**The Issue-Perspective Writing Task**

The Issue task is designed to test your ability to present a position on an issue effectively

and persuasively. Your task is to analyze the issue presented, considering various perspectives, and to develop your own position on the issue. In scoring your Issue essay, GRE readers will consider how effectively you:

+ Recognize and deal with the complexities and implications of the issue

+ Organize, develop, and express your ideas

+ Support your ideas (with reasons and examples)

+ Control the elements of standard written English (grammar, syntax, and usage)

NOTE: In the Issue section, there is no "correct" answer. In other words, what's important is how effectively you present and support your position, not what your position is.

**What GRE Issues Look Like**

Your GRE Issue will consist of two elements: a brief dictum (statement of your task) followed by a 1-2 sentence topic (a quotation which is a statement of opinion on an issue).The GRE Issue directive is exactly the same for every Issue topic, and is essentially as follows:

**Present your perspective on the following issue; use relevant reasons and/or examples to**

**Support your Point.**

GRE Issues cover a broad spectrum of issues of intellectual interest and with which college and graduate-level students often deal. Here are three sample topics, which are similar to the kinds of topics you'll find in the official GRE Issue pool. (Note: These are simulated topics that do not appear among the official GRE topics.)

"In order to achieve greatness in a particular field-whether it be in the arts, sciences, or

Politics - any individual must challenge tradition as well as the conventional wisdom of the day."

"The objective of science is largely opposed to that of art; while science seeks to discover truths, art seeks to obscure them."

“The only way to ensure that our natural environment will be protected and preserved is

through government penalties and other regulatory measures. No society can rely on the

voluntary efforts of its individuals and private businesses to achieve these objectives."

**What You Should Know about the Issue Writing Task**

Before you begin the timed Issue writing task, the testing system will present to you one "screen" of directions specific to this task These directions will indicate the four general scoring criteria listed on page 3, as well as the following guidelines:

+ Your time limit is 45 minutes.

+ Writing on any topic other than the one presented is unacceptable.

+ The topic will appear as a brief statement on an issue of gened interest.

+ You are free to accept, reject, or quaw the statement.

+ You should support your perspective with reasons and/or examples from such sources as your experience, observation, reading, and academic studies.

+ You should take a few minutes to plan your response before you begin typing.

+ You should leave time to reread your response and make any revisions you think are needed.

The topics in the official Issue pool share many common themes. Although each of the official Issue topics is unique, their basic themes cover a lot of common ground. Here's a list of themes that cover most of the official Issue topics (they're listed here in no particular order):

+ Conformity and tradition versus individuality and innovation

+ Practicality and utility versus creativity and personal enrichment

+ The importance of cultural identity (customs, rituals, and ideals)

+ Keys to individual success and progress

+ Keys to societal progress, and how we define it

+ How we obtain or advance knowledge, and what constitutes knowledge or advancement of knowledge

+ The objectives and methods of formal education

+ The value of studying history

+ The impact of technology on society and on individuals

+ The sorts of people society considers heroes or great leaders

+ The function and value of art and science (for individuals and for society)

+ The proper role of government, business, and individuals in ensuring the well-being of society

Considered collectively, the GRE Issue topics invite discussion involving all areas of intellectual inquiry-including sociology, anthropology, history, education, law and government, political science, economics, philosophy, the physical and behavioral sciences, the fine arts, and the performing arts.

There is no "correct" response to any Issue topic. You won't encounter any statement in the official topic pool that is either clearly irrefutable or clearly wrong. The test makers have written the Issues this way in order to gauge your ability to argue persuasively for or against a position as well as to qualify, or "hedge," your position.

There is no prescribed or "correct" length for an Issue essay. The only limitation on length that the testing system imposes is the practical limitation associated with the 45-minute time limit.

So do GRE graders prefer brief or longer Issue essays?

Well, it all depends on the essay's quality. An essay that is concise and to the point can be more effective than a long-winded, rambling one. On the other hand, a longer essay that is

nevertheless articulate and that includes many insightful ideas that are well supported by examples will score higher than a brief essay that lacks substance.

