



## **AP<sup>®</sup> English Language and Composition 2012 Free-Response Questions**

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**ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION**

**SECTION II**

**Total time—2 hours**

**Question 1**

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts for one-third of the total essay section score.)

The United States Postal Service (USPS) has delivered communications for more than two centuries. During the nineteenth century, the USPS helped to expand the boundaries of the United States by providing efficient and reliable communication across the country. Between 1790 and 1860 alone, the number of post offices in the United States grew from 75 to over 28,000. With this growth came job opportunities for postal workers and a boom in the cross-country rail system. The twentieth century brought substantial growth to the USPS, including large package delivery and airmail. Over the past decade, however, total mail volume has decreased considerably as competition from electronic mail and various package delivery companies has taken business away from the USPS. The loss of revenue has prompted the USPS to consider cutting back on delivery days and other services.

Carefully read the following seven sources, including the introductory information for each source. Then synthesize information from at least three of the sources and incorporate it into a coherent, well-developed essay that argues a clear position on whether the USPS should be restructured to meet the needs of a changing world, and if so, how.

Make sure your argument is central; use the sources to illustrate and support your reasoning. Avoid merely summarizing the sources. Indicate clearly which sources you are drawing from, whether through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. You may cite the sources as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the descriptions in parentheses.

Source A (Stone)

Source B (graph)

Source C (O’Keefe)

Source D (Hawkins)

Source E (McDevitt)

Source F (Cullen)

Source G (photo)

## Source A

Stone, Daniel. "Flying Like an Eagle?" *Newsweek*.  
*Newsweek*, 5 Oct. 2009. Web. 24 Sept. 2010.

*The following is excerpted from an online article in a national news magazine.*

Anyone who's waited, and waited, in line at the old letter hub knows the service could probably be run better. NEWSWEEK asked a variety of management consultants and business futurists how to turn the old pony express into a sleek, 21st-century moneymaker—or, at the very least, a breaker-even. Listen up, Postal Service (and Congress): for this advice, we'll let you cut in line.

1) Get into the e-business. More people are e-mailing? So meet their needs. "Give every American an e-mail address when they're born," suggests futurist Watts Wacker. Might they look elsewhere for a different one? Sure, but at least you'll maintain relevance in their mind. Plus, you can sell lucrative advertising on those accounts.

2) Increase service. Don't drop from six- to five-day delivery; go the other way, says Kellogg School marketing prof Richard Honack—to all seven. It seems counterintuitive to add service when you're losing money, but people have less faith in the system precisely because of spotty service. Consider tightening hours, but the USPS could be the first carrier to reliably deliver all week.

3) Advertise with coupons. It sounds like an archaic way to attract customers in a new era, but if people are flocking to the Internet, give them an incentive to come back. "We're a coupon-cutting society," says futurist and business strategist Marlene Brown. "Make people feel like there's value added."

4) Make a play for control of government broadband [Internet access]. With Congress considering an expansion of broadband access, why not put it under the USPS, asks futurist David Houle. "That would define the Postal Service as a communications-delivery service, rather than just a team of letter carriers. Don't let the service's tie to Congress make it fizzle. If used right, why not use it as an advantage?"

5) Rebrand. No one knows what the Postal Service stands for, says Wacker. "Fly like an eagle, what does that even mean?" A company's brand is its most valuable tool, or its biggest liability. Contract out to find a new logo and slogan that actually convey what you do and how you do it. And then use them. (In this week's NEWSWEEK magazine, we asked three design firms to get started.)

6) Close branches if you must, but do it strategically. Franchise services by region, posits business strategist Gurumurthy Kalyanaram. You don't need a full-service post office every few blocks in New York, for example. Some centers could be for letters only, others for packages. That way you cut down on staff size and service required to and from each.

7) Reorganize and motivate staff. Paying high wages with inflated job security isn't a competitive strategy. Unions may be fierce, but consultant Peter Cohan thinks management should put employee contracts out to bid. And add incentives: if a worker saves money, give him a percentage. Inversely, put jobs on the line to avoid losses. In other words, run it like a real business.

