

Sample Argument Topic:

The argument to be analyzed is as follows:

The following is taken from a memo from the advertising director of the Super Screen Movie Production Company.

“According to a recent report from our marketing department, during the past year, fewer people attended Super Screen-produced movies than in any other year. And yet the percentage of positive reviews by movie reviewers about specific Super Screen movies actually increased during the past year. Clearly, the contents of these reviews are not reaching enough of our prospective viewers. Thus, the problem lies not with the quality of our movies but with the public's lack of awareness that movies of good quality are available. Super Screen should therefore allocate a greater share of its budget next year to reaching the public through advertising.”

Write a response in which you discuss what questions would need to be answered in order to decide whether the recommendation and the argument on which it is based are reasonable. Be sure to explain how the answers to these 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 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:

The advertising director of the Super Screen Movie production company believes that increasing the amount of advertising the company does will increase the amount of people attending Super Screen produced movies. He believes this because during the past year fewer people than ever before attended Super Screen produced movies, yet the percentage of positive reviews about specific Super Screen produced movies increased over the past year. Ostensibly the extra advertising would tout the good reviews written about Super Screen movies. Before this plan is implemented, however, Super Screen needs to address some questions about its possible flaws.

First of all, the company needs to ask what the actual number of people attending its movies as compared to the movies of other production companies is. The number of people going to movies may have been in universal decline. If this is the case and more people are going to see Super Screen Movies than the movies of any other production company, advertising about how fun it is to go to the movie theater may do more to boost Super Screen viewership than advertising promoting its own good reviews.

Secondly, the company needs to ask what the actual original number of positive reviews was. If Super Screen movies recieved 1% positive reviews last year and this year they recieved 2% positive reviews, getting that message to viewers is not going to increase Super Screen attendance. Making better movies would be much more likely to increase attendance rates.

Finally, Super Screen needs to ask what the relationship is between its viewers and the movie reviewers cited in the memo. Using a survey distributed to its target audience, Super Screen could determine if movie reviews have an effect on their audience's decision to go see a movie, whether movie reviewers tended to have the same taste as the target audience and exactly whether or not movie reviews are reaching the audience. Super Screen also needs to consider how its movie choices have affected the separate movie reviewer and audience populations. If the studio has switched from making mega-blockbuster action movies to more nuanced dramas, the general public may be less willing to go see their movies even though movie critics prefer the dramas to the action movies.

Finally the studio must ask whether the percentage of positive reviews is really a relevant way to measure the potential impact of movie reviews. There are dozens of movie reviewers but when deciding whether to not to go to a movie, the general public will

usually pick from among the 10 most popular movie reviews. These are the reviews that will impress the public if they are included in advertising. If the most popular movie reviewers disliked Super Screen movies that a larger number of small time film bloggers reviewed positively, Super Screen needs to think of a new advertising strategy.

In conclusion, there are many questions Super Screen needs to answer before using this advertising director's plan. They need to look carefully at actual numbers, both of viewership and of positive reviews. They also need to identify the relationship that their target audience has with movie reviewers and determine how their target audience feels about their movies. Finally they need to take a nuanced look at the movie reviews that they use in their advertising.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 6:

This response clearly identifies aspects of the argument relevant to the assigned task and provides insightful, thoroughly developed analysis. Thus, it earns a score of 6. The response is clearly on task, examining the questions that would need to be answered in order to determine if the recommendation is reasonable. In each case, the writer perceptively explores the nuances of the question, showing different ways in which the answers to those questions might have

an impact on the recommendation. For example, the first body paragraph looks at the issue of overall movie attendance, exploring the possibility that Super Screen might actually be doing better than other production companies. If that is the case, perhaps Super Screen's advertising is already effective, and the proposed plan to increase advertising would not have the intended effect.

Throughout the response, the analysis is detailed and cogent, and the organization of the response is logical both within paragraphs and between paragraphs. In addition, although there are a few misspelled words, the response demonstrates facility with language, conveying ideas fluently and precisely. Sentences like this one demonstrate the superior control of the conventions of standard written English seen throughout this response: "If this is the case and more people are going to see Super Screen Movies than the movies of any other production company, advertising about how fun it is to go to the movie theater may do more to boost Super Screen viewership than advertising promoting its own good reviews." Because of its fluent language and insightful analysis, this response earns a score of 6.

