

how many can then come in second? Four. Once one of them comes in second, she's out of the picture, so how many of them can come in third? Three. And now you're done because all three slots have been filled. The answer is $5 \times 4 \times 3$, which is 60.

To solve a permutation

- Figure out how many slots you have.
- Write down the number of options for each slot.
- Multiply them.

The difference between a permutation and a combination is that in a combination, the order is irrelevant. A **combination** is just a group, and the order of elements within the group doesn't matter. For example, suppose you were asked to go to the store and bring home three different types of ice cream. Now suppose that when you got to the store, there were five flavors in the freezer—chocolate, vanilla, strawberry, butter pecan, and mocha. How many combinations of three ice cream flavors could you bring home? Notice that the order doesn't matter, because bringing home chocolate, strawberry, and vanilla is the same thing as bringing home strawberry, vanilla, and chocolate. One way to solve this is the brute force method; in other words, write out every combination.

Combination problems usually ask for groups, teams, or committees.

VCS VCB VCM VSB VSM VBM CSB CSM CBM SBM

That's 10 combinations, but there's a quicker way to do it. Start by filling in the three slots as you would with a permutation (there are

three slots because you're supposed to bring home three different types of ice cream). Five flavors could be in the first slot, four could be in the second, and three could be in the third. So far, that's $5 \times 4 \times 3$. But remember, this takes into account all the different orders that three flavors can be arranged in. We don't want that, because the order doesn't matter in a combination. So we have to divide $5 \times 4 \times 3$ by the number of ways of arranging three things. In how many ways can three things be arranged? That's $3!$, $3 \times 2 \times 1$, which is 6. Thus we end up with $\frac{5 \times 4 \times 3}{3 \times 2 \times 1}$. Cancel the denominators, to find that all that remains is $5 \times 2 = 10$. Bingo.

Does the order matter?

To solve a combination

- Figure out how many slots you have.
- Fill in the slots as you would a permutation.
- Divide by the factorial of the number of slots.

The denominator of the fraction will always cancel out completely, so it's best to cancel first before you multiply.

Here's an example:

Brooke wants to hang three paintings in a row on her wall. She has six paintings to choose from. How many arrangements of paintings on the wall can she create?

- 6
- 30
- 90
- 120
- 720

Always cross off wrong answer choices on your scratch paper.

Here's How to Crack It

The first thing you need to do is determine whether the order matters. In this case it does, because we're arranging the paintings on the wall. Putting the Monet on the left and the Van Gogh in the middle isn't the same arrangement as putting the Van Gogh on the left and the Monet in the middle. This is a permutation question. We have three slots to fill because we're arranging three paintings. There are 6 paintings that could fill the first slot, 5 paintings that could fill the second slot, and 4 paintings that could fill the third slot. So we have $6 \times 5 \times 4$, which equals 120. Thus, the correct answer is (D).

Here's another example:

A pizza may be ordered with any of eight possible toppings.

Quantity A

The number of different ways to order a pizza with three different toppings

Quantity B

The number of different ways to order a pizza with five different toppings

- Quantity A is greater.
- Quantity B is greater.
- The two quantities are equal.
- The relationship cannot be determined from the information given.

Here's How to Crack It

First, note that for both quantities we're dealing with a combination, because the order of toppings doesn't matter. A pizza with mushrooms and pepperoni is the same thing as a pizza with pepperoni and mushrooms. Let's figure out Quantity A first.

We have eight toppings and we're picking three of them. That means we have three slots to fill. There are 8 toppings that could fill the first slot, 7 that could fill the second slot, and 6 that could fill the third, so we have $8 \times 7 \times 6$. Since this is a combination, we have to divide by the factorial of the number of slots. In this case we have three slots, so we have to divide by $3!$, or $3 \times 2 \times 1$. So our problem looks like this: $\frac{8 \times 7 \times 6}{3 \times 2 \times 1}$. To make the multiplication easier, let's

cancel first. The 6 on top will cancel with the 3×2 on the bottom, leaving us with $\frac{8 \times 7}{1}$, which is 56. Thus, there are 56 ways to order a three-topping pizza with eight toppings to choose from. Now let's look at Quantity B.

We still have eight toppings, but this time we're picking five of them so we have five slots to fill. There are 8 toppings that could fill the first slot, 7 that could fill the second slot, 6 that could fill the third, 5 that could fill the fourth, and 4 that could fill the fifth. That's $8 \times 7 \times 6 \times 5 \times 4$, but we still have to divide by the factorial of the number of slots. We have five slots, so that means we need to divide by $5!$, or $5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1$. Thus we have $\frac{8 \times 7 \times 6 \times 5 \times 4}{5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1}$. We definitely want to cancel first here, rather than doing all that multiplication. The 5 on top will cancel with the 5 on the bottom. Likewise, the 4 on top will cancel with the 4 on the bottom. The 6 on top will cancel with the 3×2 on the bottom, leaving us again with $\frac{8 \times 7}{1}$, which is 56. Therefore, there are also 56 ways to order a five-topping pizza with eight toppings to choose from. The two quantities are equal, so the answer is (C).

Let's try one more:

Nicole needs to form a committee of 3 from a group of 8 research attorneys to study possible changes to the Superior Court. If two of the attorneys are too inexperienced to serve together on the committee, how many different arrangements of committees can Nicole form?

- 20
- 30
- 50
- 56
- 336

Here's How to Crack It

This problem is a little more complicated than an ordinary combination problem, because an extra condition has been placed on the committee. Without that condition, this would be a fairly ordinary combination problem, and we'd simply calculate how many groups of three can be created with eight people to choose from.

There's more than one way to approach this problem. First, you should realize that there are two ways that we could form this committee. We could have three experienced attorneys, or we could have two experienced attorneys and one inexperienced attorney. If we find the number of ways to create each of those two possibilities, we can add them together to get the answer. It's fairly straightforward to calculate the number of ways to have three

experienced attorneys on a committee. There are three slots to fill, and we have 6 options for the first slot, 5 for the second, and 4 for the third. Here the order doesn't matter, so we divide by $3!$ to get $\frac{6 \times 5 \times 4}{3 \times 2 \times 1} = 20$. Thus, there are 20 ways to create the committee using three experienced attorneys. What about creating a committee that has two experienced attorneys and one inexperienced attorney? We have 6 options for the first experienced attorney and 5 options for the second. Order doesn't matter so we divide by $2!$. So far we have $\frac{6 \times 5}{2 \times 1}$. Next we have 2 options for the inexperienced attorney, so now we have to multiply by 2, and our calculation is $\frac{6 \times 5}{2 \times 1} \times \frac{2}{1} = 30$. As you can see, there are 30 ways to create the committee using two experienced attorneys and one inexperienced attorney. Adding 20 and 30 gives us 50 total committees, so the answer is (C).

Here's another way that you could solve the problem. If there were no conditions placed on the committee, we could just calculate $\frac{8 \times 7 \times 6}{3 \times 2 \times 1}$, which would give us 56 committees. But we know some of those committees are not allowed; any committee that has the two inexperienced attorneys on it isn't allowed. How many of these types of committees are there? Let's call the inexperienced attorneys A and B. An unacceptable committee would be A B __, in

which the last slot could be filled by any of the experienced attorneys. Since there are 6 experienced attorneys, there are 6 unacceptable committees. Subtracting them from 56 gives us 50 acceptable committees. Hey, the answer's still (C)!

FUNCTIONS AND THE GRE

f(x) Notation

ETS often employs the use of function notation to create difficult problems. Generally speaking, the function notation is a style of math problem that causes test takers to be nervous. The function notation, $f(x)$, is unfamiliar to look at, seems difficult and involved, and evokes memories of graphs and charting lines that you may have learned in high school geometry.

The good news is that pure function problems on the GRE are much more straightforward than that and become very manageable if you utilize Plugging In strategies.

The easiest way to think about a function question is to look at an example. Take $f(x) = x + 2$, for instance. All this problem is stating is that for any value of x , the function $f(x)$ is that value plus 2. Let's say that $x = 3$; therefore, to solve this problem, take the value of x and plug it into the given equation. So if $x = 3$, the equation now reads $f(3) = 3 + 2$, or $f(3) = 5$. To solve function notation problems, all you need to do is read the instructions carefully and fill in the values for the variables where appropriate. If you used the same equation, but the value of x is 10, then the function is now $f(10) = 10 + 2$, so $f(10) = 12$.

Sometimes a function problem gives a restriction such as $x \neq 0$. If this is the case, you know that x could be equal to any value but 0, and this is generally for a good reason. If $f(x) = \frac{2}{x}$, then x cannot equal 0 because a number cannot be divided by 0.

Try this example of a function question on the GRE.

If $-3 \leq g \leq 2$ and $f(g) = -2g$ and g is an integer, then which of the following integers could be a value of $f(g)$?

Indicate all such integers.

- 6
- 5
- 2
- 0
- 2
- 4
- 6

Here's How to Crack It

This is a function problem with restrictions, so find all the different values that can be plugged in for g . Since g is an integer that is equal to or between -3 and 2 , then there is a range for its values. Therefore, $f(g)$ (which equals $-2g$) is all the integer values between the high and low end of the range of g multiplied by 2. In other words, Plug In 2 and -3 for g in the function and figure out what the range is. If $g = -3$, then $f(g)$ is $f(-3) = -2(-3) = 6$. And if $g = 2$, then $f(g)$ is $f(2) = -2(2) = -4$. So the range of $f(g)$ is $-4 \leq f(g) \leq 6$. Choices (A) and (B) are less than -4 and fall out of the range. The

rest of the integers fall in the range, so they are possible values of $f(g)$. Therefore, the correct answer is (C), (D), (E), (F), and (G).

Evaluating functions is all about following the directions. Just Plug In the values for the variable and solve.

Functions with Uncommon Symbols: #*μ°χ

The GRE also tries to scare students using functions in another way: picking strange symbols and putting them in a problem. When you see a funny symbol that you have never seen before, don't stress out! It's just a function problem in disguise. Follow the directions to find the correct answer.

A problem with funny symbols may look something like the following.

If the operation χ is defined for all integers x and y as $x \chi y = x^2 + y - 2$, then which of the following is equal to $4 \chi -3$?

- 21
- 17
- 15
- 11
- 10

Here's How to Crack It

Remember, this is a function problem, so just follow the directions. The problem wants to know the value of $4 \chi -3$, and it states that $x \chi y = x^2 + y - 2$. To solve this problem, Plug In $x = 4$ and $y = -3$. So $4 \chi -3 = 4^2 + (-3) - 2$. Now, solve: $4 \chi -3 = 16 - 3 - 2 = 11$. The correct answer is (D).

You may get a different symbol when you get another problem like this, but the process is still the same. Just Plug In the values given for the variables and solve the problem. If you have worked your way through this book and mastered the content, then there won't be any actual mathematical symbols on the GRE that are unfamiliar to you. If you see a symbol like that, it's a function problem!

Let's look at one more example.

For any nonnegative integer x , let $x^* = x - 1$.