My experience in writing GRE Issue essays is that you can score a 6 with an essay as brief as 400 words. The sample Issue essay you'll encounter a few pages ahead, which meets the ETS criteria for a top score of 6, is intentionally brief-about 400 words – to demonstrate that you don't have to write a lengthy essay to score high.

The sample essays in Part 2 of this book are longer; they range from 500 to 750 words in length, and most include five or six paragraphs. The only model ("6") Issue essay that ETS has published is about 700 words in length, and contains seven paragraphs. However, ETS admits that "other '6' responses may not be as eloquent as this essay." So for a top score of 6 your Issue essay need not be as lengthy or as polished as my samples, or ETS' model.

**How to Approach the Issue Writing Task**

To score high on the Issue writing task, you need to accomplish the four basic tasks listed on page 3. To make sure you accomplish all four tasks within the 45-minute time limit, follow this 7-step approach:

1. Brainstorm, and get your pencil moving (2-3 minutes).

Try to come up with a few reasons both for and against the stated opinion, as well as a few examples supporting each side of the issue. Jot down any idea you can think of, even if it seems far-fetched, trite, insupportable, or unconvincing at the moment; as you compose your essay, it might occur to you how to transform one of your weaker ideas into a strong one. In other words, during step 1 is not the time to censor yourself!

1. Adopt a position, and organize your ideas (1-2 minutes).

Indicate "pro" or "con” next to each one of the reasons and examples you jotted down during step 1. Arrange your ideas into three or four body paragraphs, then decide tentatively on a logical order in which to present them. Number the points in your outline according and

1. Compose a brief introductory paragraph (M minutes).

In your first paragraph, you should accomplish each of the following tasks:

+ Demonstrate that you understand the complexities or implications of the issue

+ Let the reader know that you have a clear perspective on the issue

+ Anticipate the ideas you intend to present in your essay's body paragraphs

You can probably accomplish all three tasks in two or three sentences. Don't go into detail yet about your reasoning, and don't provide specific examples. This is what your essay's body paragraphs are for.

NOTE: Consider waiting until you've completed the rest of your Issue essay before composing your introduction. Why? If your position on the issue evolves as you compose the body of your essay (it could happen), you won't have to rewrite your introduction.

1. Type the body of your response (20-25 minutes).

Try to stick to your outline, but be flexible. Start with whichever point is easiest for you to articulate and which seems most insightful or persuasive to you. Later, in step 6, if you determine that this point should appear after one or more other points, through the magic of word processing you can rearrange your paragraphs for logical sense and continuity. During step 4, your chief ambition is to peck away at your keyboard like mad, in order to get your

ideas onto the screen! Try to devote no more than three or four sentences to any one point in your outline, and don't worry if you don't have time to include every single point from your outline. The readers understand that the 45-minute time constraint prevents most test takers from covering every point they want to make.

1. Write a brief concluding (summary) paragraph (34 minutes).

Unless your essay has a clear end, the reader might think you didn't finish in time; so be sure to make time to wrap up your essay. Convey the main thrust of your essay in two or three sentences. If an especially insightful concluding point occurs to you, the

final sentence of your essay is the place for it.

1. Revise and rearrange your essay as needed to ensure continuity and balance (8-10 minutes).

Try to reserve a substantial amount of time for revising and reworking your essay. Here's what you should try to accomplish during step 6:

* Be sure you've presented varying perspectives on the issue. There's nothing wrong with adopting a strong position; but you should always acknowledge the merits and drawbacks of other viewpoints as well. If your essay appears too one-sided, now's the time to add a paragraph that remedies this problem.
* Rearrange your paragraphs so your essay flows logicaIIy and persuasively from one point to the next. Be sure the first sentence of each paragraph begins a distinct train of thought and clearly conveys to the reader the essence of the paragraph.
* Check your paragraphs to see if they are balanced in length. If they aren't, perhaps you were overly wordy or repetitive in one area of discussion, while in another you neglected to provide adequate support (reasons and/or examples). During step 6 is the time to trim back and fill out as needed to achieve a balanced presentation.
* Check your introductory and concluding paragraphs to make sure they're consistent with each other and with the topic.