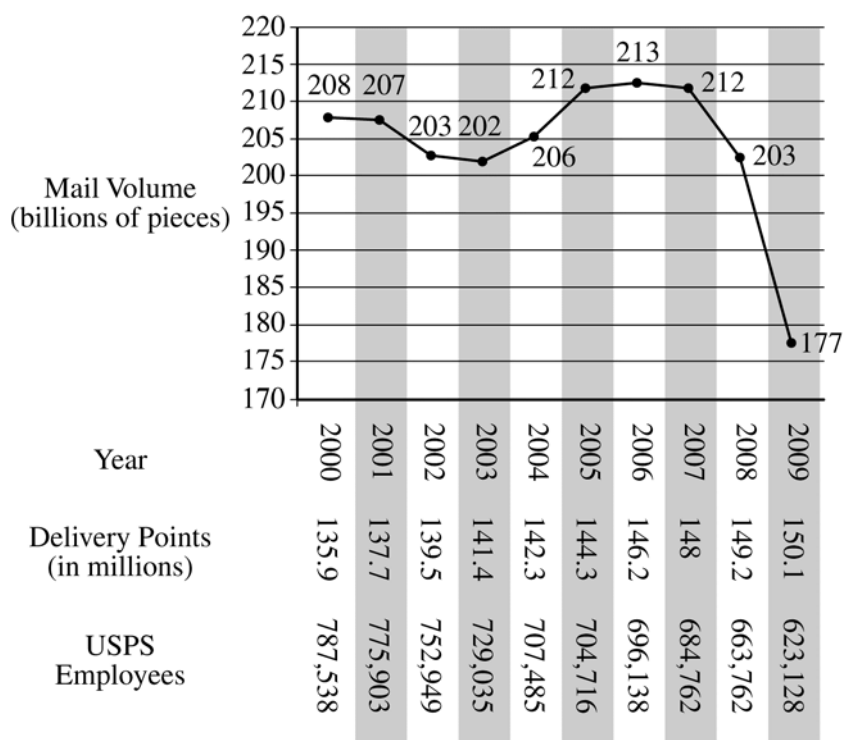
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## Source B

“The Challenge to Deliver: Creating the 21st Century Postal Service: United States Postal Service 2009 Annual Report.” *United States Postal Service*. United States Postal Service, 2009. Web. 24 Sept. 2010.

The following graph is excerpted from the 2009 annual report of the United States Postal Service.

## The Delivery Challenge: Less Mail, More Addresses



Source C

O’Keefe, Ed. “Postal Service Expected to Announce ‘Significant Changes.’ ” *Washington Post*. Washington Post Company, 2 Mar. 2010. Web. 27 Sept. 2010.

*The following is excerpted from an online article in a national newspaper.*

The U.S. Postal Service will release projections Tuesday that confirm for the first time the suspicion that mail volume will never return to pre-recession levels. In response, the agency is pushing anew for a dramatic reshaping of how Americans get and send their letters and packages.

Customers are continuing to migrate to the Internet and to cheaper standard-mail options, and away from the Postal Service’s signature product—first-class mail, Postmaster General John E. Potter will report in announcing the projections.

The Postal Service experienced a 13 percent drop in mail volume last fiscal year, more than double any previous decline, and lost \$3.8 billion. The projections anticipate steeper drops in mail volume and revenue over the next 10 years, and mounting labor costs only complicate the agency’s path to firm fiscal footing.

In an effort to offset some of the losses, Potter seeks more flexibility in the coming year to set delivery schedules, prices and labor costs. The changes could mean an end to Saturday deliveries, longer delivery times for letters and packages, higher postage-stamp prices that exceed the rate of inflation, and the potential for future layoffs.

“At the end of the day, I’m convinced that if we make the changes that are necessary, we can continue to provide universal service for Americans for decades to come,” Potter said Monday. “We can turn back from the red to the black, but there are some significant changes we need to make.”

The postmaster general called for many of these changes last year but failed to convince lawmakers. This time he’s armed with \$4.8 million worth of outside studies that conclude that, without drastic changes, the mail agency will face even more staggering losses.

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**Source D**

Hawkins, Dawn. "Advantages of Using the United States Postal Service." *Associated Content*. Associated Content, 14 Aug. 2009. Web. 27 Sept. 2010.

