its popularity with the customer. The option of reducing operating hours and reducing its

stock of available movies is a good start, however these two ideas need some revising in order for them to be successful in turning the company's profits around.

The reduction of hours needs to be reversed. Instead of closing earlier they should open later. People go to the video store to rent movies more frequently in the evening hours than in the morning. In the morning is when most customers return movies. The adjustment in hours can be structured so that the store opens later in the morning, and customers can simply return the movies in a drop box, allowing the store to remain open later in the evening for people who want to rent movies.

Reducing the stock by "eliminating all movies released more than five years ago" is a good way to reduce costs, but again it may hurt business. Unlike food items don't go bad after a certain amount of time. In some cases it is quite the opposite, they become classics. It would be bad business to assume that people will not want to rent movies over five years old, and "Movies Galore" might actually lose customers if they do so. Instead of eliminating an entire group of movies of a certain age, spread the reduction of stock throughout the entire store, making it a more subtle reduction to the consumer, but an effective cost-saver to the store.

The basic ideas of cutting stock and reducing operating hours do indicate saving money, however only if it is done correctly with both the business and the consumer in mind. It is obvious that "Movies Galore" has the consumer in mind because of its refusal to jeopardize their reputation "for offering great movies at a low price." So they need to consider exactly how their proposals are going to impact the consumer and whether or not they will actually lose business by putting these policies in place.

If the management at "Movies Galore" uses good business sense then there is no reason that their declining profits cannot be turned around, with little to no affect on the consumer.

### **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 3:**

While this response conveys ideas with acceptable clarity, despite an occasional error, it earns a score in the lower half because it mainly discusses tangential matters. The introductory paragraph, for example, suggests that instead of presenting an examination of the prompt's logic, the response will offer business advice to turn "the company's profits around." And that is what paragraphs two and four do: they avoid relevant analysis and instead engage in analyzing tangential matters and generally agreeing with the prompt. Paragraph two, for example, implicitly agrees with the

reduction in hours but suggests that a better business tactic would be to switch the early closing for a later closing and later opening. Paragraph four agrees with the overall recommendation and concludes that Movies Galore is generally going in the right business direction. What relevant analysis is present occurs in paragraph three, which questions the wisdom of reducing the stock of older movies since this might hurt rather than help profitability. So, although the response exhibits competent control of the conventions of standard written English, it does not manage to exhibit adequate development of relevant analysis. The fact that its relevant analysis is greatly outweighed by tangential material and business advice indicates that the response is limited in addressing the specific task directions. Thus, it merits a score of 3.

**The following sample argument response received a score of 2:**

In order to reverse the decrease or decline in the profits it is very necessary to take some steps which are beneficial to both the customer and the seller. Thus to increase the profits, offering movies at low prices can be one of the ways. This will not only increase the purchasing ability of the customers but also bring about an increase in the sales and the profits made by the company. Raising the rental prices of the videos would not be a better option because this will not lead to an increase in the profits made by the

company. If the customers will get videos in lower price in comparsion to the rent, they will prefer to purchase more videos then taking them on the rent.

The increase in the profits can also be brought about by giving various exciting offers at different occassions, for example- buy three and get one free video at the time of Christmas , New Year etc can attract more and more customers towards the stores and also bring about an increase in the profits earned by the stores.

Increase in the video sales can also be brought about by offering several discount schemes when the hit and great movies are being released. Thus, in order to increase the profits without jeopardizing the reputation of the stores , it is recommended to implement the similar changes as mentioned above in all the other nine Movies Galore stores.

### **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 2:**

This response clearly fits the second bulleted description of a 2 in the scoring guide. It does not follow the directions of the assigned task. Instead of discussing questions that need to be addressed in order to determine if the recommendation is likely to have the predicted result, the writer merely posits potential strategies to



increase profits. The response also develops ideas poorly and contains serious errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics, such as in this sentence: “If the customers will get videos in lower price in comparsion to the rent, they will prefer to purchase more videos then taking them on the rent.” However, it is the response’s overall disregard of the specific task directions that earns it a score of 2.

**The following sample argument response received a score of 1:**

Yes reducing the price of the movies would attract more coustmers.No one will be ready to purchase a movie for a high price rather than that they could see the movie in a theater.Watching a movie in the theater would be lesser than renting the movie.

It is stated that making special bargains and increasing the rental prices will not result in yeilding any profits.

They had to shut down their store at 6:00pm instead of 9:00pm

**Comments on sample essay receiving score of 1:**

This response is fundamentally deficient. Although the response arguably offers some evidence that the writer understands the basic subject matter of the argument, it provides little evidence

of understanding the argument made in the prompt. The “Yes” that begins the first sentence makes it seem as if the writer is responding to a claim made in the prompt, but the fact that the remainder of the sentence makes a claim that never appears in the prompt (i.e. “reducing the price of the movies would attract more customers”) suggests, at best, a very limited understanding of the argument. Although the brief opening paragraph is somewhat relevant to the argument’s assertion that “raising our rental prices is not a viable way to improve profits”, it is not sufficient to demonstrate either that the writer understands the argument or that the writer is able to develop an organized response. The second paragraph consists almost entirely of verbatim or poorly paraphrased material from the prompt, and, as such, provides no additional evidence either that the writer understands the argument or that the writer has the ability to develop an organized response. Thus, despite its relatively clear use of language, this response demonstrates fundamental deficiencies in analytical writing that warrant a score of 1.

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