1. Proofread for mechanical problems (34 minutes).

Rework awkward sentences so they flow more naturally. Check for errors in diction, usage, grammar, and spelling. Keep in mind: To score a 6, your essay need not be flawless. GRE readers won't mark you down for the occasional awkward sentence and minor error in punctuation, spelling, grammar, or usage. Don't get hung up on whether each sentence is something Hemingway or Steinbeck would be proud of. Use whatever time remains to fix the most glaring mechanical problems.

Putting It Together-a Sample Issue Essay

Now, take a look at an essay response to the third Issue topic you saw earlier, on page 4.

In this response I've underlined certain transitional words and phrases, in order to help you see how I organized my ideas - the "pros" and "cons" from Step 1 -so that they flow naturally from one to the next. (On the real exam you won't be able to underline, italicize, or otherwise highlight text.)

As you read the response below, keep in mind:

+ None of the points I've made are irrefutable, because the issue is far from "black and white”. It's all a matter of opinion. That's what the Issue essay is all about.

+ My response is relatively simple in style and language, and brief enough (400 words) to compose and type in 45 minutes.

+ I didn't compose this essay under the pressure of time, so don't worry if your practice essays don't turn out quite as polished.

Sample Response to Issue on

*The only way to ensure that our natural environment will be protected and preserved is through government genalBies and other regulatory measures. No society can rely on the voluntary efforts of its individuals and private businesses to achieve these objectives.*

While nearly everyone would agree in principle that certain efforts to preserve the natural

environment are in humankind's best interests, exclusive reliance on volunteerism would be naive and imprudent, especially considering the stakes involved. For this reason, and because serious environmental problems are generally large in scale, I agree that government participation is needed to ensure environmental preservation.

Experience tells us that individuals and private corporations tend to act in their own short-term economic and political interest, not on behalf of the environment or the public at large. For example, current technology makes possible the complete elimination of polluting emissions from automobiles.

Nevertheless, neither automobile manufacturers nor consumers are willing or able to voluntarily make the short-term sacrifices necessary to accomplish this goal. Only the

government holds the regulatory and enforcement power to impose the necessary standards and to ensure that we achieve such goals.

Admittedly, government penalties do not guarantee compliance with environmental regulations. Businesses often attempt to avoid compliance by concealing their activities, lobbying legislators to modify regulations, or moving operations to jurisdictions that allow their environmentally harmful activities. Others calculate the cost of polluting, in tens of punishment, then budget in advance for anticipated penalties and openly violate the law. However, this behavior only serves to underscore the need for government intervention, because left unfettered this type of behavior would only exacerbate environmental problems.

One must admit as well that government regulation, environmental or otherwise, is fraught with bureaucratic and enforcement problems. Regulatory systems inherently call for legislative committees, investigations, and enforcement agencies, all of which add to the tax burden on the citizens whom these regulations are designed to protect. A&Q, delays typically associated with bureaucratic regulation can thwart the purpose of the regulations, because environmental problems can quickly become grave indeed. However, given that the only alternative is to rely on volunteerism, government regulation seems necessary.

Finally, environmental issues inherently involve public health and are far too pandemic in nature for individuals to solve on their own. Many of the most egregious environmental violations traverse state and sometimes national borders, Individuals have neither the power nor the resources to address these widespread hazards.

In the final analysis, only the authority and scope of power that a government possesses can ensure the attainment of agreed-upon environmental goals. Because individuals are unable and businesses are by nature unwilling to assume this responsibility, government must do so.

**DOs and DON'TS for the Issue Writing Task**

Here's a quick list of DOs and DON'TS to keep you on the right track in organizing and composing your Issue essay. To internalize the ideas in this list, earmark the list and refer back to it from time to time as you read the sample essays in Part 2.

DO try to break apart the statement into components or discrete areas of consideration. In fact, many GRE Issue statements are intentionally designed for you to do so.

DON'T waste time second-guessing what the reader might agree (or disagree) with. Instead, just be sure to acknowledge various perspectives on the issue and develop a well-supported position on it.

DO "hedge" your position by qualifying your viewpoint and acknowledging others. In doing so, you won't appear wishy-washy, but rather thoughtful and scholarly!

DON'T be reluctant to take a strong stance on an issue; but avoid coming across as fanatical or extreme. Approach the Issue essay as an intellectual exercise, not as a forum for sharing your personal belief system.