*The following is excerpted from an online article.*

Note: The article by Dawn Hawkins does not appear on this website due to copyright constraints.

## Source E

McDevitt, Caitlin. "To Postal Workers, No Mail Is 'Junk': With Revenues Falling, the Post Office Owes Its Future to Stuff We Throw Out." *Newsweek*. Newsweek, 27 Sept. 2008. Web. 28 Sept. 2010.

*The following is excerpted from an online article in a national news magazine.*

These are tough times for the U.S. Postal Service. It's being pummeled by high fuel costs. The soft economy is crimping the overall volume of mail, which fell 5.5 percent in the past year. Its business is also falling as Americans opt for e-mail over birthday cards and thank-you notes. Now comes another threat: consumers like Colleen Plimpton of Bethel, Conn. Earlier this year Plimpton became tired of the credit-card offers, catalogs and advertising fliers that clogged her mailbox. So in February she paid \$20 to GreenDimes, a firm that helps consumers reduce their inflow of "junk mail" by contacting businesses on their behalf. "[Junk mailers] are cutting down trees willy-nilly, and that has got to stop," says Plimpton.

To the post office, consumers like her are a serious threat. "Efforts to convince people not to receive mail are really going to hurt," says Steve Kearney, a Postal Service senior vice president.

The Postal Service lost \$1.1 billion in its latest quarter. That number would be even larger if it weren't for direct mailings, which now constitute 52 percent of mail volume, up from 38 percent in 1990. Revenue from direct mail "is the financial underpinning of the Postal Service—it could not survive without it," says Michael Coughlin, former deputy postmaster.

But 89 percent of consumers say in polls that they'd prefer not to receive direct-marketing mail; 44 percent of it is never opened. That's why 19 state legislatures have debated Do Not Mail lists, which would function just like the federal Do Not Call list. But partly due to opposition from postal workers, not a single bill has passed. When Colorado state Rep. Sara Gagliardi held a public meeting on a bill she was sponsoring, she was surprised when a crowd of postal workers showed up to express vehement opposition.

Both the Postal Service and the Direct Marketing Association say direct mail is a key source of customers for small businesses. "Advertising mail is a very valuable product to many consumers," says Sam Pulcrano, Postal Service vice president for sustainability, who points to two-for-one pizza coupons as especially welcome surprises. To blunt opposition, the DMA recently launched the Mail Moves America coalition to lobby against the restrictions.

GreenDimes founder Pankaj Shah isn't sympathetic. Not only is his company providing a service to consumers, he says, but it has also used its fees to plant more than 1 million trees. "We're all about giving consumers choice, not about bringing down the post office," he says. Still, as more consumers opt out of junk mail, rain, sleet and gloom of night may seem like the least of mail carriers' problems.

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## Source F

Cullen, Kevin. "Sending, Getting 'Real' Mail Still Magic." *Commercial-News*. Commercial-News, 20 Mar. 2010. Web. 28 Sept. 2010.

*The following is excerpted from an online article.*

E-mail is fast and simple, but to me an old-fashioned, handwritten letter has value in this speed-obsessed world. I have deleted hundreds of e-mails in one fell swoop, without taking the time to reread them, but I still have a letter that my Grandpa Cullen sent to me when I was 8.

I like to receive letters, thank-you notes, birthday cards and Christmas cards, and I like to send them too. Even today, it costs just 44 cents to send one from Danville to Sandybeach, Hawaii, or Frozentoes, Alaska . . . a genuine bargain.

Historians worry about the disappearance of permanent, written records. If there were no "real" letters, diaries, governmental files, handbills, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers and books—real ink on real paper—what would be left? Will electronic records even survive for 100 years? And what will happen if they don't? . . .

The Postal Service has been required to pay its own costs since 1970, and it made a profit until 2006. Since then, declining mail volume has created major problems. It delivered 17 percent fewer pieces in 2009 than it did in 2006, and lost \$1.4 billion. That money was borrowed from the U.S. Treasury.

More declines in volume, coupled with the soaring cost of retiree health benefits, could create \$238 billion in losses over the next 10 years, Postmaster General John Potter recently said. Approximately half of the present 300,000 postal workers are expected to retire by 2020.