Quantity A

$$\frac{15^*}{3^*}$$

Quantity B

$$\left(\frac{15}{3}\right)^*$$

- Quantity A is greater.
- Quantity B is greater.
- The two quantities are equal.
- The relationship cannot be determined from the information given.

Here's How to Crack It

Just follow the directions: $15^* = 15 - 1$, or 14, and $3^* = 3 - 1$, or 2. So Quantity A is $\frac{14}{2}$, or 7. Don't forget PEMDAS for Quantity B. First, $\frac{15}{3}$ is 5. Then, $5^* = 5 - 1$, or 4. So because Quantity A is 7 and Quantity B is 4, the correct answer is (A).

Groups

Group problems, although not too common on the GRE, can be troublesome if you don't know how to set them up.

You might see one group problem on the GRE.

When confronted by a group problem, use the group equation:

$$T = G_1 + G_2 - B + N$$

In the equation, T represents the Total, G_1 is one group, G_2 is the second group, B is for the members in both groups and N is for the members in neither group. Here's an example of a typical group problem.

A biologist studying breeding groups noted that of 225 birds tagged for the study, 85 birds made nests in pine trees, 175 made nests in oak trees, and 40 birds did not build nests in either type of tree. How many birds built nests in both types of trees?

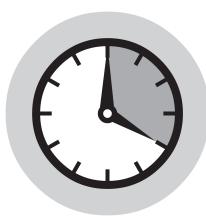
- 45
- 60
- 75
- 80
- 125

Here's How to Crack It

Let's use the group equation. The total is 225, one group consists of 85 birds, the other group has 175 birds in it, and we know that 40 birds built nests in neither type of tree. Our equation would look like this:

$$225 = 85 + 175 - B + 40$$

All we have to do is solve for B. Simplifying the equation gives us $225 = 300 - B$, so B must equal 75. Choice (C) is our answer.



Wrapping Up Math

You're almost done with the Math section. Tackle the Math Drills on the following pages. Then, give yourself a break. Take a walk, eat a snack, or meet up with a pal and give yourself some downtime before you dive into Part IV, the Analytical Writing Section.

Et Cetera Drill

[Click here](#) to download a PDF of Et Cetera Drill.

Here are some math questions to practice on. Remember to check your answers when you finish. You can find the answers in Part V.

1 of 10

A bowl contains 15 marbles, all of which are either red or blue. If the number of red marbles is one more than the number of blue marbles, what is the probability that a marble selected at random is blue?

$\frac{1}{15}$

$\frac{2}{15}$

$\frac{7}{15}$

$\frac{1}{2}$

$\frac{8}{15}$

2 of 10

If $Y(x) = 10x - 1$, what is $Y(5) - Y(3)$?

15

18

19

20

46

3 of 10

For all positive integer values of x , $\#x = 2^{-x}$.

Quantity A

#8

Quantity B

#4

- Quantity A is greater.
- Quantity B is greater.
- The two quantities are equal.
- The relationship cannot be determined from the information given.

4 of 10

At a recent dog show, there were 5 finalists. One of the finalists was awarded “Best in Show” and another finalist was awarded “Honorable Mention.” In how many ways could the two awards be given out?

5 of 10

Company X budgets \$90,000 total on advertising for all of its products per year. Company X budgets \$40,000 for all advertising for product A and \$30,000 for all advertising for product B. From the budgets for products A and B, \$15,000 is budgeted for advertisements that feature both products used as a system.

Quantity A

The total amount
Company X budgets
for advertising
products other than
products A and B

Quantity B

\$20,000

- Quantity A is greater.
- Quantity B is greater.
- The two quantities are equal.
- The relationship cannot be determined from the information given.

6 of 10

Lee randomly selects a 2-digit prime number less than 50. What is the probability that the tens digit is greater than the units digit?

- $\frac{3}{14}$
- $\frac{3}{11}$
- $\frac{3}{8}$
- $\frac{1}{2}$
- $\frac{8}{11}$

7 of 10

An elected official wants to take five members of his staff to an undisclosed secure location. What is the minimum number of staff members the elected official must employ in order to have at least 20 different groups that could be taken to the location?

- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

11

8 of 10

For all real numbers x and y , if $x \# y = x(x - y)$, then $x \# (x \# y) =$

- $x^2 - xy$
- $x^2 - 2xy$
- $x^3 - x^2 - xy$
- $x^3 - (xy)^2$
- $x^2 - x^3 + x^2y$

9 of 10

A jar contains 12 marbles. Each is either yellow or green and there are twice as many yellow marbles as green marbles. If two marbles are to be selected from the jar at random, what is the probability that exactly one of each color is selected?

- $\frac{8}{33}$
- $\frac{16}{33}$
- $\frac{1}{2}$
- $\frac{17}{33}$
- $\frac{25}{33}$

10 of 10

A set of 10 points lies in a plane such that no three points are collinear.

Quantity A

The number of distinct triangles that can be created from the set

Quantity B

The number of distinct quadrilaterals that can be created from the set

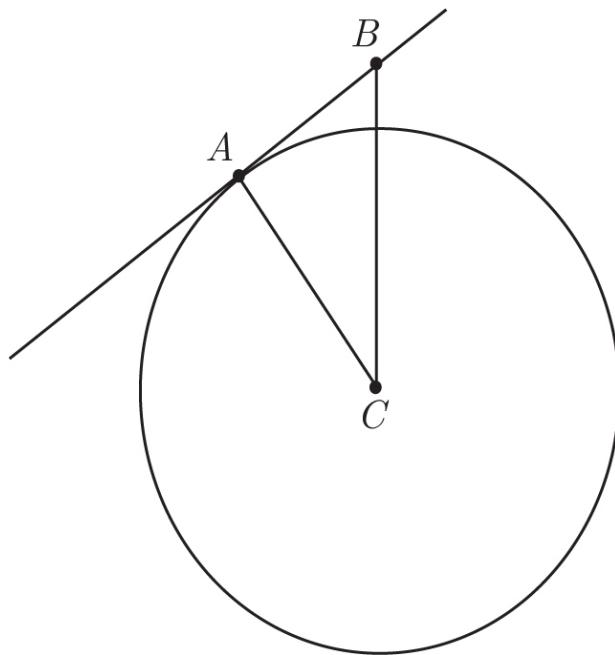
- Quantity A is greater.
- Quantity B is greater.
- The two quantities are equal.
- The relationship cannot be determined from the information given.

Comprehensive Math Drill

[Click here](#) to download a PDF of Comprehensive Math Drill.

Let's do a drill involving all of the math topics we have covered throughout the book. Remember to check your answers when you finish. You can find the answers in Part V.

1 of 20



Line AB is tangent to the circle C at point A . The radius of the circle with center C is 5 and $BC = \frac{10\sqrt{3}}{3}$.

Quantity A

The length of line segment AB

Quantity B

The length of line segment AC

- Quantity A is greater.
- Quantity B is greater.

- The two quantities are equal.
- The relationship cannot be determined from the information given.

2 of 20

$$x \neq 0$$

Quantity A

$$\frac{x}{10}$$

Quantity B

$$\frac{\frac{x}{5}}{2}$$

- Quantity A is greater.
- Quantity B is greater.
- The two quantities are equal.
- The relationship cannot be determined from the information given.

3 of 20

Quantity A

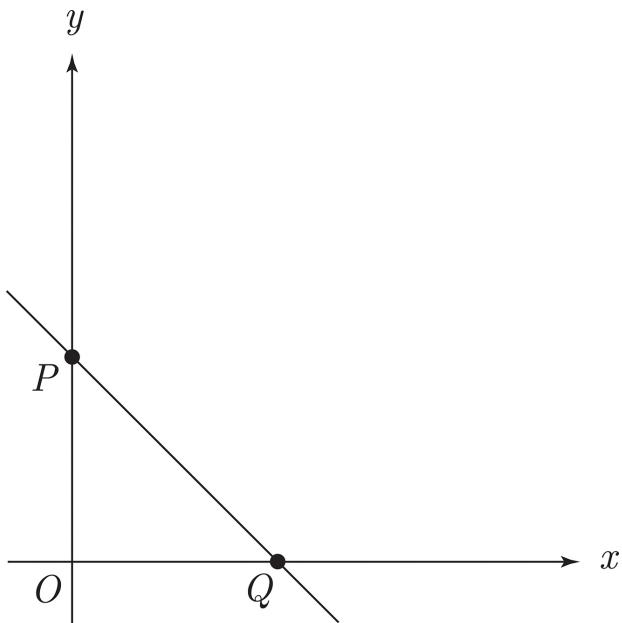
The standard deviation
of the set {1,3,5}

Quantity B

The standard deviation
of the set {8,10,12}

- Quantity A is greater.
- Quantity B is greater.
- The two quantities are equal.
- The relationship cannot be determined from the information given.

4 of 20



The line $y = -\frac{5}{6}x + 1$ is graphed on the rectangular coordinate axes.

Quantity A

$$OQ$$

Quantity B

$$OP$$

- Quantity A is greater.
- Quantity B is greater.
- The two quantities are equal.
- The relationship cannot be determined from the information given.

5 of 20

At a dog show, there are 20 judges and 10 dogs in the final round.

Quantity A

The number of distinct pairs of judges

Quantity B

The number of possible rankings of dogs from

first to third place

- Quantity A is greater.
- Quantity B is greater.
- The two quantities are equal.
- The relationship cannot be determined from the information given.

[6 of 20](#)

$$k > 0$$

$$l > 1$$

Quantity A

$$\frac{1}{\frac{1}{k} + \frac{1}{l}}$$

Quantity B

$$\frac{kl}{\frac{1}{k} + \frac{1}{l}}$$

- Quantity A is greater.
- Quantity B is greater.
- The two quantities are equal.
- The relationship cannot be determined from the information given.

[7 of 20](#)

Quantity A

The greatest odd factor
of 78

Quantity B

The greatest prime
factor of 78

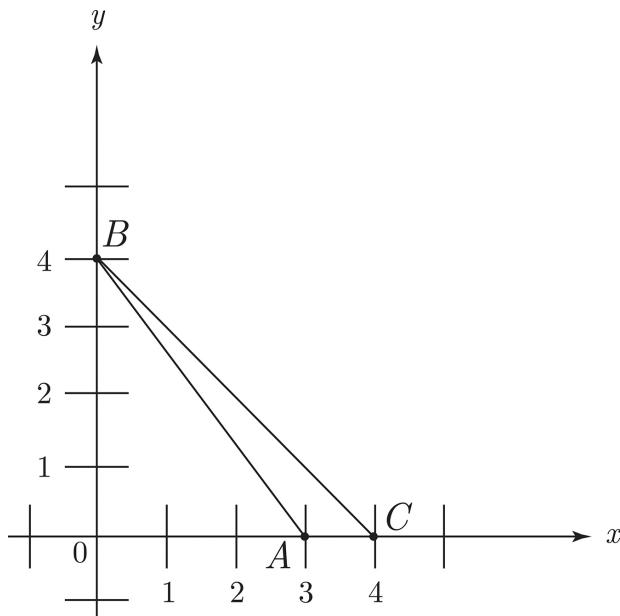
- Quantity A is greater.
- Quantity B is greater.
- The two quantities are equal.