DON'T dwell on the details, but don't try to cover everything. Try to cover as many points in your outline as you have time for, devoting no more than one paragraph to each one. At the same time, don’t worry if you're forced to leave the secondary and more tangential points on your scratch paper. GRE readers understand your time constraints.

DON'T overdo it when it comes to drawing on personal experiences to support your position. Try instead to demonstrate a breadth of both real-world experience and academic knowledge.

DON'T approach the Issue task as a trivia contest. Bolster your position with names and events with which the readers are likely to have at least some familiarity, not by recounting statistics, quoting obscure sources, or citing little-known historical events.

DO explain how each example you mention illustrates your point. Anyone can simply list a long string of examples and claim that they illustrate a point. But the readers are looking for incisive analysis, not fast typing.

**The Argument-Analysis Writing Task**

The Argument writing task is designed to test your critical-reasoning skills as well as your writing skills. Your task is to critique the stated argument in terms of its cogency (logical soundness) and in terms of the strength of the evidence offered in support of the argument. In scoring your Argument essay, GRE readers will consider how effectively you:

+ Identify and analyze the key elements of the argument

+ Organize, develop, and express your critique

+ Support your ideas (with reasons and examples)

+ Control the elements of standard written English (grammar, syntax, and usage)

**What GRE Arguments Look Like**

Each Argument in the official pool consists of a brief directive (statement of your task) followed by a paragraph-length passage, which presents an argument.

The Argument itself will be introduced as a quotation from some fictitious source.

What You Should Know about the Argument Writing Task

Before you begin the timed argument writing task, the testing system will present to you

two "screens" of directions specific to this task. In addition to indicating the four general

scoring criteria, these directions will indicate essentially the following:

Screen 1 (general guidelines and suggestions):

+ Your time limit is 30 minutes.

+ You must critique the logical soundness of the argument presented.

+ A critique of any other argument is unacceptable.

+ You should take a few minutes to plan your response before you begin typing.

+ You should develop your ideas fully and organize them in a coherent manner.

+ You should leave time to reread your response and make any revisions you think are needed.

Screen 2 (specific guidelines for critiquing the argument):

+ You are not being asked to agree or disagree with any of the statements in the argument.

+ You should analyze the argument's line of reasoning.

+ You should consider questionable assumptions underlying the argument.

+ You should consider the extent to which the evidence presented supports the argument's conclusion.

+ You may discuss what additional evidence would help strengthen or refute the argument.

+ You may discuss what additional information, if any, would help you to evaluate the argument's conclusion.

Your analysis must focus strictly on the Argument's logical features and on its evidence. Do not confuse the Argument writing task with the Issue task. Your Argument essay is not the place to present your own opinions about an issue that the Argument might involve. An Issue topic involving advertising claims might call for you to present various viewpoints about the duty of a business or businesses to provide complete and unbiased product information to consumers. But such viewpoints are irrelevant to the Argument task, in which you must focus strictly on the internal cogency (logical soundness) of the Argument.

The test makers have intentionally loaded each argument with numerous flaws (fallacies and other weaknesses) that you must address effectively to score high. In contrast to the instructions for the Issue writing task, the instructions for the Argument task do not state:"There is no correct response."Why not? In designing each Argument, the test makers made sure to incorporate into it certain logical problems (fallacies and other weaknesses) for you to identify and address in your essay. That's what the Argument writing task is all about. Should you fail to identify and address these built-in problems, you won't attain a high score.

A typical GRE Argument will contain three or four discrete logical flaws. Here's a list of the seven types of flaws that appear most frequently in the official GRE Arguments:

+ Drawing a weak analogy between two things

+ Confusing a cause-and effect relationship with a mere correlation or temporal sequence

+ Assuming that characteristics of a group applies to each group member

+ Assuming that a certain condition is necessary and/or sufficient for a certain outcome

+ Relying on potentially unrepresentative statistical results

+ Relying on tainted results from a survey or poll

+ Assuming that all things remain unchanged over time

All GRE Arguments are not created equal. Having composed essays for more GRE Arguments than any other human being, I can state with authority that some GRE Arguments are tougher to handle than others. Of course, after reading Parts 1 and 3 of this book, you shouldn't have much trouble with any of them. Nevertheless, if you peruse the official pool of Arguments, you'll no doubt notice that in some of them the logical flaws seem to jump off the paper (or screen) at you, one at a time, while in others the flaws are inter- twined or hidden from clear view, making it especially challenging to extract, separate, and organize them. And there are no guarantees that the test will deal you a favorable hand. But who said life is fair? At least you have this book to help even the playing field.