Eliminating Saturday mail delivery would save \$40 billion over a decade. Potter also wants to close and consolidate 154 post offices. More and more part-time workers would be hired as full-time workers retire.

Clearly, mail delivery isn't going away entirely. It's an essential government function, like feeding the Army. No private contractor will carry a letter from the Florida Keys to Alaska for 44 cents.

I'm going to do my bit by sending more letters.

Our Christmas card list will be expanded. Birthday cards will go to more friends and family. And I'm going to thank more people, in writing, for more things. I will send more cards and letters to offer encouragement, interest and sympathy. It shows good breeding.

I have shoeboxes filled with kind letters sent to me through the years by readers who liked something that I wrote. I always thanked them by return mail. Many friendships began that way. Those messages weren't deleted 100 at a time; they were saved, and they can be reread. . . .

It's satisfying to write a "real" letter, put it in an envelope and drop it into the mailbox. A day or two later, I know, someone will hold it and connect with me. Who knows? It may be read by someone I will never meet, 100 years from now.

Not a bad investment, for 44 cents.

"Sending, Getting 'Real' Mail Still Magic," by Kevin Cullen, copyright © 2010 by Commercial News. Used by permission.



**Source G**

*Ochopee Post Office, Florida, 1970s. N.d. Photograph.  
Collection of the United States Postal Service.  
USPS.com. Web. 9 May 2011.*

*The following photo, from the Web site of the United States Postal Service, shows the Ochopee Post Office, the smallest free-standing post office in the United States.*



Ochopee Post Office, Florida, 1970s © 1970 United States Postal Service. All Rights Reserved. Used with Permission.

# AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

## 2012 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 1

The score should reflect a judgment of the essay's quality as a whole. Remember that students had only 15 minutes to read the sources and 40 minutes to write; the essay, therefore, is not a finished product and should not be judged by standards appropriate for an out-of-class assignment. Evaluate the essay as a draft, making certain to reward students for what they do well.

All essays, even those scored 8 or 9, may contain occasional lapses in analysis, prose style, or mechanics. Such features should enter into the holistic evaluation of an essay's overall quality. In no case may an essay with many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics be scored higher than a 2.

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- 9** Essays earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for a score of 8 and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their argument, thorough in development, or impressive in their control of language.

### **8 Effective**

Essays earning a score of 8 **effectively** develop a position on whether the USPS should be restructured to meet the needs of a changing world, and if so, how. They develop their position by effectively synthesizing\* at least three of the sources. The evidence and explanations used are appropriate and convincing. Their prose demonstrates a consistent ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing but is not necessarily flawless.

- 7** Essays earning a score of 7 meet the criteria for a score of 6 but provide more complete explanation, more thorough development, or a more mature prose style.

### **6 Adequate**

Essays earning a score of 6 **adequately** develop a position on whether the USPS should be restructured to meet the needs of a changing world, and if so, how. They develop their position by adequately synthesizing at least three of the sources. The evidence and explanations used are appropriate and sufficient. The language may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear.

- 5** Essays earning a score of 5 develop a position on whether the USPS should be restructured to meet the needs of a changing world, and if so, how. They develop their position by synthesizing at least three sources, but how they use and explain sources is somewhat uneven, inconsistent, or limited. The argument is generally clear, and the sources generally develop the student's position, but the links between the sources and the argument may be strained. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the student's ideas.

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\* For the purposes of scoring, *synthesis* means using sources to develop a position and citing them accurately.

# AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

## 2012 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 1 (continued)

#### 4 Inadequate

Essays earning a score of 4 **inadequately** develop a position on whether the USPS should be restructured to meet the needs of a changing world, and if so, how. They develop their position by synthesizing at least two sources, but the evidence or explanations used may be inappropriate, insufficient, or less convincing. The sources may dominate the student's attempts at development; the link between the argument and the sources may be weak; or the student may misunderstand, misrepresent, or oversimplify the sources. The prose generally conveys the student's ideas but may be less consistent in controlling the elements of effective writing.

- 3** Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for a score of 4 but demonstrate less success in developing a position on whether the USPS should be restructured to meet the needs of a changing world, and if so, how. They are less perceptive in their understanding of the sources, or their explanation or examples may be particularly limited or simplistic. The essays may show less maturity in control of writing.