- The relationship cannot be determined from the information given.

8 of 20

Joe has \$200. If he buys a DVD player for \$150, what is the greatest number of DVDs he can buy with the remaining money if DVDs cost \$12 each?

9 of 20



What is the area of triangle ABC in the figure above?

- 2
 4
 $4\sqrt{2}$
 7
 8

10 of 20

By which of the following could $10(9^6)$ be divided by to produce an integer result?

Indicate all such values.

90

100

330

540

72

11 of 20

Roberta drove 50 miles in 2 hours. Her rate in miles per hour is equivalent to which of the following proportions?

Indicate all such proportions.

5 to 20

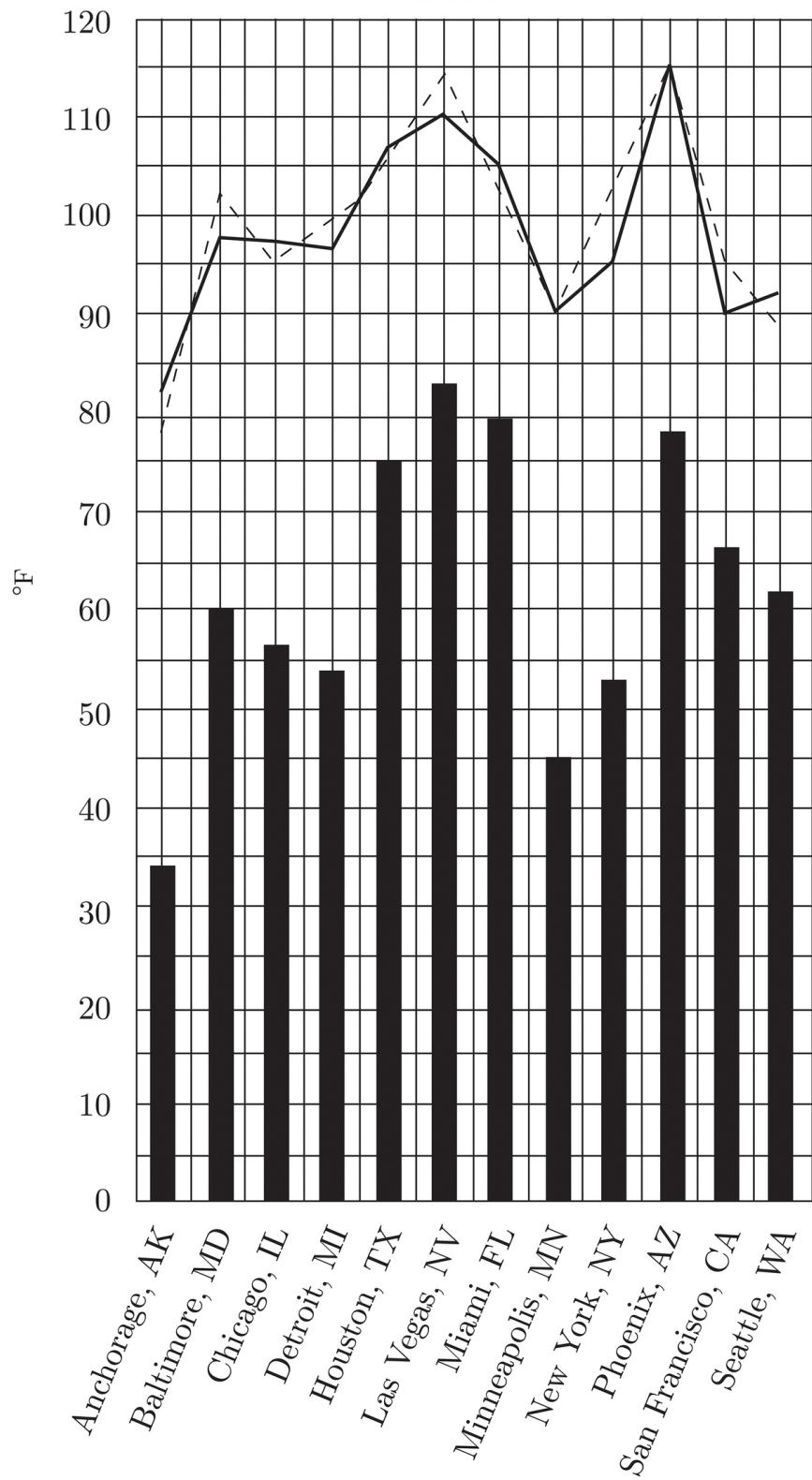
100 to 4

400 to 16

20 to 500

Questions 12 through 14 refer to the following graph.

TEMPERATURES OF U.S. CITIES IN
YEARS *X* AND *Y*



-
- Average Temperature for Years X and Y
High for Year Y
High for Year X

12 of 20

For how many of the cities shown was the highest temperature in Year Y greater than or equal to the highest temperature in Year X ?

- 4
- 5
- 7
- 8
- 12

13 of 20

What is the approximate percent increase from the lowest average (arithmetic mean) temperature for Years X and Y to the highest average temperature?

- 60%
- 82%
- 140%
- 188%
- 213%

14 of 20

The average (arithmetic mean) temperature for any city in Years X and Y is the average of the high and low temperatures for those years. What is the average of the low temperatures for Baltimore for Years X and Y ?

- -9° F

- 11° F
- 20° F
- 44° F
- It cannot be determined from the information given.

15 of 20

If $|2x - 3| + 2 > 7$, which of the following could be the value of x ?

Indicate all such values.

- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1
- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3

16 of 20

If x , y , and z are consecutive odd integers where $x < y < z$ and $x + y + z < z$, then which of the following could be the value of x ?

Indicate all such values.

- 3
- 1
- 0
- 1
- 3

17 of 20

If $4^x = 1,024$, then $(4^{x+1})(5^{x-1}) =$

- 10^6
- $(5^4)(10^5)$
- $(4^4)(10^5)$
- $(5^4)(10^4)$
- $(4^4)(10^4)$

18 of 20

What is the greatest distance between two vertices of a rectangular solid with a height of 5, a length of 12, and a volume of 780?

- 12
- $12\sqrt{2}$
- 13
- $13\sqrt{2}$
- $13\sqrt{3}$

19 of 20

If three boys and three girls sit in a row on a park bench, and no boy can sit on either end of the bench, how many arrangements of the children on the bench are possible?

- 46,656
- 38,880
- 1,256
- 144
- 38

20 of 20

If 16 is the average (arithmetic mean) of p , 24, and q , what is $16(p + q)$?

- 180
- 192
- 384
- 524
- 768

Summary

- Topics such as probability, permutations and combinations, factorials, and functions represent only a small percentage of the math topics tested on the GRE. Make sure you've mastered all the more important topics before attempting these.
- Probability is expressed as a fraction. The denominator of the fraction represents the total number of possible outcomes, while the numerator stands for the desired outcomes.
- If a probability question asks for the chance of event A or event B, find the probability of each event and add them together. If the question asks for the probability of event A and event B, multiply the individual probabilities.
- The key to factorial problems is to look for ways to cancel or factor out terms.
- Permutations and combinations are related concepts. A permutation tells you how many arrangements or orderings of things are possible. A combination tells you how many groupings of things are possible.
- Function problems use funny-looking symbols as shorthand for the operations to perform on a certain number.
- The group equation is $\text{Total} = \text{Group}_1 + \text{Group}_2 - \text{Members of Both Groups} + \text{Members of Neither Group}$.

Part IV

How to Crack the Analytical Writing Section

15 The Geography of the Analytical Writing Section

16 The Issue Essay

17 The Argument Essay

Chapter 15

The Geography of the Analytical Writing Section

This chapter clues you in on everything you've ever wanted to know about the Analytical Writing section of the GRE. It contains important information on how the essays are used by graduate schools, the scoring system ETS graders use to evaluate your essays, and the crucial distinctions between the issue essay and the argument essay. This chapter also looks at the basic word-processing program used by ETS.

ESSAYS AND THE GRE

The Analytical Writing section of the GRE requires you to write two essays—one will be an analysis of an issue and the other will be an analysis of an argument. You will have 30 minutes for each essay.

In the past, ETS has had problems with test takers relying on preplanned essays. The essay questions have been reformulated to reduce the possibility of testers preparing their essays in advance. However, while you may not be able to plan your entire essay in advance, you can still go into your test session having a good idea of what type of essay you're going to write.

How Do Schools Use the Writing Assessment?

First, the essays are probably more important for international students and those for whom English is not a first language. If you are not a native English speaker, expect your essay score and the essays you wrote to receive more attention. (ETS also makes the essays available to schools, which may choose to read them or not.) Second, and not surprisingly, the essays will probably be weighted more heavily by programs for which writing is a frequent and necessary task. A master's program in applied mathematics might not care so much about your 30-minute written opinion about whether or not it's necessary for a person to read imaginative literature, but a program in creative writing probably would.

Even if your program doesn't care much about the essay, a poor score might still raise a red flag.

Ultimately, though, here's the most honest answer to this question: it depends. Some schools will not care at all about the Analytical Writing score, while others will say that they want only applicants who scored a 5 or higher on this section. Call the schools you're interested in and talk to people in the department. By finding out how important your target schools consider the Analytical Writing

section, you'll be able to determine the appropriate amount of effort to devote to it.



More Online!

Head over to PrincetonReview.com/grad-school-advice for useful information and helpful articles about graduate school.

Regardless of your target score on this section, you should at least read through these chapters to get a better sense of what ETS is looking for. You'll have to write these essays, so no matter what, you want to do a decent job. You'll find that writing high-scoring essays is not as hard as it may seem once you've been shown how to do it.

What you write—the content—will be weighted more than how you write.

How Will the Essays Be Scored?

Your essays will be read by two graders, and each will assign a score from 1 to 6, based on how well you do the following:

- follow the instructions of the prompt
- consider the complexities of the issue or argument
- effectively organize and develop your ideas
- support your position with relevant examples
- control the elements of written English

The grades you receive for each essay will be totaled and averaged. For example, if you receive a 4 and a 5 on your issue essay and a 3 and a 4 on your argument essay, your Analytical Writing score will be a 4.0; 16 total points divided by 4 scores. If the graders' scores for your essays differ by more than one point, a third person will be brought in to read the essay. The graders use a holistic grading system; they're trained to look at the big picture, not to focus on minor details. Your essay is not expected to be perfect, so the graders will overlook minor errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar. However, pervasive or egregious errors will affect your score.

