

**Question 3**

**Suggested time—40 minutes.**

(This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

Colin Powell, a four-star general and former United States secretary of state, wrote in his 1995 autobiography: “[W]e do not have the luxury of collecting information indefinitely. At some point, before we can have every possible fact in hand, we have to decide. The key is not to make quick decisions, but to make timely decisions.”

Write an essay that argues your position on the extent to which Powell’s claim about making decisions is valid.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
- Provide evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

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**Begin your response to this question at the top of a new page in the separate Free Response booklet  
and fill in the appropriate circle at the top of each page to indicate the question number.**

## Argument Essay

6 points

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In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
- Provide evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
<b>Row A</b> <b>Thesis</b> <b>(0–1 points)</b>	<b>0 points</b> For any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no defensible thesis.</li> <li>• The intended thesis only restates the prompt.</li> <li>• The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim.</li> <li>• There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt.</li> </ul>	<b>1 point</b> Responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>		
<b>Responses that do not earn this point:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only restate the prompt.</li> <li>• Do not take a position, or the position is vague or must be inferred.</li> <li>• State an obvious fact rather than making a claim that requires a defense.</li> </ul>	<b>Responses that earn this point:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to the prompt by taking a position on the extent to which Powell’s claim about making decisions is valid, rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. Clearly take a position rather than just stating that there are pros/cons.</li> </ul>	
<b>Examples that do not earn this point:</b> <b>Do not take a position</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Life is full of decisions, and everyone must make decisions at one time or another.”</i></li> </ul> <b>Address the topic of the prompt but are not defensible—it is an obvious fact stated as a claim</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Before making a decision, it is best to weigh all the pros and cons and examine all the factors that go into that decision.”</i></li> </ul>		
<b>Examples that earn this point:</b> <b>Present a defensible position that responds to the prompt.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“As Secretary Powell argues, the key to making decisions is not to make them quickly, but to make them at the right time.”</i></li> <li>• <i>“While it is best to have all the relevant information in hand before making a decision, at some point or another, waiting too long to make the decision can be as bad as making it too quickly.”</i></li> <li>• <i>“It’s easy enough to say that making timely decisions is important. The difficult part—as Hamlet well knows—is trying to figure out exactly <u>when</u> to make that critical decision.”</i></li> </ul>		
<b>Additional Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity.</li> <li>• The thesis may be anywhere within the response.</li> <li>• The thesis <i>may</i> establish a line of reasoning that structures the essay, but it needn’t do so to earn the thesis point.</li> <li>• A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning.</li> </ul>		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria				
<b>Row B Evidence AND Commentary (0–4 points)</b>	<b>0 points</b> Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.	<b>1 point</b> <b>EVIDENCE:</b> Provides evidence that is mostly general.  <b>AND</b>  <b>COMMENTARY:</b> Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the argument.	<b>2 points</b> <b>EVIDENCE:</b> Provides some specific, relevant evidence.  <b>AND</b>  <b>COMMENTARY:</b> Explains how some of the evidence relates to the student's argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.	<b>3 points</b> <b>EVIDENCE:</b> Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning.  <b>AND</b>  <b>COMMENTARY:</b> Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning.	<b>4 points</b> <b>EVIDENCE:</b> Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning.  <b>AND</b>  <b>COMMENTARY:</b> Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning.
<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>					
<b>Typical responses that earn 0 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are incoherent or do not address the prompt.</li> <li>May be just opinion with no evidence or evidence that is irrelevant.</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 1 point:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tend to focus on summary of evidence rather than specific details.</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 2 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities.</li> <li>May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don't strengthen the argument.</li> <li>May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim.</li> <li>Do not explain the connections or progression between the student's claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established.</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 3 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uniformly offer evidence to support claims.</li> <li>Focus on the importance of specific details to build an argument.</li> <li>Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims.</li> <li>Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim.</li> </ul>	<b>Typical responses that earn 4 points:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uniformly offer evidence to support claims.</li> <li>Focus on the importance of specific details to build an argument.</li> <li>Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained.</li> </ul>	
<b>Additional Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row.</li> </ul>					

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row C  Sophistication (0–1 points)	<b>0 points</b>  Does not meet the criteria for one point.	<b>1 point</b>  Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation.
<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>		
	<b>Responses that do not earn this point:</b>	<b>Responses that earn this point may demonstrate sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation by doing any of the following:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempt to contextualize their argument, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (“<i>In a world where . . .</i>” OR “<i>Since the beginning of time . . .</i>”).</li> <li>• Only hint at or suggest other arguments (“<i>While some may argue that . . .</i>” OR “<i>Some people say . . .</i>”).</li> <li>• Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance the argument.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Crafting a nuanced argument by consistently identifying and exploring complexities or tensions.</li> <li>2. Articulating the implications or limitations of an argument (either the student’s argument or an argument related to the prompt) by situating it within a broader context.</li> <li>3. Making effective rhetorical choices that consistently strengthen the force and impact of the student’s argument.</li> <li>4. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.</li> </ol>
<b>Additional Notes:</b> This point should be awarded only if the sophistication of thought or complex understanding is part of the student’s argument, not merely a phrase or reference.		