#### 2 Little Success

Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in developing a position on whether the USPS should be restructured to meet the needs of a changing world, and if so, how. They may merely allude to knowledge gained from reading the sources rather than citing the sources themselves. These essays may misread the sources, fail to develop a position, or substitute a simpler task by merely summarizing or categorizing the sources or by merely responding to the prompt tangentially with unrelated, inaccurate, or inappropriate explanation. The prose of these essays often demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing, such as grammatical problems, a lack of development or organization, or a lack of control.

- 1** Essays earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for a score of 2 but are undeveloped, especially simplistic in their explanation, weak in their control of writing, or do not allude to or cite even one source.
- 0** Indicates an off-topic response, one that merely repeats the prompt, an entirely crossed-out response, a drawing, or a response in a language other than English.

— Indicates an entirely blank response.

## Sample 1A

In a fast-paced society of sleek innovations and modern technologies, it can be easy to get lost in the hype of popular new gadgets and trends while moving away from the traditions and enterprises that were so vital to the United States as a developing country. One of these pioneering enterprises, the United States Postal Service (USPS), has become a casualty of the innovation we have come to laud so highly. While we should not discount the progress made in the past decades that has facilitated a switch from traditional to faster and sleeker technologies, it is also paramount that we support and maintain traditions and symbols of the American dream like USPS by applying modern principles and revamping the company's image and organization.

The United States Postal Service not only serves to deliver mail, get money orders, and set up P.O. boxes, but also to remain a symbol of our country's development and progress. The USPS serves to remind the US population of where our country has been and can give citizens a feeling of pride that can be matched by few other countries. With this reminder of where we have been comes a respect for the traditions of our ancestors. Cullen argues, "E-mail is fast and simple, but to me, an old-fashioned handwritten letter has value in this speed-obsessed world." While new technology and trends come and go, a personal touch and sentimental value give the USPS a more profound speed of ease. Hawkins agrees, "It's nice to sometimes get a personally written letter in the mail. Nothing replaces a personally written letter to an old friend. It gives the message a more intimate feeling." The USPS represents more than a graph of profit or delivery points. It represents a long-standing tradition that unites Americans.

Furthermore, the USPS connects all citizens of the United States. While we may come from all different parts of the world, we all have at least one thing in common; we get our mail from the US Postal Service. We all support our government, and as of 2009, more than 600,000 USPS employees. Hawkins asserts, "When you send a letter or your bills through the mail, you are helping other Americans keep their jobs." While the internet may have certain advantages, we must keep in mind the larger and frankly more important issues at hand; not delivery time or total convenience, but national pride and support. Not only do we support our neighbors, but according to McDevitt, we are also supporting small businesses.

The USPS must be maintained, but to do this effectively, certain important aspects must be changed and reorganized. First, the USPS must reorganize and revitalize its business strategy. From 2007 to 2009 the volume of mail carried decreased drastically by 35 billion pieces while delivery points increased by 2.1 million. This sort of business model is not practical or efficient. In order to continue, the USPS must take significant action. Stone offers, "Close branches if you must, but do it strategically." Decreasing delivery points by closing branches will make business more efficient. Postmaster General John E. Potter is confident that "At the end of the day...we can continue to provide universal service for Americans for decades to come." With the right kind of restructuring, distribution can become more profitable, and the business can return to its pre-recession levels.

Furthermore, in order to meet the new and modern population, USPS must revitalize its image. Stone argues, "A company's brand is its most valuable tool or its biggest liability." The USPS, while an important tradition, cannot stay stagnant in its mode of branding itself. This is an area in which the USPS should adapt to the new technologies available and the trends of communication. The USPS needs to be known to US citizens, and its image as part of United States history should be capitalized on. The company should also follow the "green" initiatives that appeal to so many consumers. Colken Plimpton stresses, "(Junk mailers) are cutting down trees willy-nilly, and that has got to stop." The USPS should use the opinions of Plimpton and Stone in tandem to create a new image conscious of the environment, traditional, and American values.