Here are ETS's descriptions of the scoring levels:

Issue Essay		Argument Essay
6	An essay that scores a 6 presents a cogent, well-articulated critique of the issue and conveys meaning skillfully.	An essay that scores a 6 presents a cogent, well-articulated critique of the argument and conveys meaning skillfully.
5	An essay that scores a 5 presents a generally thoughtful, well-developed analysis of the complexities of the issue and conveys meaning clearly.	An essay that scores a 5 presents a generally thoughtful, well-developed critique of the argument and conveys meaning clearly.
4	An essay that scores a 4 presents a competent analysis of the issue and conveys meaning adequately.	An essay that scores a 4 presents a competent critique of the argument and conveys meaning adequately.
3	An essay that scores a 3 demonstrates some competence in its analysis of the issue and in conveying meaning but is obviously flawed.	An essay that scores a 3 demonstrates some competence in its critique of the argument and in conveying meaning but is obviously flawed.
2	An essay that scores a 2 demonstrates serious weaknesses in analytical writing.	An essay that scores a 2 demonstrates serious weaknesses in analytical writing.
1	An essay that scores a 1 demonstrates fundamental deficiencies in analytical writing skills.	An essay that scores a 1 demonstrates fundamental deficiencies in both analysis and writing.

An essay written on a topic other than the one provided will receive a score of 0.

Who Are These Readers Anyway?

We'll put this in the form of a multiple-choice question:

Your essays will initially be read by

- (A) captains of industry
- (B) leading professors
- (C) college TAs working part time

If you guessed (C), you're correct. Each essay will be read by part-time employees of ETS, mostly culled from graduate school programs.

How Much Time Do They Devote to Each Essay?

The short answer is this: not much. It is unusual for a grader to spend more than two minutes grading an essay, and some essays are graded in less than a minute. The graders are reading many, many GRE essays and they aren't going to spend time admiring that clever turn of phrase you came up with. So don't sweat the small stuff—it probably won't even be noticed. Focus on the big picture—that's what the graders will be focusing on.

ETS graders spend less than two minutes grading your essay.

So How Do You Score High on the Analytical Writing Essays?

On the face of it, you might think it would be pretty difficult to impress these jaded readers, but it turns out that there are some very specific ways to persuade them of your superior writing skills.

Make the graders' jobs easy. Give them exactly what they're looking for.

What ETS Doesn't Want You to Know

In a recent analysis of a group of essays written by actual test takers, and the grades that those essays received, ETS researchers noticed that the most successful essays had one thing in common. Which of the following characteristics do you think it was?

- Good organization
- Proper diction

- Noteworthy ideas
- Good vocabulary
- Sentence variety
- Length

What Your Essay Needs in Order to Look Like a Successful Essay

The ETS researchers discovered that the essays that received the highest grades from ETS essay graders had one single factor in common: length.

To ace the Analytical Writing section, you need to take one simple step: write as much as you possibly can. Each essay should include *at least* four indented paragraphs. Your Issue essay should be 400 to 750 words in length, and your Argument essay should be 350 to 600 words.

So All I Have to Do Is Type “I Hate the GRE” Over and Over Again?

Well, no. The length issue isn’t that easy. The ETS researchers also noted that, not surprisingly, the high-scoring essays all made reasonably good points addressing the topic. So you have to actually write something that covers the essay topic. And in your quest for length, it’s more important that you add depth than breadth. What this means is that it’s better to have a few good examples that are thoroughly and deeply explored than it is to add length by tacking more and more examples and paragraphs onto your essay until it starts to feel like a superficial list of bulleted points rather than a thoughtful piece of writing.

Read the Directions Every Time

You should read the directions for each essay prompt. The instructions we provide here for each essay task are not necessarily the ones you will see on the GRE. Directions can vary in focus, so

you shouldn't memorize any particular set of instructions. Visit the ETS website at www.ets.org/gre for a complete list of all the potential essay topics and direction variants. (Yes, you really get to see this information in advance of the test!) Practice responding to the different instructions, combined with a variety of issue and argument prompts. Be sure to mix it up; the prompt/directions pairings you see on the ETS website are not necessarily the duos you will see on the real test. Practicing with a variety of these essays will prepare you for whatever comes your way on test day.

Oh, Yes, You Can Plan Your Essays in Advance

In fact, there are some very specific ways to prepare for the essays that go beyond length and good typing skills. So how can you prepare ahead of time?

Creating a Template

When a builder builds a house, the first thing he does is construct a frame. The frame supports the entire house. After the frame is completed, he can nail the walls and windows to the frame. We're going to show you how to build the frame for the perfect GRE essay. Of course, you won't know the exact topic of the essay until you get there (just as the builder may not know what color his client is going to paint the living room), but you will have an all-purpose frame on which to construct a great essay no matter what the topic is. We call this frame the template.

Preconstruction

Just as a builder can construct the windows of a house in his workshop weeks before he arrives to install them, so can you pre-build certain elements of your essay. We call this "preconstruction."

In the next two chapters, we'll show you how to prepare ahead of time to write essays on two topics that you won't see until they appear on your screen.

ISSUE VERSUS ARGUMENT ESSAY

It is worth noting at this time that the essay section gives you two very distinct writing tasks, and that a failure to appropriately address these tasks will severely reduce your score.

The Issue Essay

The Issue essay asks for your opinion; you're expected to present your viewpoint on a particular topic and support that viewpoint with various examples. The following is one example of the instructions for the Issue essay:

You will be given a brief quotation that states or implies an issue of general interest and specific instructions on how to respond to that issue. You will have 30 minutes to plan and compose a response in which you develop a position on the issue according to the specific instructions. A response to any other issue will receive a score of zero.

Make sure that you respond to the specific instructions and support your position on the issue with reasons and examples drawn from such areas as your reading, experience, observations, and/or academic studies.

Note how important it is to specifically address the assignment provided as part of the Issue prompt; not following ETS's directions will make your grader unhappy and result in a poor score on the essay.

The Argument Essay

The Argument essay requires a different type of response. Instead of presenting your own perspective, your job is to critique someone else's argument. You're supposed to address the logical flaws of the argument, not provide your personal opinion on the subject. The following is one example of the directions for the Argument essay:

You will be given a short passage that presents an argument, or an argument to be completed, and specific instructions on how to respond to that passage. You will have 30 minutes to plan and compose a response in which you analyze the passage according to the specific instructions. A response to any other argument will receive a score of zero.

Note that you are NOT being asked to present your own views on the subject. Make sure that you respond to the specific instructions and support your analysis with relevant reasons and/or examples.

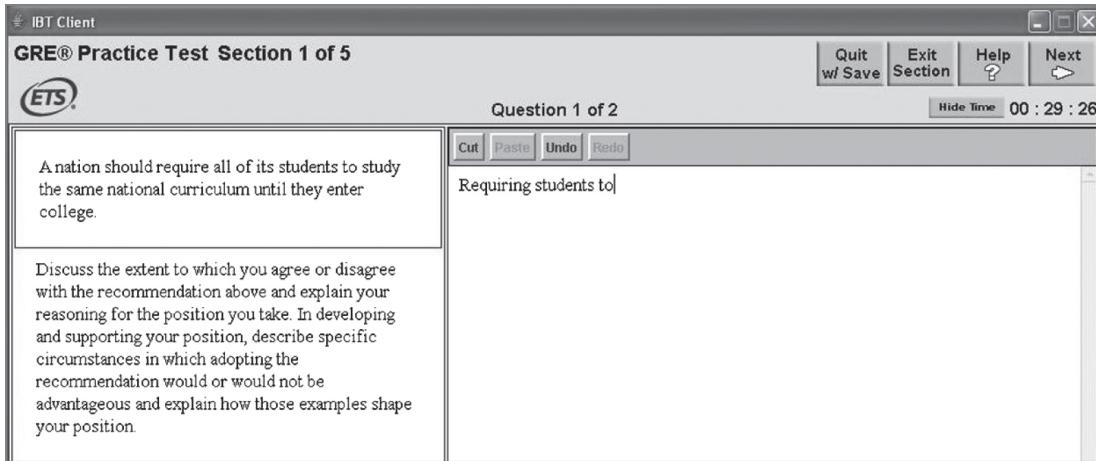
In the Argument essay, the emphasis is on writing a logical analysis of the argument, not an opinion piece. It is absolutely essential that you don't confuse the two essay tasks on the GRE.

ETS graders don't expect a perfect essay; occasional spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors won't kill your score.

HOW DOES THE WORD-PROCESSING PROGRAM WORK?

ETS has created a very simple program that allows students to compose their essays on the screen. Compared to any of the commercial word-processing programs, this one is extremely limited, but it does allow the basic functions. You can move the cursor with the arrow keys, and you can delete, copy, and paste. You don't have to use any of these functions. With just the backspace key and the mouse to change your point of insertion, you will be able to use the computer like a regular word-processing program.

Take a look at the image below to see what your screen will look like during the Analytical Writing section of the test:



The question will always appear at the top left of your screen. Beside it, in a box, will be your writing area (in the writing area above, you can see a partially completed sentence). When you click inside the box with your mouse, a winking cursor will appear, indicating that you can begin typing.

As we said above, the program supports the use of many of the normal computer keys.

- The “Backspace” key removes text to the left of the cursor.
- The “Delete” key removes text to the right of the cursor.
- The “Arrow” keys move the cursor up, down, left, or right.
- The “Home” key moves the cursor to the beginning of a line.
- The “End” key moves the cursor to the end of a line.
- The “Enter” key moves the cursor to the beginning of the next line.

- “Page up” moves the cursor up one page.
- “Page down” moves the cursor down one page.

You can also use the buttons above the writing area to copy and paste words, sentences, or paragraphs. To do this, you first have to highlight the desired text by clicking on the starting point with your mouse and holding down the mouse button while you drag it to the ending point. Then click on the “Cut” button. This deletes the text you’ve selected from the screen, but also stores it in the computer’s memory. Next, just move the cursor to wherever you would like the selected text to reappear, and click on the “Paste” button. The selected text will appear in that spot.

If you make a mistake, simply click on the “Undo” button, which will undo whatever operation you have just done. You can undo a cut, a paste, or even the last set of words you’ve typed in. Unfortunately, unlike many word-processing programs, ETS’s program does not have a “Redo” button, so be careful what you decide to undo.

Obviously, the small box on the screen is not big enough to contain your entire essay. However, by hitting the “Page up” and “Page down” keys on your keyboard, or by using the arrows on your keyboard, you will be able to go forward and backward to reread what you have written and make corrections.

Does Spelling Count?

Officially, no. The word-processing program doesn’t have a spell checker, and ETS essay readers are supposed to ignore minor errors of spelling and grammar, but the readers wouldn’t be human if they weren’t influenced by an essay that had lots of spelling mistakes and improper grammar—it gives the impression that you just didn’t care enough to proofread.

Because pervasive spelling errors will detract from your score, pick an easier word if you're really uncertain of how to spell a word.

