

**Question 3**

**Suggested time—40 minutes.**

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

Many people spend long hours trying to achieve perfection in their personal or professional lives. Similarly, people often demand perfection from others, creating expectations that may be challenging to live up to. In contrast, some people think perfection is not attainable or desirable.

Write an essay that argues your position on the value of striving for perfection.

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.**

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>• Equivocate or summarize others' arguments but not the student's (e.g., some people say it's good, some people say it's bad).</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 developing a position on handwriting instruction in today's schools, rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. Clearly take a position rather than just stating there are pros/cons.</li> </ul>
	<b>Examples that do not earn this point:</b> <b>Restate the prompt</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"Some people think that handwriting should still be taught in schools today, but others think that it's not necessary anymore because everything is digital."</i></li> </ul> <b>Address the topic of the prompt, but do not take a position</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"Kids no longer learn handwriting in school, and there are several reasons why that's the case."</i></li> </ul> <b>Address the topic of the prompt but state an obvious fact as a claim</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"As opposed to previous centuries, nowadays handwriting is not really taught in schools anymore."</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>"Even though it may seem old-fashioned, handwriting should still be taught in schools today."</i></li> <li>• <i>"While it makes sense for students to learn keyboarding and other skills that will prepare them for a digital world, handwriting instruction still holds a place in a modern child's education."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Given the fact that most kids learn on computers and tablets nowadays, it makes no sense for them to spend time learning an obsolete skill such as cursive handwriting, although they still will need to learn how to print."</i></li> </ul>

## Argument Essay

6 points

Many people spend long hours trying to achieve perfection in their personal or professional lives. Similarly, people often demand perfection from others, creating expectations that may be challenging to live up to. In contrast, some people think perfection is not attainable or desirable.

Write an essay that argues your position on the value of striving for perfection.

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> Respond to the prompt by taking a position on the value of striving for perfection, rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. Clearly take a position rather than just stating that there are pros/cons.	
<b>Examples that do not earn this point:</b> <b>Do not take a position</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"In this world, there are those who won't be satisfied unless everything is perfect, and those who are perfectly happy to let things be as they are."</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>"Perfection is something that many people strive for, but very few actually achieve."</i></li> </ul>	<b>Examples that earn this point:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"Perfection is something that is almost impossible to reach, so it's not worth the effort to try to achieve it."</i></li> <li>• <i>"While the outcome may not always be successful, the struggle to achieve perfection can yield many benefits along the way."</i></li> <li>• <i>"Although it may be fine to set high standards and expect perfection from yourself, it's unrealistic to believe that other people will be willing to put in what it takes to reach the same levels of perfection."</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> <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>		<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> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crafting a nuanced argument by consistently identifying and exploring complexities or tensions.</li> <li>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>Making effective rhetorical choices that consistently strengthen the force and impact of the student’s argument.</li> <li>Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.</li> </ol>
<b>Additional Notes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul>		