In conclusion, the US Postal Service is an important tradition and symbol of our country and should be supported and maintained. That being said, companies must learn to adapt, however, this does not mean it must lose its traditional values and charm.

## Sample 1B

It is your cousin's third birthday next week. Would she be more excited to receive a birthday card in the mail with funny characters, or a boring e-mail that she probably can't read? The United States Postal Service hand-delivers your cousin's birthday card to her and connects the both of you even when you are miles apart. Although you may be able to pay your bills online and contact friends and family via the internet, sending a card or letter comes with a special touch that no technology or other company can compensate for. The USPS should not cut back on delivery dates and services, but instead, rebuild its efficiency. USPS needs to catch up to America and provide customers with a more reliable postal service. In order to restructure, USPS needs to hire workers on commission so they are motivated to encourage Americans to use USPS. USPS also needs to lower postage stamp prices, decrease delivery times for letters and packages, and offer 7-day delivery service. USPS should be restructured to catch up to technology because it can provide everything that FedEx or UPS can, not only better, but it does the job of an email with more emotion than any other communication service in America.

The USPS needs to impress Americans all over again in order to get them to use the postal service. Firstly, they need to increase their service. Increasing their service can potentially lead to Americans trusting USPS and viewing them as reliable. USPS needs to "[consider tightening hours] so 'the USPS could be the first carrier to reliably deliver all week'" (Source A). FedEx or UPS may not deliver on weekends, for example, but if USPS offers weekend delivery, many Americans may be inclined to use that service. Secondly, USPS needs to hire workers on commission. Commission motivates workers to encourage Americans to use the postal service, in turn expanding the business of USPS. Also, USPS needs to work more diligently and efficiently. They must hire workers specialized in certain jobs. If USPS gets that right, then the delivery rate should increase, say from a letter reaching New York from Arizona in 3 days instead of a week. Thirdly, USPS needs to further lower its prices for delivering packages because FedEx and UPS are more expensive. With Americans trying to save more, if USPS has cheaper rates along with reliable services, of course, consumers would choose USPS. As well, USPS needs to decrease postage stamp prices. The end result should be beneficial for USPS. Although, I think USPS should continue making an effort to impress Americans, "the projections anticipate steep drops in mail volume and revenue over the next 10 years!" (Source C). But that can change with a renewal of USPS's services. Once the company makes the changes previously suggested, the trend of decrease in mail volume shall not continue.

Aren't you always excited when you receive a letter in the mail and you know it's from your friend? I know I'm fiercely tearing away at the envelope. Receiving a letter from your friend "gives the message a more intimate feeling" (Source D) compared to receiving an email in size 12 Times New Roman font. Letters in the mail are much more sentimental, especially because they're handwritten, and you can always read the letters again and again from a box of letters you keep. USPS is a postal service that enables you to stay in contact with family and friends and savor these moments in a shoebox instead of an inbox. Although "email is great for a quick note here and there" (Source D), there's no guarantee that a hundred years from now you will still have those memories. What if your email crashes? All these connections you made on your email disappear. However, it may seem like a more practical, efficient way of communication but is dry and unreliable, unlike USPS.

Also, email is full of junk mail. I know I'm constantly getting spammed, which is frustrating. Email does not compensate for the benefits of letters at all. In addition, you can't send a postcard through email, and I travel a lot, so when I'm traveling, I like to send postcards to family and friends to let them know where I am. Plus, they get a little taste of the country I'm in through the image on the postcard. USPS, every day, builds connections through its postal service. Lastly, there are people in America without access to the internet. So how would they possibly communicate? The USPS does everything

it can to ensure your loved ones stay in touch. For example, in Source G, there is a mini post office in a small town where the internet may not be accessible. USPS, even in a small town, ensures that Americans have the ability to communicate. Although the small post office may not make tons of profit, it does so out of goodness and care.

The USPS should be restructured and come back much stronger to win over Americans. By providing reliable service, weekend deliveries, lower prices, and faster service, it can impress Americans and gain popularity once again. The USPS provides services that not even FedEx or UPS does. With optimism and will.

## Sample 1C

I believe that the USPS should not be restructured to meet the needs of a changing world for several reasons.