The following sample argument response received a score of 5:

While the advertising director clearly aims at relitalizing his production company and ensuring that the public is well informed

about the movies which are available, there are several basic flaws to his argument . There remain some questions that need answering before any steps can be taken with regard to advertising strategies for the Super Screen Movie Production Company.

First among these questions is this; were ticket sales of the entire movie industry down? This is an essential question because it helps to pinpoint the cause of the writer's problem. If the industry as a whole is undergoing poor revenues, then perhaps the issue is not Super Screen's advertising company but rather the country's economy. In times of economic strife, it is only natural that people would be less willing to spend money on luxuries such as movie tickets. If this is the case, it might better suit the production company to cut costs rather than refunneling them into a different part of the company.

Second, the advertising director should ask himself this; what medium do the majority of his most generous movie reviewers utilize? The writer states that movie reviews were generally positive, but where were these reviews located? On television, newspapers, or the Internet? It is possible that the medium used by the most positive reviewers of Super Screen's movies is one that is not utilized by most of the company's target audiences. If Super Screen produces many family films, but most of the good reviews

are found in late night television shows, then there is a good chance that the reviews are not going to be seen by the target audience. If this is the case, then the company would be better off conducting research as to what medium is most likely to reach their audiences.

One last question would be this; what advertising is currently being used by the Super Screen company? If the company advertises using only one medium, such as in newspapers, perhaps the solution is not to double the amount of newspaper space but to branch out and try other forms of advertising. The writer fails to mention exactly how the company currently advertises their movies, and this absence detracts from his argument.

In conclusion, the advertising director would be better served by first answering these questions and evaluating the resulting answers before pouring millions of dollars into his solution. It is possible that an alternative solution exists, perhaps one that will not be as expensive nor as risky.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 5:

This response earns a score of 5 because it presents generally perceptive analysis and maintains facility with language in spite of a few minor errors. The writer clearly identifies aspects of the argument relevant to the assigned task, looking at how

the various points raised might impact the marketing director's recommendation. However, the development of each point is not as insightful as the development seen in the sample 6 (see, for example, the somewhat rudimentary paragraph about Super Screen's advertising media). In general, however, the development is perceptive, as in the exploration of a potential disconnect between the target audience and the media used by the reviewers, so the response rises above the adequate level. Language control in this response is also at the 5 level, as seen in the effective use of sentence variety and appropriate word choice. Take, for example, this sentence, which demonstrates effective control of subordination and complex syntax: "If Super Screen produces many family films, but most of the good reviews are found in late night television shows, then there is a good chance that the reviews are not going to be seen by the target audience." Because of its perceptive analysis and strong control of language, then, this response earns a score of 5.

The following sample argument response received a score of 4:

In order to decide whether or not the advertising director's recommendation is reasonable there are a lot more questions that need to be addressed. First of all it is important to look at the bigger

picture. Fundamentally, has anything changed about Super Screen? Has new leadership come into the company? If so, how has that changed business practices?

Leadership changes or other changes within the company might have led Super Screen to choose to make different types of movies this year than it has in the past. It is important to determine whether or not different movie subjects/topics have influenced audiences. Many times there are discrepancies between how a reviewer rates a movie and how an audience rates a movie. It is important to determine whether or not the audiences are pleased with the products coming out of Super Screen, not just the movie reviewers.

Another question to ask is whether or not advertising has significantly changed over the past year. Has there been any less advertising this year than years before? If not, then again, the problem probably does not lie in advertising alone. If there have been some differences in the way movies were advertised, it would be important to look at some of those decisions and determine how they affected movie audiences. Perhaps the right audiences were not targeted for the right movies. If a childrens movie was released and all the advertising went into adult magazines, this would present an obvious problem.

In conclusion, it would not be a good idea to only up the advertising budget next year in an attempt to reach audiences. It is important to look at differences, if any, throughout the whole company and then determine the best course of action.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 4:

This response does identify questions that need to be answered in order to determine if the recommendation is reasonable, and the development of each point of analysis is adequate. Take, for example, the discussion of how Super Screen might have started making different types of movies this year. The writer notes, “It is important to determine whether or not different movie subjects/topics have influenced audiences. Many times there are discrepancies between how a reviewer rates a movie and how an audience rates a movie.” This discussion is certainly relevant, and it is developed enough to make the point that positive reviews might not lead to more viewers. But the response does not demonstrate the perceptive analysis or the thorough development required for a higher score. As with the analysis, language control in this response is adequate. There are some minor errors, but all the writer’s points are presented with adequate clarity. Because of its adequate analysis and language control, this response earns a score of 4.