Summary

- Different programs value the essay section in different ways. Check with your program to see how important the essays are.
- Understand the criteria ETS uses for judging your essay. Organization, examples, and language use are important. Perfect grammar and spelling less so.
- On the GRE, longer essays tend to receive better scores, so strive to write as much as you can for each essay.
- Make sure you understand the differences in the assignments for the Issue essay and the Argument essay.
- Issue essays ask for your opinion on a topic, while Argument essays expect you to critique the logic of an argument. The ways in which you're asked to do each of these tasks will vary, so make sure you read each set of directions carefully.
- The word processor ETS provides has only the most basic functions. You can delete, copy, and paste text, but not much more.

Chapter 16

The Issue Essay

The Issue essay of the GRE requires you to present your opinion on the provided topic. This chapter will show you the steps to take in order to write a clear, coherent essay in the limited time provided. You'll learn the key parts of a successful essay, and how to brainstorm ideas, combine them into a thesis, and then structure a cohesive essay that will get you the best possible result.



THREE BASIC STEPS

Because you don't have a lot of time to write the essays, you'll need to have a pretty good idea of how you're going to attack them as soon as you sit down at the computer on test day. Our approach to the essays involves three steps:

- 1. Think.** Before you start writing, take a moment to brainstorm some thoughts about the topic.
- 2. Organize.** Take the ideas you've come up with and fit them into the assignment for the prompt.
- 3. Write.** Once you've completed the first two steps, the final step should be a snap.

Thirty minutes is not a lot of time to write an essay, so you have to get it right the first time out. While ETS advises you to leave enough time to proofread and edit your essay, it simply isn't feasible to expect to make any significant changes to your essay during the final minutes of the section. Furthermore, if you get halfway through your essay and realize you're stuck or you're not saying what you need to say, you'll be hard pressed to fix your essay in the time you have left.

It is essential, therefore, to make sure you spend time planning your essay before you start writing. You have to figure out what it is you want to say before you begin; otherwise, you run the risk of writing an incoherent, rambling essay. The first two steps are actually more important to a successful GRE essay than the final step; by

spending a little time planning your essay, the actual writing part should be relatively painless.

You have to know what you want your essay to say before you can start writing.

The keys to the essay: Think, Organize, Write

Essay Essentials

As you learned in sixth-grade composition class, a basic essay has three parts: an introduction, some body paragraphs, and a conclusion. These three things are exactly what you should include in your Analysis of an Issue Essay. Each of these parts has a specific role to play.

1. The **introduction** should introduce the topic of the essay, discuss the issues surrounding it, and present the essay's thesis.
2. The **body paragraphs** should use examples to support the thesis of the essay.
3. The **conclusion** should summarize the major points of the issue, reiterate the thesis, and perhaps consider its implications.

The basics parts of an essay include the introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion.

Basically, if you try to think of each paragraph as having a specific job to do, you can pretty much preconstruct each type of paragraph and then fill in the specific details on test day.

Keys to a High-Scoring Essay

In order to write a high-scoring Issue essay, you should accomplish four key tasks. A high-scoring Issue essay

- considers the complexities of the issue
- supports the position with relevant examples
- is clear and well organized
- demonstrates superior facility with the conventions of standard written English

To put it more simply, your essay should be logically organized, include good examples to support whatever position you've taken, and demonstrate that you can use the English language reasonably well in writing.

Let's continue our discussion of the Issue essay by looking at a typical prompt.

The Prompt

“True beauty is found not in the exceptional but in the commonplace.”

Write an essay in which you take a position on the statement above. In developing and supporting your essay, consider instances in which the statement does and does not hold true.

The prompts are supposed to get you thinking about areas of “general interest,” whatever that means. A better way of thinking about the prompt is to look at it as an agree/disagree or pro/con statement. Your task in the essay will be to look at both sides of the

issue, the pro and the con side, and take a position on the statement. Let's look at how to do that.

Step 1

Step 1: Think

“Think” is a pretty broad command, so we need to clarify this step in order to make it more useful. Specifically, we want you to think about three things.

1. **Key Terms.** What are the key words or phrases in the prompt? Do the terms need clarifying before you can properly deal with them in the essay?
2. **Opposite Side.** What would the converse of the statement be?
3. **Examples.** What are some examples that would support the statement? What are some examples that would support the opposite statement?

Let's work through these steps with our sample prompt.

[*Click here* to download a PDF of Essay Brainstorming.](#)

Key Terms

When preparing your essay, first look more closely at the key terms in the prompt. Do they need to be clarified? Are there multiple ways of interpreting the words? In order to make your essay as focused as possible, you might need to limit the key terms to a specific definition or interpretation. If the key terms in the prompt seem pretty straightforward, you still want to note them. By repeatedly

returning to these terms in your essay, you'll convey the impression that your essay is strongly organized and on topic.

For the sample prompt above, write down the key terms.

Before you keep reading, make sure you've written down the key terms.

For this prompt, the key terms are *beauty*, *true*, *exceptional*, and *commonplace*. We need to think about how we're going to use these terms in our essay. For example, what is *true beauty*? Do we want that to mean just natural beauty or can we consider man-made objects? As for the word *beauty*, do we want to limit our discussion to artistic beauty such as paintings and sculptures, or should we consider poems and literature as well? Should we discuss only natural beauty, such as stars and flowers, or should we consider personal beauty as well, such as models and GRE instructors? As you can see, we could write a lot on this topic, if we had the time. But we don't, so it's important to focus. By defining our key terms, we make the essay a lot more manageable and easier to write in a short amount of time. For this essay, let's include both natural objects and man-made artistic feats, but leave out personal beauty.

Using key terms from the prompt throughout your essay contributes to its overall coherency.

Opposite Side

In order to score well on the Issue essay, you'll have to consider both sides of the prompt. A simple "I agree, and here's why" essay won't be enough here; rather, you'll need to consider both sides of the issue and state a clear position that you can defend. Take a brief moment to look at the sample prompt again, and then write down the converse of the statement.

“True beauty is found not in the exceptional but in the commonplace.”

For this prompt, the opposite side of the argument would be something along the lines of “True beauty is found not in the commonplace, but in the exceptional.” Note that there is no right answer to the prompt; either side is valid. So if you find the opposite of the statement more convincing, that’s fine. As long as you can support your position with some relevant examples, it doesn’t matter what position you take on the prompt. This brings us to the final part of step one—brainstorming examples.

Examples

In many ways, the examples will be the most important part of your essay. Without strong, relevant examples, you cannot expect to achieve a high score on the Issue essay. As the instructions state, you should support your position with examples drawn from your reading, experience, observation, and academic studies. In general, the more specific your examples are, the better your essay score. And examples from history, literature, or current events are better than personal observations or experiences. Imagine that a friend asks you to read her essay and give feedback. Which sentence would you respond more favorably to?

“Few observers would doubt the awesome beauty of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome, a work of art produced by the great Renaissance artist Michelangelo.”

“Few observers would doubt the awesome beauty of the various paintings they see in museums, works of art produced by great artists.”

Both sentences essentially say the same thing and use practically the same words. But you would probably respond more favorably to the first sentence because it contains a *specific* example.

Take a moment to jot down some examples for the previous prompt. Make sure you come up with examples for both the original statement and its opposite.

Before you continue on, make sure you've come up with examples for both statements.

Now take a moment to look over your examples. Are they specific? Are they relevant to the topic? Do they support a position on the topic? The strength of your examples will determine the strength of your argument. It's hard to write a convincing paper with weak examples. Here are some examples that might work for our sample topic, both weaker and stronger:

Okay Example

paintings, artwork

buildings, churches

flowers, natural wonders

Better Example

Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*

Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris

Niagara Falls

Avoid hypothetical examples—the more specific your example is, the better.

Good examples are relevant to the topic and contain specific details.

In each case, the better example is the more specific, more detailed example. Also note that we've avoided any personal examples. While you certainly may feel that your boyfriend or girlfriend is the most beautiful person in the world, that sort of personal example won't be as effective as a more academic or global example. Use personal examples only when specifically instructed to by the prompt or as a last resort.

Step 2

Step 2: Organize

Once you've identified the key terms, considered the opposite side of the issue, and generated some examples, it's time to organize your thoughts. Basically, you should do the following:

- 1. Separate Your Examples.** How many of your examples support the pro side and how many support the con side? Divide your examples up and see which side has more support.
- 2. Write Your Thesis Statement.** After evaluating the strength of your examples, decide what position you will take in your essay, and then write your thesis. Your thesis is the main point that you want your essay to express.

Let's continue the process on the sample prompt.

Separate Your Examples

Do this before you decide on your thesis statement. Even though you might have a strong preference for one position on the issue, you might notice that the examples you brainstormed tend to

support the other side of the issue. Don't expend more time trying to think of examples to support your preconceptions; just write your essay supporting the other side! There is no right or wrong response. All that matters is being able to write a strong, coherent essay in a very limited time. Your personal views or beliefs are unimportant to the ETS graders. If we continue with the examples we used earlier, they would probably break down like this:

Pro	Con
natural wonders	<i>Mona Lisa</i>
	Notre Dame

It doesn't matter what side of the issue you take on the GRE.

Based on some of the examples we've come up with, it looks like we'd be better off supporting the idea that "True beauty is found not in the commonplace, but in the exceptional." While natural wonders like sunsets and flowers are pretty commonplace, we've come up with a lot more exceptional examples. And it looks like we could even argue that it is the exceptional natural wonders, such as Niagara Falls, that are truly beautiful.

Write Your Thesis Statement

Now comes the culmination of all of our work. What point do we want to make about the topic? Write it down.

Before you move to the next sentence, make sure you've written down your response.

Our thesis should probably be something along the lines of this: "While certain commonplace natural objects are examples of beauty, true beauty is most often found in rare, exceptional cases."

Now that we have figured out what we want to say, we can focus on proving why we believe it. But remember: Only after working through these steps are we truly ready to write!

Practice: Steps 1 and 2

Work through steps one and two on the following Issue essay prompts below.

PROMPT 1

“Government funding should never be used to support art that the majority of the population finds distasteful or objectionable.”

Write an essay in which you take a position on the statement above. In developing and supporting your position, you should consider whether the above statement is always true or whether there are exceptions to it.

On your scratch paper, write the (1) Key Terms, (2) Opposite Side, (3) Examples, and (4) Thesis.

PROMPT 2

“Oftentimes, the results of a particular action are not of consequence; rather, it is the way we go about the action that matters most.”

Write an essay in which you take a position on the statement above. In developing and supporting your position, you should consider situations in which the

ways matter most as well as situations in which the results matter most.

On your scratch paper, write the (1) Key Terms, (2) Opposite Side, (3) Examples, and (4) Thesis.

Practice: Sample Responses

Obviously, your examples and thesis statements will differ from those given below, but these sample responses will give you a good indication of what to aim for in your actual essay.

Prompt 1

Key Terms: What does *support* mean? Is that just giving money to the artist, or does the government have to commission the work or promote it? What population are we using to judge—the general population, the population of artists, or some other population? What do we mean when we say art is “objectionable” or “distasteful”? What standards are we using to determine that?

Opposite Side: “Government funding should be used to support art, even if the majority of the population finds the art distasteful.”