There is no prescribed or "correct" length for a high-scoring Argument essay. The length of your Argument essay is limited only by the 30-minute time limit and the number of logical flaws that are available to discuss. In my experience composing Argument essays, 400 words can suffice for a top-scoring response to any GRE Argument.

**How to Approach the Argument Writing Task**

To score high on an Argument essay, you need to accomplish the four basic tasks listed on page 10. To make sure you accomplish all four tasks in the 30 minutes allotted, follow this 7-step approach:

1. Read the Argument;

as you do so, identify its conclusion and its supporting evidence (1 minute). As you read the Argument for the first time, be sure you identify its f3nal conclusion. (You'll probably find it in either the first or last sentence of the Argument). Jot it down on your scratch paper! In the Argument it might be called a "claim," a "recommendation” or “contention". Why is Step 1 important? Unless you are clear about the Argument's final conclusion, it's impossible to evaluate the author's reasoning or the strength of the evidence offered in support of its conclusion.

1. Brainstorm, and get your pencil moving (23 minutes).

Try to identify at least three or four discrete flaws in the Argument. Commit the List of flaws on page 12 to memory to help you during the exam. If additional logical problems jump out at you, by all means jot them down. Be on special lookout for any unsubstantiated or unreasonable assumptions upon which the Argument's conclusion depends. Don't worry at this point that some flaws you identified overlap. You can sort them out during the next step.

1. Organize your essay (2-3 minutes).

Using your notes from step 2 as a guide, arrange your ideas into paragraphs (probably three or four, depending on the number of flaws built into the argument).Take a minute to consider whether any of the flaws you identified overlap and whether any can be separated into two distinct flaws. In many cases the best sequence in which to present your points of critique

is the same order in which they appear in the Argument.

1. Write a brief introductory paragraph (1-2 minutes).

The introduction is not as crucial as the points of your critique. Here's all you should try to accomplish in an introductory paragraph:

+ Indicate the Argument's final conclusion.

+ Describe briefly the Argument's line of reasoning and evidence offered to support the conclusion.

Allude generally to the problems with the Argument's line of reasoning and use of evidence.

Don't waste time repeating the entire Argument in an introductory paragraph. The reader, whom you can assume is already well familiar with the Argument, is interested in your critique-not in your transcription skills.

NOTE: The essays in Part 3 include longer introductory paragraphs, in which I've indicated the Argument's supporting evidence in great detail for your reference to help you in analyzing the Argument. But there's no need for you to include such detail in your introductory paragraph.

1. Compose the body of your response (15-20 minutes).

Unless you are providing handwritten essays, skip any introduction for now. Try to stick to your outline, but be flexible. Start with whichever points of critique strike you as the most

important, are clearest in your mind, and are easiest to articulate. (You can always rearrange your points later). As in the Issue essay, during this step your chief aim is to peck madly at your keyboard in order to get your ideas onto the screen!

1. Compose a concluding paragraph (H minutes).

In this final paragraph you should sum up the points of your critique. This paragraph is a good place for you to review each point in terms of either of the following:

* How the Argument can be strengthened, or
* What additional information would be helpful in evaluating the Argument's conclusion.

Whether or not you incorporate either element into your essay, both of which are optional, be sure your essay has a clear end; otherwise, the reader might think you didn't finish in time.

1. Revise and proofread your essay (3-5 minutes).

Check for errors in diction, usage, and grammar. Check the flow of your essay, paying particular attention to transitions. Unless you are providing handwritten essays, if you have time, rear-range paragraphs so they appear in a logical sequence, and rework awkward sentences so they flow more naturally.