The following sample argument response received a score of 3:

There are a battery of questions that should be asked when deciding whether or not the advertising director's recommendation is reasonable. One of the most prevalent being "How many people actually take into account movie reviews when they are deciding which movie to watch?" For, if no one reads movie reviews before making these decisions, then the proposed plan from the movie director may not guarantee anything.

The second question would be this: "who exactly is doing the movie reviews?" For instance, if there is but one or two reviewers who are doing such work, can we be sure that such a small sample would be representative of our target market?

The director's argument is not necessarily fallacious. However, there is certain evidence that would have to be put forward to consider his proposal further. First of all, we need to know how our target market takes movie reviews into account. And lastly, we need to know who, and how many people, are conducting the reviews. Only then, can we make a maximally informed decision regarding the reviews.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 3:

This response earns a score of 3 because of the limited development of its critique. The points that the writer makes are certainly relevant, and there is some attempt made to analyze the impact on the recommendation of the questions the writer raises. However, the response provides little support for each point. For example, the discussion of “who exactly is doing the movie reviews” is supported only by the fairly generic notion that the sample size might be too small to be meaningful. This response uses repetition instead of developing its analysis, as seen in the final paragraph, which simply repeats the points made earlier in the response. Language control in this response is adequate, but it earns a score of 3 for limited development.

The following sample argument response received a score of 2:

It seems like the Super Screen Movie Production Company has good quality movies. However, it did not have enough viewers to see the movies. It is probably because not many people are aware of their movies that being showed. Their problem is how to let people know that their movies are showing. The Super Screen Movie Production Company need to come up with different strategies to

let people know about their movies and has more advertisements done. If the company does the following three ideas, I think they are able to reach the number of prospective viewers. One of them is advertise their movies on television, second is to talk about their new movies on radio, and third is to post poster of their new movies every where that can catch people attention. This will be able to bring their number of viewers higher.

Television is a very popular electronic that no one can live without. After a long working hours, everyone watches television to relax such as the News, movies, soap opera, and so on. If the Super Screen Movie Production Company has their movie's advertisement during this hour, people will be able to see and know that there is a good quality movie around the corner. They will come and see the movie.

Everyone has to go to work. They have to drive in a car where they listen to their radio. This is the best time for the Super Screen Movie Production Company to talk about their new released movie. This give people a chance to hear about their new movie and decide whether to go see it or not.

Seeing a poster is worth more than a thousand words. Many students do not like to look at a paper with a lot of words, but if they see a poster with picture, they will stop and look right away. This is also helping the Super Screen Movie Production to increase their viewers. Not only students, the adults are the same. There are some people do not know how to read, so seeing a poster of the new movie will help them out a lot.

After discussing three different ways for the Super Screen Movie Production Company to advertise their movie to reach enough number of prospective viewers, I believe that their movies will get many more viewers to come see their movies. What easy ways to let people know about their movies by advertise them on television, talk about the movies on radio, and put posters of their movies up everyone that people can see.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 2:

This response earns a score of 2 because it does not present an examination based on logical analysis. Instead, it agrees with the marketing director's argument and provides advice for how Super Screen could best increase its advertising ("One of them is advertise their movies on television, second is to talk about their new movies

on radio, and third is to post poster of their new movies every where that can catch people attention.”). There are some minor errors in this response, but it does not demonstrate the serious problems in language characteristic of a 2 (language control is more at the 3 level). Instead, this response earns a 2 because it presents agreement and advice instead of logical analysis.

The following sample argument response received a score of 1:

According to this memo, It seems to be wrong things are not exist about Super Screeb Movie Production Company. That's it.

There are advantage of both ways - by listening to advice through personal experience. But I prefer to learn about the thing. Yes sure. in my country monumentally yes or not for his or her. i couldn't understand about terrable things Why did you sent me a reply I can not imagine that oh no

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 1:

This incoherent response earns a score of 1. There is some evidence of an attempt to respond to the assigned topic (“It seems to be wrong things are not exist about Super Screeb Movie Production Company.”), but there is little or no evidence of understanding the

argument. There is also little or no evidence of the ability to develop an organized response. In addition, the response contains pervasive errors that result in incoherence. For all these reasons, then, the response earns a score of 1.

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