Examples: Robert Mapplethorpe controversy; National Endowment for the Arts; Supreme Court rulings on obscenity; Government censorship

Thesis: “While artists have the right to create whatever objectionable art they wish, taxpayers should not have to pay for art they find offensive or obscene.”

Prompt 2

Key Terms: What do we mean by *consequence*? Does this term refer to the results of the action, or the effects the action has on the

person doing the action? Similarly, when we say the way we go about something “matters most,” what criteria are we using?

Opposite Side: “The way we go about a certain action is not of consequence; the results we get are what matter most.”

Examples: Rosa Parks, whose actions helped further the Civil Rights movement; Gandhi, whose methods of nonviolent resistance played a part in Indian independence; Revolutionary War, whose violent methods eventually led to independence for the United States

Thesis: “While people do note the ways in which people go about certain actions, it is usually the ultimate result that matters.”

Step 3

Step 3: Write

Now that we know how to prepare for our Issue essay, we can write it. In this section, we’ll discuss various templates for essays and show you how you can pre-construct certain portions of your essay. Before we do that, though, let’s revisit your goals for the essay.

Essay Essentials Review

Remember the format of your essay should include

- introduction
- body paragraphs
- conclusion

Another way to think about this structure is

- Say what you're going to say.
- Say it.
- Say what you said.

Preconstruction: The Introduction

For the Issue essay, a good introduction accomplishes the following tasks:

1. clearly establishes the topic of the paper
2. previews both sides of the issue at hand
3. presents a clear thesis

Let's look at each of these tasks in detail and discuss different ways to accomplish the goals of the introductory paragraph.

Establish the Topic

You want to make it clear what issue the essay is going to talk about. Even though the grader will see the prompt you're writing about, he or she should be able to figure out the prompt just from reading the introduction of your essay. There are a few different ways you can quickly establish the topic, so let's return to our original prompt and preconstruct some approaches.

Don't just restate the prompt! Come up with a strong "hook" for the beginning of your essay.

Here, once again, is our prompt:

“True beauty is found not in the exceptional but in the commonplace.”

Write an essay in which you take a position on the statement above. In developing and supporting your essay, consider instances in which the statement does and does not hold true.

One of the worst ways of establishing the topic is to merely quote the prompt, as that shows a lack of creativity and a potential lack of understanding of the prompt itself. So let's discuss some other ways to start our essay.

Approach 1: Rhetorical Questions

This approach is a tried-and-true way of introducing your topic. Instead of simply quoting or paraphrasing the prompt, turn it into a rhetorical question. Here are a few samples:

Where does true beauty lie, in the exceptional or in the commonplace?

Do we find the exceptional more beautiful or the commonplace?

Can we find beauty only in rare, exceptional instances or does it truly lie all around us?

It is immediately clear what topic the essay will explore, from each of these examples of introductory sentences. See if you can come up with a rhetorical question for either this topic or one from the previous drill.

Approach 2: Famous Quotations

Another classic approach to beginning an essay is to use either a well-known saying or a famous quote from someone. Many of the

GRE topics are fairly bland, so even if you can't think of a famous quote, there are usually some classic aphorisms you use. Here's what we mean:

"Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty," or so said the romantic poet John Keats.

A common saying is that beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Obviously, this type of introduction can be tough to do if something doesn't pop into your head right away. Try to come up with a quote or common saying for this topic or one from the drill.

Approach 3: Anecdote

An anecdote is a brief story. Oftentimes you can grab your reader's attention and introduce the topic with a good anecdote. Consider this example:

It is said that Cézanne, the famed French painter, was so concerned with the beauty of his paintings that he would destroy any of his works that he felt was flawed.

The Romantic poet John Keats was so struck by the beauty of Chapman's translation of Homer's work that he wrote a poem about it.

When using an anecdote, you might have to write a sentence or two explaining the relevance of your story. Try out an anecdote for this topic or one of the drill topics.

A good opening line is great to have, but if you're stuck, don't spend an excessive amount of time trying to come up with something clever.

Approach 4: Fact/Statistic

For some topics, it might be appropriate to start your essay by stating a fact or statistic. Factual mistakes won't cost you any

points, because this is an essay, not a book report. So don't be afraid if your fact isn't 100 percent accurate. Here's an illustration:

A recent scientific study showed that the faces that people find the most beautiful are those that are the most symmetrical.

Psychologists have demonstrated that people's responses to certain phenomena are based on certain innate mechanisms in the brain.

Give this approach a shot, using this topic or one from the drill.

Approach 5: Definition

One way you may wish to start your essay is by defining one of the key terms from the prompt:

Beauty, by definition, is that which moves us or impacts us significantly.

The “exceptional” typically refers to those things that stand out, which is also a plausible definition for beauty.

The advantage to this approach is that you already spent some time thinking along these lines when you were planning your essay. Come up with a sample introductory sentence for this topic or one of the drill topics.

Preview the Issue

Once you've told the reader what the topic is, your next task is to inform the reader of the issues at hand. You want to briefly touch on both sides of the debate, explaining the pros and cons of the prompt. A good way to accomplish this is to make use of strong transition words—words like *but*, *despite*, *while*, and *although*. Here are some examples.

While some people can find beauty in the most common of places, true beauty is found only in the exceptional.

Some would argue that beauty is found everywhere, from the flowers to the stars, but others would state that true beauty is found only in rare, special instances.

Despite the assertions of many that beauty is everywhere, true beauty is found only in exceptional cases.

Although one might argue that many commonplace things are beautiful, it is the exceptional things that possess true beauty.

There can be no doubt that some of the world's most common things are beautiful. And yet, it is often the exceptional objects that possess true beauty.

Practice writing sentences that address both sides of the issue. Use the sample topic or one from the drill.

Present the Thesis

Your final task in the introduction is to present the thesis. Some writers prefer to avoid the first person, refusing to use sentences such as "I believe..." or "I feel...." However, there is no penalty for use of the first person. A more important consideration when writing your thesis is giving some indication of why you hold your particular position. You should make it clear that you've thought about and analyzed the issue. Here are some examples of thesis statements.

I believe that beauty is truly found in the exceptional, not in the commonplace, because if common things were beautiful, the very word would lose its meaning.

In my view, beauty is found in the exceptional, not in the commonplace, because only exceptional things really stand out as special in our minds.

It is clear that true beauty is not to be found in the commonplace but in the exceptional. On closer inspection, even so-called common

objects that people consider beautiful are actually exceptional.

After weighing the evidence, it is certain that beauty is the province of the exceptional, not the commonplace. People find true beauty in things that they rarely experience, not the things they experience every day.

For each thesis, you can see that the author is also giving some justification for the viewpoint. This justification will be of course explored more thoroughly in the body paragraphs, but it's good to give a preview of how your essay will take shape. Try writing thesis statements for some of the sample prompts.

A good thesis tells the reader exactly what your position is and why.

Preconstruction: Body Paragraphs

A body paragraph should do the following:

1. use a good transition/topic sentence
2. present an example
3. explain how the example supports the thesis

Body paragraphs are a little harder to preconstruct because they are the most specific part of the essay. Still, there are some handy tips for creating body paragraphs that will make for a strong essay.

Transition/Topic Sentence

One attribute of the strongest essays is that they flow well. The best way to write an essay like this is to use strong topic sentences and good transitions for each of your body paragraphs. Your topic

sentence should serve as a gentle reminder of what the thesis of the essay is. Here's an example:

One example of beauty found in the exceptional is Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa.

A second instance in which true beauty lies not in the commonplace but in the exceptional is Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.

Of course, you might want to avoid using simple transitions like "the first example" and "the second example." You can make your writing stronger by leading with the example and making the transition a little more subtle, like so:

Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa is surely one of the most exceptional, and beautiful, paintings ever created.

Consider the beauty of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, a building that is in no way commonplace.

Or to get even fancier, refer to the previous example in your transition sentence:

Like da Vinci's Mona Lisa, the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris is an exceptional, and exceptionally beautiful, object.

The important point is that each sentence introduces the example and reminds the reader of the purpose of the example, which in this case is to support the notion of beauty as exceptional. In the next few sentences, you'll provide details about your example. It's important that you remember to link the example to your thesis.

Explain How Your Example Supports Your Thesis

On the GRE essays, don't get so caught up in providing details for your example that you forget to explain how or why your example helps your thesis. The purpose of the Issue essay is not to just list some examples; the purpose is to develop and support a position on

the issue. Here's an example of a body paragraph that doesn't quite fulfill that goal:

Don't just state the example; explain why the example is relevant to your thesis.

Like da Vinci's Mona Lisa, the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris is an exceptional, and exceptionally beautiful, object. Notre Dame is a stunning example of gothic architecture, famous for the flying buttresses that adorn the sides of the building. The cathedral also has rows and rows of beautiful sculptures recessed into the walls, as well as a gorgeous central stained-glass window. These features make Notre Dame one of the most beautiful cathedrals in the world.

The writer here did a good job of providing specific details about the example, which definitely strengthens this paragraph. However, the writer failed to explain why Notre Dame supports the view that true beauty is exceptional, not commonplace. Let's fix that:

Like da Vinci's Mona Lisa, the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris is an exceptional, and exceptionally beautiful, object. Churches and cathedrals line the streets of most major cities in Western Europe, but few possess the renown of Notre Dame. Notre Dame is a stunning example of gothic architecture, famous for the flying buttresses that adorn the sides of the building. The cathedral also has rows and rows of beautiful sculptures recessed into the walls, as well as a gorgeous central stained-glass window. These features make Notre Dame one of the most beautiful cathedrals in the world. Compared to a common church or cathedral, Notre Dame is truly awe-inspiring; Victor Hugo used the building as the backdrop for his magnificent book The Hunchback of Notre Dame and thousands of tourists travel untold miles to view the cathedral. That sort of beauty is not possessed by just any church on the corner.

This is a stronger body paragraph because it is more explicit in its discussion of the thesis. The author notes that churches and cathedrals are fairly common, but then argues that Notre Dame stands out as an exceptional cathedral. The author concludes the paragraph by showing how Notre Dame is more beautiful than any typical church. Just as the topic of the essay should be clear from the introduction, the thesis should be clear from each body paragraph.

Write a body paragraph for one of the examples for this sample topic, or one of your examples from the practice. Make sure you have a good topic/transition sentence, specific details for the example, and an explanation of how or why the example is relevant to the thesis.

Preconstruction: Conclusion Paragraphs

Your essay should always have a conclusion, for two reasons. First, a conclusion paragraph is evidence of good organization. It shows that you knew exactly what points you wanted to make, you made them, and now you're ending the essay. And second, an essay that lacks a conclusion seems incomplete, almost as if your writing abruptly ends before it should. This can give a negative impression of your essay. Fortunately, conclusion paragraphs are easy to write.

Make sure your essay has a conclusion.

A good conclusion

1. alerts the reader that the essay is ending
2. summarizes the main points of the essay

Some test takers even prefer to write their introduction and conclusion first and then fill in the body paragraphs. This strategy has the advantage of making your essay seem complete even if you happen to run out of time writing the body paragraphs.