**DOs and DON'TS for the Argument Writing Task**

Here's a quick list of DOs and DON'TS to keep you on the right track in organizing and composing your Argument essay. To reinforce the ideas in this list, refer back to it from time to time as you read the sample essays in Part 3.

DON'T merely restate or rehash the stated Argument. The only way to score points is to tell the reader what's wrong with the argument, so keep your introductory paragraph brief.

DO analyze the Argument with an eye for uncovering at least three or four flaws-in the author's line of reasoning and use of evidence. Remember: Unless you've recognized and discussed at least three logical flaws, you have missed something sign cant-and you won't score a 5 or 6.

DO support each point of your critique with sound reasons and/or relevant examples.

DON'T stray from the argument at hand. Your personal opinions about the issue discussed in the argument are irrelevant to the Argument writing task.

DO discuss what is required to make the Argument more persuasive and/or what would help you better evaluate it-if you have time. The last paragraph of your essay is a good place to accomplish this task.

DON'T introduce any new flaws in the concluding paragraph. Your job here is simply to reiterate the main points of your critique and possibly to indicate what would be required to make the Argument more convincing or what additional information would help you evaluate it.

DO organize your points of critique in a logical order, and use transition words and phrases to connect the various points of your critique. Keep in mind: The sequence in which the flaws appear in the Argument itself is often as good a sequence as any for the points of your critique.

**Reasoning Problems Appearing Frequently in GRE Arguments-and How to Handle Them**

The test makers intentionally incorporate into each GRE Argument numerous flaws in reasoning and use of evidence that render the Argument vulnerable to criticism. In a typical Argument you can find three or four distinct areas for critique. (Glance through the more than 100 essays in Pan 3, and you'll notice that most of them contain three or four body paragraphs-one for each distinct flaw built into the Argument).

In this section you'll explore the logical fallacies and other reasoning problems that appear most frequently in GRE Arguments. For each problem you'll frnd a simulated Argument that illustrates the problem (you'll recognize some of these as variations of the two on pages 10 and 1 I), along with an effective essay response.

N0TE:The examples in this section are not taken from actual GRE Arguments; but they closely simulate many of the Arguments you'll find in the official Argument pool. Also keep in mind that these examples are a bit briefer than complete GRE Arguments-because each one is intended to isolate one particular reasoning problem.

Drawing a Weak Analogy between Two Things

A GRE Argument might draw a conclusion about one thing (perhaps a city, school, or company) on the basis of an observation about a similar thing. However, in doing so the Argument assumes that because the two things are similar in certain respects they are similar in all respects, at least as far as the Argument is concerned. Unless the Argument provides sufficient evidence to substantiate this assumption (by the way, it won't), the Argument is vulnerable to criticism. The following example actually involves two weak analogies.

Confusing a Cause-and-Effect Relationship with a Mere Correlation or Temporal Sequence

Many GRE Arguments rely on the claim that certain events cause other certain events. A cause-and-effect claim might be based on:

1. a significant correlation between the occurrence of two phenomena (both phenomena generally occur together), or

2. a temporal relationship between the two (one event occurred after another).

A significant correlation or a temporal relationship between two phenomena is one indication of a cause-and effect relationship between them. However, neither in itself suffices to

prove such a relationship. Unless the Argument also considers and eliminates all other plau-

sible causes of the presumed "result" (by the way, it won't), the Argument is vulnerable to

criticism.The following example incorporates both claims (1 and 2) listed above.

Assuming That Characteristics of a Group Apply to Every Member of That Group

A GRE Argument might point out some fact about a general group-such as students, employees, or cities-to support a claim about one particular member of that group. Unless the

Argument supplies clear evidence that the member is representative of the group as a whole

(by the way, it won't), the Argument is vulnerable to criticism. Following is an example.

Assuming That a Certain Condition Is Necessary and/or Sufficient for a Certain Outcome

A GRE Argument might recommend a certain course of action, based on one or both of the following claims:

1. The course of action is necessary to achieve a desired result.

2. The course of action is sufficient to achieve the desired result.

Both claims often occur in the same Argument, and both are potentially vulnerable to criticism. With respect to claim 1, the Argument must provide evidence that no other means of achieving the same result are available (by the way, it won't).With respect to claim 2, the Argument must provide strong evidence that the proposed course of action by itself would be sufficient to bring about the desired result (by the way, it won't).