The first reason is that personal, handwritten letters are much more significant. You can actually keep, hold, and touch a handwritten letter, rather than an email that you can only read on the computer or a cell phone. (Source D)

The second reason is, let's say a famous person wrote you a handwritten letter over an email. The letter is obviously going to be worth some money over the email.

Another reason I don't think the USPS should change for this world is because if you have an important document you would like to save and someone sends it to you in an email, and you accidentally delete it. It would be much easier to keep and save a handwritten letter for as long as you want to or as long as you would need to.

I think people would appreciate it if the USPS changed, and people would appreciate if they didn't change. But at the end of the day, I don't believe the USPS is going to change the way they do things.



# AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

## 2012 SCORING COMMENTARY

### Question 1

#### Overview

This question was intended to engage students in a multifaceted writing task that exhibits synthetic, text-based thinking and writing. Synthesis is essentially the integration of parts into a whole. This year, as in years past, the prompt specified that the “whole” of this synthesis task was to be the student’s own argument in response to the question of whether the United States Postal Service should be restructured, and if so, how? The “parts” of the task might be identified as the ideas and perspectives the student gleans from the sources and finds useful in formulating a response. Students could also draw on prior knowledge gained through observation, experience, or reading to answer this question, but they were not required to do so.

A full response to this question required students to take the following steps: (1) **critical reading** of seven sources about the past, present, and future prospects of the United States Postal Service; (2) the **critical use of selected sources** to piece together (synthesize) an understanding of the test question and its implications, and to inform the construction of an original response to the question; (3) clear **attribution to the appropriate sources** for the facts, perspectives, and arguments these sources contributed to the student’s argument. Sources could function to provoke, inspire, and challenge as well as support a student’s own argument.

#### Sample: 1A

##### Score: 9

The student takes a nuanced approach to establishing an argument in this essay, suggesting simultaneously that the USPS should be preserved in order to remain “a symbol of our countries [sic] development and progress” but yet must be changed, reorganized, and revitalized to meet the needs of a changing world. The complexity of this position requires that the student ably synthesize the sources that individually make competing claims rather than collate a set of related sources to substantiate a single and simpler position. Throughout the essay, sources are effectively used to convincingly support and develop the student’s argument. Moreover, the student does not only reproduce the content of these sources but is able to assess their formal limitations. For example, the student dismisses the project of Source B, a graph that illustrates a dramatic nosedive in post office revenue, by claiming that the “USPS represents more than a graph of profit or delivery points. It represents a long standing tradition that unites Americans.” The essay earned a score of 9, because it is especially thorough in its development and sophisticated in its argument.

#### Sample: 1B

##### Score: 5

This essay does present the argument that the USPS needs to be restructured, but this argument is uneven in its development. That unevenness is in part a consequence of how sources are synthesized to offer support for the argument. On the one hand, one series of sources is used to indicate the many specific ways the USPS might revitalize its operations to meet the needs of a changing world. On the other, the student cites a source that celebrates traditional modes of letter delivery and the personal touch it enables, the connection established when a handwritten card arrives at one’s doorstep. A more fully adequate essay would integrate these positions clearly. It is entirely plausible to argue that the post office might adapt to a changing world yet retain traditional elements of its service, but the essay lacks the organization necessary to sustain such an argument. Moreover, in the discussion of strategies the post office needs to pursue, the essay employs inconsistent evidence and explanations to support the student’s argument: some solutions

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**2012 SCORING COMMENTARY**

**Question 1 (continued)**

based in the sources (for example, the USPS might consider being the only carrier to deliver reliably all seven days of the week) are reasonable and appropriate, but other solutions (for example, paying postal workers on commission) are not as convincing.

**Sample: 1C**

**Score: 2**

The essay demonstrates little success in developing a position on the restructuring of the post office. The student alludes to an idea gleaned from a single source (Source D) but then engages in a tangential discussion of the value of handwritten letters by famous people. The essay then proceeds to elaborate on the general value of print over electronic sources but never directly connects this idea to an argument about restructuring the post office. In the conclusion, the student shifts the argument from “the USPS should not be restructured [*sic*]” to the unsupported and undeveloped opinion that, although some people would like it if the USPS changed and others would not, the USPS is not “going to change the way they do things.”