Alert the Reader

Conclusion paragraphs have their own topic/transition sentences, which generally should contain a word or phrase that signifies the end of the essay. Here are some examples:

In conclusion, it's clear that true beauty is found not in the commonplace, but in the exceptional.

Ultimately, beauty lies in the exceptional, not in the commonplace.

As the bulk of the evidence shows, the exceptional, not the commonplace, possesses true beauty.

Clearly, true beauty is found in exceptional things, not in commonplace ones.

The examples above all support the idea that we find true beauty in exceptional cases, not in commonplace ones.

Write some conclusion sentences for this topic or a sample topic from the sample prompts.

Summarize Main Points

Your conclusion should also summarize the main points of the essay, meaning that it should mention the thesis and how the examples support it. Additionally, you can briefly consider the implications of the thesis. Here are some sample conclusions:

In conclusion, it's clear that true beauty is found not in the commonplace, but in the exceptional. The Mona Lisa and Notre Dame Cathedral are both exceptional examples of fairly

commonplace things and it is these exceptions that are noted as truly beautiful. If anything, the commonplace serves only as a contrast to what true beauty really is.

Ultimately, beauty lies in the exceptional, not the commonplace. While paintings and churches are fairly commonplace, only a small few of them, such as the Mona Lisa or Notre Dame, truly reach the heights of beauty. It is in these exceptions that we find real beauty.

The examples above all support the idea that we find true beauty in exceptional cases, not in commonplace ones. Common things may seem at first glance to be beautiful, but once we compare these commonplace examples to the truly exceptional ones, we see that the exceptional ones are truly beautiful.

Try your hand at constructing a conclusion paragraph, once again using this topic or one from the sample prompts.

Putting It All Together

Read through this sample essay that's based on the basic five-paragraph model. Then you'll have the chance to try writing a similar essay for a different prompt.

“True beauty is found not in the exceptional but in the commonplace.”

Write an essay in which you take a position on the statement above. In developing and supporting your essay, consider instances in which the statement does and does not hold true.

Beauty, by definition, is that which moves us or impacts us significantly. Some would argue that beauty is found everywhere,

from the flowers to the stars. But others would state that true beauty is found only in rare, special instances. After weighing the evidence, it is certain that beauty is the province of the exceptional, not the commonplace. People are moved most by things that they rarely experience, not the things they experience every day.

Those who would argue that true beauty is everywhere might point to the beauty of a flower, or the starlit night. These experiences are certainly common, but do they show that true beauty is commonplace? Flowers might be considered beautiful, but how often does a person stop to look at or appreciate every flower? Flowers are so common that in many cases, they are ignored or viewed as nothing special. However, on those rare occasions—exceptional occasions, one might say—when we want to commemorate an event or express emotion, we notice the beauty of flowers. Thus, it is not the commonplace flower that strikes us as beautiful, but the exceptional situations themselves that move us to appreciate the flower.

Now consider the exceptional. Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa is surely one of the most exceptional, and beautiful, paintings ever created. Few people who view the painting are not moved by the sheer beauty of it, and the Mona Lisa is instantly recognized as a masterpiece of art. And yet, there have been literally millions of paintings produced in human history. Is every single one of them beautiful? Does every one of those paintings have the impact that da Vinci's does? Of course not. In order to find beauty, we must separate the exceptional cases from the common ones. True beauty is such because it stands out from the masses of the average and pedestrian.

Like da Vinci's Mona Lisa, the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris is an exceptional, and exceptionally beautiful, object. Churches and cathedrals line the streets of most major cities in Western Europe, but few possess the renown of Notre Dame, one of the most beautiful cathedrals in the world. Compared to a common church

or cathedral, Notre Dame is truly awe-inspiring; Victor Hugo used the building as the backdrop for his magnificent book The Hunchback of Notre Dame and thousands of tourists travel untold miles to view the cathedral. That sort of beauty is not possessed by just any church on the corner.

In conclusion, it's clear that true beauty is found not in the commonplace, but in the exceptional. The Mona Lisa and Notre Dame Cathedral are both exceptional examples of fairly commonplace things and it is these exceptions that are noted as truly beautiful. If anything, the commonplace serves only as a contrast so that we can understand what true beauty really is.

Your Turn

Try writing a similar essay for the prompt that follows this paragraph. Make sure you consider the opposing side of the argument. Devote a paragraph to looking at an example for the other side of the issue, but make sure you indicate that there is a flaw in the example or that the example is less than convincing. Set a timer for 30 minutes to practice GRE time constraints.

“People most respect the powerful not when they exercise their power, but when they refrain from exercising it.”

Write an essay in which you develop and support a position on the statement above. In writing your essay, you should consider both when the statement may be true and when it may be false.

How to Score Your Essay

Now it's time to put on your essay-scoring hat and prepare to grade your own essay. If you're lucky enough to have a friend who is also

preparing for the GRE, you could switch essays and grade each other's like you used to do in sixth grade. You'll need to be objective during this process. Remember, the only way to improve is to honestly assess your weaknesses and systematically eliminate them.

Set a timer for two minutes. Read the essay carefully but quickly, so that you do not exceed the two minutes on the timer.

Now ask yourself the following questions about the essay:

1. Overall, did it make sense?
2. Did you address the topic directly?
3. Did you address the topic thoroughly?
4. Did your introduction paragraph repeat the issue to establish the topic of the essay?
5. Did you consider both sides of the issue?
6. Did your examples make sense?
7. Did you flesh out your examples with details?
8. Did you explain how your examples supported your thesis?
9. Did your essay have a strong concluding paragraph?
10. Was your essay well organized, using transitions and topic sentences?
11. Did you use language that made the organization of the essay obvious?
12. Did you use correct grammar, spelling, and language, for the most part?

If you could answer "yes" to all or almost all of these questions, congratulations! Your essay would probably receive a score in the 5–6 range. If you continue to practice, and write an essay of similar

quality on the real Analysis of an Issue section of the real test, you should score very well.

If you answered “yes” to fewer than 10 of the questions, you have room for improvement. Fortunately, you also know which areas you need to strengthen as you continue to practice.

If you answered “yes” to fewer than six of the questions, your essay would probably not score very well on a real GRE. An essay of this quality would not help you in the admissions process and could raise some red flags in the minds of the admissions people. You need to continue to practice, focusing on the areas of weakness that you discovered during this scoring process.

Another Sample Response

Take a look at a high-scoring response to the prompt you just practiced on. Your essay might look different and that’s fine. This is just one of many ways to successfully complete the Issue essay assignment.

“The powerful are most respected not when they exercise their power, but when they refrain from exercising it.”

Write an essay in which you develop and support a position on the statement above. In writing your essay, you should consider both when the statement may be true and when it may be false.

What aspect of power engenders the greatest respect? Some would argue that power inspires respect only by its ability to change things or bring about results. This camp respects the powerful only when they demonstrate their power by raising a massive army or bestowing charity on the less fortunate. Others believe that the true

measure of power lies not in what it is used for, but in how it is restrained. These people believe that people most respect the powerful when they choose not to use their power, such as granting clemency to a criminal on death row or allowing critics of the government to speak out. However, even in these cases of restraint, it is clear that the exercise of power is more respected because of what that restraint implies about government power and control.

Consider first the respect people hold for the exercise of power. One of the mightiest displays of power is the ability to protect and safeguard people and property and this aspect of government is what many people respect. Indeed, in Hobbes's Leviathan, he argued that one of the reasons people sacrifice themselves for the good of the state is to preserve the power of the state to protect its members from outside attacks. And one of the stated goals of the United States massive military buildup was so that other countries would either "love us or fear us." Thus, it is clear that people have respect for displays of power. Similarly, the ability of the powerful to bestow gifts of charity on the less fortunate is also well respected. The names of philanthropists like Carnegie and Rockefeller are held in high esteem because they used their power to help those less fortunate than themselves.

On the other hand, the ability to show restraint can also engender respect. Recently, the governor of Illinois decided to commute the death sentences of all the prisoners on death row. Such an act of clemency brought high praise from human rights proponents around the world. Furthermore, the fact that democratic governments allow dissent when they could in many cases censor or squash unfavorable opinions also lends credence to the view that restraint of power is what people respect. For example, the arbitrary arrest and sentencing of political dissidents in Russia has brought much international criticism of the Kremlin, while countries that support freedom of speech and the press are widely respected in the world.

Ultimately, after considering both sides of the issue, it must be concluded that the exercise of power is most respected. This is because even in cases of restraint, the entity in power is still exercising its power. Granting clemency is possible only because the state holds the power of life and death. Allowing dissent is exceptional only because the government has the power to crush it. Thus, it is not the restraint of power that people most respect, it is the exercise of it.

FINAL THOUGHTS: WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR TIME

Now that you know how to construct your essay, you have to practice writing essays in a mere 30 minutes. Here's a guideline for how to use your time.

- Find key terms, state the opposite side, brainstorm examples:
5–7 minutes
- Formulate a thesis: 2 minutes
- Write the essay: 18–20 minutes
- Proofread: 1–2 minutes



Your essay doesn't have to be perfect. Focus on the big picture.

Notice that not a lot of time is allotted for proofreading. Remember that it's okay to have minor spelling and grammatical errors. Your time is better spent making sure you consider both sides of the issue completely and write an effective essay. For tons more

practice, you can go to www.ets.org/gre for the complete list of essay topics.

Summary

- Follow the three simple steps to essay success: Think, Organize, Write.
- One of the keys to high-scoring essays is good examples. Make sure your examples are relevant to the topic and as specific as possible.
- Try to use examples drawn from your readings, current events, literature, and history. Avoid personal examples.
- Spice up your writing by employing an interesting “hook” to get your readers’ attention. Consider using such hooks as rhetorical questions, quotes, anecdotes, facts and statistics, and other attention-getting devices.
- A good GRE essay presents a smooth flow of ideas and examples. Make sure you use transitions to help show the progression of ideas in your essay.
- Templates can be effective ways of organizing your essay, but don’t feel restricted to them. Come up with your own template or modify the existing templates as you see fit.

Chapter 17

The Argument Essay

The Argument essay of the GRE asks you to examine and critique the logic of an argument. The arguments you will see in this chapter are similar to the ones you worked with in Chapter 7, and you will need to use the same approach to breaking these arguments down. This chapter will show you how to organize and write an essay once you've found the premises, conclusion, and assumptions of a GRE argument.

You'll be able to use all the skills we've discussed for the Analysis of an Issue essays on Argument essays as well, but in a slightly different way. Instead of asking for your opinion on a topic, the Analysis of an Argument essay asks you to critique someone else's argument. Before we jump into setting up templates and other preconstruction steps, let's take a look at how Analytical Writing arguments work.

THE PARTS OF AN ARGUMENT

As you read in Chapter 7 on Critical Reasoning, an argument, for GRE purposes, is a short paragraph in which an author introduces a topic and uses reasoning or factual evidence to back up his or her opinion about that topic.