Lacking this son of evidence, the Argument cannot rely on these claims to support its

recommendation. In the following example, the response includes two paragraphs; the first challenges claim 1, while the second challenges claim 2.

Relying on Potentially Unrepresentative Statistical Results

A GRE Argument might cite statistical evidence from a study, survey, or poll involving a "sample" group or population, then draw a conclusion about a larger group or population that the sample supposedly represents. But in order for a statistical sample to reliably represent a larger population, the sample must meet two requirements:

1. The sample must be significant in size (number), as a portion of the overall population.

2. The sample must be representative of the overall population in terms of relevant characteristics.

GRE Arguments that cite statistics from studies, surveys, and polls often fail to establish either of these two requirements. Of course this failure is by design of the test makers, who are inviting you to call into question the reliability of the evidence. The following example shows how you can handle both problems together, in one paragraph of your response.

Relying on Tainted Results from a Survey or Poll

As you just learned, a GRE Argument might draw some conclusion involving a group based on statistical data about an insufficient or unrepresentative sample. However, this is not the only potential problem with statistical data. The process of collecting the data (i.e., the methodology) might be flawed in a way that calls into question the quality of the data, rendering the data "tainted" and therefore unreliable for the purpose of drawing any conclusions. In order for survey or poll results to be reliable in quality:

1. The survey or poll responses must be credible (truthful and accurate). If respondents have reason to provide incomplete or false responses, the results are tainted and unreliable.

2. The method of collecting the data must be unbiased. If responses are not mandatory, or if the survey's form predisposes subjects to respond in certain ways, then the results are tainted and unreliable.

Assuming That All Things Remain Unchanged over Time

A GRE Argument might rely on evidence collected in the past in order to draw some conclusion about (or make a recommendation for) the present or the future. But unless the Argument provides clear evidence that key circumstances are similar now as they were at the time past, the Argument is vulnerable to criticism. Following is an example.

DOs and DON'TS for Writing Style

According to ETS officials, GRE readers are instructed to place less weight on writing style and mechanics than on content and organization. But this doesn't mean that your writing style won't influence the reader or affect your Analytical Writing score. You can bet that it will! To score high your writing must be:

+ Articulate and precise (through the use of good diction and clear expression)

+ Correct in grammar, mechanics, and usage (conforming to the requirements of

standard written English)

+ Persuasive in style (using rhetorical devices effectively)

+ Varied in sentence length and structure (to add interest and variety as well as to demonstrate maturity and sophistication in writing style)

All of this is easier said than done, of course. Although there's only so much you can do in a few weeks or even a few months to improve your writing, here are some specific style-related guidelines that you can implement right away in your GRE essays.

DO maintain a somewhat formal tone; avoid slang and colloquialisms. Otherwise, instead of hitting a "home run" with your essay, you'll be "out of luck" with the GRE readers, and you'll have to "snake" your way in to a "bottom-barrel" graduate program. Get the idea?

DON'T try to make your point with humor or sarcasm. Not that the GRE readers don't have a sense of humor; it's just that they leave it at the door when they go to work

for ETS.

DONT overuse Latin and other non-English terms.The occasional use of Latin terms and acronyms-such asper se, i.e., and e.g. -is perfectly acceptable. Non-English words used commonly in academic writing-such as vis-a-vis and caveat-are also acceptable.

Just don't overdo it.

(Note: The GRE word processor won't allow you to include diacritical marks, like the one above the "a" in "vis-a-vis." But don't worry about it; again, the GRE readers understand the exam's constraints.)

DON'T try too hard to impress the readers with your vocabulary By all means, try to demonstrate a strong vocabulary. (Notice the words "imprudent,""unfettered," and "pandemic" in my sample Issue essay on page 8). Just don't overdo it; and avoid technical terminology that only specialists and scholars in a specific field can understand.

DO refer to yourself, at your option. Self-references- singular as well as plural are perfectly acceptable, though optional. Just be consistent.

DO be sure your references to the source of the statement or argument are appropriate. If no specific source is provided, try using "speaker" or "statement" in your Issue essay and "author" or "argument" in your Argument essay.