The following statement is a really simplified example of an argument:

My car broke down yesterday, and I need a car to get to work. Therefore, I should buy a new car.

The car argument above is composed of the following three parts:

- the conclusion—the author's opinion and recommendation for action
- the premises—the facts the author uses to back up his or her opinion
- the assumptions—unstated conditions that must be true in order for the argument to make sense

In this argument, the author's conclusion is “I should buy a new car.”

The premises the author uses to support this conclusion are that his car broke down yesterday, and that he needs a car to get to work.

The premises must support the conclusion the way table legs support a tabletop. The tabletop is the most obvious and useful part of a table—you see more of it, and you can put things on it. But without the legs to hold it up, it's just a slab of wood on the floor. The same is true for the conclusion of an argument. The conclusion is the part that gets all the attention, since it recommends some course of action, but without the premises to support the conclusion, the conclusion won't hold up.

Conclusion Words

Certain words indicate a conclusion.

- so
- therefore
- thus
- hence
- showed that
- clearly
- then
- consequently
- as a result
- concluded that

When you see these words, you can be relatively sure that you've found the conclusion of the argument.

Premise Words

Certain words indicate premises.

- because
- since

- if
- given that
- in view of
- in light of
- assume

ASSUMPTIONS

An assumption is an unstated premise that supports the author's conclusion. It's the connection between the stated premises and the conclusion. In the example of the table, the assumption is that nails or glue hold the legs and the tabletop together. Without the glue or nails, the table will fall apart. Without the assumption, the argument will fall apart.

Sometimes the assumption is described as the gap between the facts that make up the premises and the conclusion. They don't always connect, so the assumption is the gap between them.

Let's take a look back at the car argument:

My car broke down yesterday, and I need a car to get to work. Therefore, I should buy a new car.

The premises are that *my car broke down yesterday* and *I need a car to get to work*. The conclusion is that *I should buy a new car*.

When you first read this argument, you may have had some questions. These questions might have been along the lines of "Why can't the author just rent a car?" or "Why can't the author just fix the car?"

As you read an argument, identifying the premises and conclusion, questions may pop into your head. Those questions are pointing out the gap that leads to the assumption. Here, the gap is between

having a broken car and still needing a car to get to work on the one side, and having to buy a new car on the other side.

Therefore, the assumption must be as follows: *There is no other way to have a car.*

There are all sorts of smaller assumptions here—that the car can't be fixed, that a car can't be rented, that there's no other car the author can borrow—but those are all covered in the main assumption.

The assumption fills the gap between the premises and the conclusion, and, in fact, functions as an unstated premise:

My car broke down yesterday, and I need a car to get to work. There is no other way to have a car. Therefore, I should buy a new car.

Brainstorming for the Argument Essay consists primarily of coming up with a list of assumptions.

Three Common Types of Arguments and Their Assumptions

There are three types of arguments you are likely to see. They are Sampling, Analogy, and Causal. Becoming familiar with these three types will help you identify the assumptions in the argument more quickly when the clock is ticking on the real test.

1. The Sampling Assumption

A sampling argument assumes that a small group is representative of a much larger group to which it belongs. To attack a sampling argument, show that one cannot assume that the opinions or experiences of the smaller group are necessarily representative of the larger group.

2. The Analogy Assumption

An argument by analogy assumes that A = B or that what is true for one entity will be true for another. To attack an argument by analogy, simply show that the two groups or places or individuals are nothing like each other. What is true for one does not have to be true of the other.

3. The Causal Assumption

A causal argument assumes that A causes B, or that if you remove the cause, you will remove the effect. While there may be a strong correlation between A and B, it does not always follow that it is a causal relationship or that A is the cause of B. To attack a causal relationship, point out that there are other possible causes for B and brainstorm some possible examples.

Well, Great, But Why Do I Care?

You should care about taking apart the argument, and finding the assumptions in particular, because the key to writing a great Argument essay on the Analytical Writing section is ripping apart the argument.

Think about it. The official instructions on the test ask you to “critique” the author’s argument. However, if you claim that everything the author says makes sense, you won’t be able to write an essay that’s more than a few sentences long. This means that in order to write a great essay, you’ll need to tear the author’s argument apart.

Danger: The most common mistake people make in writing the Argument essay is expressing their own opinions. Don’t do this! The Issue essay specifically asks you to give an opinion and then back it up. The Argument essay, on the other hand, wants a critique of someone else’s opinion, not your own.

WRITING THE ARGUMENT ESSAY

Writing the Analysis of an Argument essay requires a series of steps.

Step 1: Read the topic and identify the conclusion and the premises.

Step 2: Since they're asking you to critique (that is, weaken) the argument, concentrate on identifying its assumptions. Look for gaps in the argument, weaknesses in the logic, and new information in the conclusion that wasn't present in the premises. Brainstorm as many different assumptions as you can think of. Write these out on your scratch paper or on the computer screen.

Step 3: Select three or four of the strongest assumptions around which to build your essay.

Step 4: Choose a template that allows you to attack the assumptions in an organized way.

Step 5: Write the essay, using all the tools and techniques that you'll be learning in this chapter.

Step 6: Read over the essay and edit it.

You will have 30 minutes to plan and compose a response to the argument topic, so make sure to budget your time wisely.

KEYS TO A HIGH-SCORING ESSAY

In the Analysis of an Argument topic section, your job is to critique the argument's line of reasoning and the evidence supporting it, and to suggest ways in which the argument could be strengthened. Again, you aren't required to know any more about the subject than would any normal person—but you must be able to spot logical weaknesses. Make absolutely sure you have read and understood the previous section about taking apart the argument.

In order to write a high-scoring essay, you should accomplish four key tasks. According to a booklet prepared by ETS, “An outstanding argument essay...clearly identifies and insightfully analyzes important features of the argument; develops ideas cogently, organizes them logically, and connects them smoothly with clear transitions; effectively supports the main points of the critique; and demonstrates superior control of language, including diction, syntactic variety, and the conventions of standard written English. There may be minor flaws.”

To put it more simply, your essay should demonstrate all of the same things that you did for the Analysis of an Issue essay, plus one extra ingredient: a cursory knowledge of the rules of logic.

Your opinion is not the point in an Analysis of an Argument essay.

Doing the Actual Analysis of the Argument

In any Analytical Writing argument, the first thing you should do is separate the conclusion from the premises.

Let's see how this works with an actual essay topic.

Topic:

The director of the International Health Foundation recently released this announcement:

“A new medical test that allows the early detection of a particular disease will prevent the deaths of people all over the world who would otherwise die from the disease. The test has been extremely effective in allowing doctors to diagnose the disease six months to a year before it would have been spotted by conventional means. As soon as we can institute this test as routine

procedure in hospitals around the world, the death rate from this disease will plummet.”

Save the fancy prose for English class! Your grader cares more that you can identify the parts of the argument than for a clever turn of phrase.

The conclusion in this argument comes in the first line:

A new medical test that allows the early detection of a particular disease will prevent the deaths of people all over the world who would otherwise die from that disease.

The premises are the evidence in support of this conclusion.

The test has been extremely effective in allowing doctors to diagnose the disease six months to a year before it would have been spotted by conventional means.

The assumptions are the unspoken premises of the argument—without which the argument would fall apart. Remember that assumptions are often causal, analogical, or statistical. What are some assumptions of this argument? Let’s brainstorm.

Brainstorming for Assumptions

You can often find assumptions by looking for a gap in the reasoning. “Medical tests allow early detection”: According to the conclusion, this medical test leads to the early detection of the disease. There doesn’t seem to be a gap here.

Early detection allows patients to survive: In turn, the early detection of the disease allows patients to survive the disease. Well, hold on a minute. Is this necessarily true?

- First, do we know that early detection will *necessarily* lead to survival? We don't even know if this disease is curable. Early detection of an incurable disease is not going to help anyone survive it.
- Second, will the test be widely available and cheap enough for general use? If the test is expensive or available only in certain parts of the world, people will continue to die from the disease.
- Third, will doctors and patients interpret the tests correctly? The test may be fine, but if doctors misinterpret the results or if patients ignore the need for treatment, then the test will not save lives.

Death rate will plummet: There's a huge gap here in that there's absolutely no explanation of how merely detecting the disease will immediately cause the death rate from it to plummet. This area is ripe for exploration.

Organizing the Analysis of an Argument Essay

We're now ready to put this into a ready-made template. In any Analysis of an Argument essay, the template structure should be pretty straightforward. You're simply going to reiterate the argument, attack the argument in three different ways (each in a separate paragraph), summarize what you've said, and mention how the argument could be strengthened. From an organizational standpoint, this is pretty easy. Try to minimize your use of the word *I*. Your opinion is not the point in an Analysis of an Argument essay. To make your essay as reader-friendly as possible, be sure to indent each of the four or five paragraphs for clear breaks between your thoughts.

The arguments provided for the writing assessment of the GRE typically contain more flaws than those you worked with in the multiple-choice section. The flaws are often easier to spot as well.

A Sample Template

Of course, you should develop your own template for the Analysis of an Argument essay, but to get you started, here's one possible structure:

On scratch paper, complete the following prompts.

The argument that (restatement of the conclusion) is not entirely logically convincing, since it ignores certain crucial assumptions.

First, the argument assumes that:

Second, the argument never addresses:

Finally, the argument omits:

Thus, the argument is not completely sound. The evidence in support of the conclusion is not sufficient to support the conclusion of the argument because:

Ultimately, the argument might have been strengthened by:

The key to succeeding on an Analysis of an Argument essay is to critique the argument clearly.

How Would the Result of Our Brainstorming Fit into the Template?

Here's how the assumptions we came up with for this argument would fit into the template:

The argument that the new medical test will prevent deaths that would have occurred in the past is not entirely logically convincing since it ignores certain crucial assumptions.

First, the argument assumes that early detection of the disease will lead to an immediate drop in the mortality rate from this disease, yet it does nothing to explain how this will happen, and so on.

Second, the argument never addresses the point that the existence of this new test, even if totally effective, is not the same as the widespread use of the test, and so on.

Finally, even supposing the ability of early detection to save lives and the widespread use of the test, the argument still depends on the doctors' correct interpretation of the test and the patients' willingness to undergo treatment, and so on.

Thus, the argument is not completely sound. The evidence in support of the conclusion that the test will cause death rates to plummet does little to prove that conclusion, since it does not address the assumptions already raised. Ultimately, the argument might have been strengthened if the author could have shown that the disease responds to early treatment, which can be enacted immediately upon receipt of the test results, that the test will be widely available around the world, and that doctors and patients will make proper use of the test.

Customizing Your Analysis of an Argument Template

Your organizational structure may vary in some ways, but it will always include the following elements. The first paragraph should sum up the argument's conclusion. The second, third, and fourth paragraphs will attack the argument and the supporting evidence. The last paragraph should summarize what you've said and state how the argument could be strengthened. Here are some alternate ways of organizing your essay:

Variation 1

1st paragraph: Restate the argument.

2nd paragraph: Discuss the link (or lack thereof) between the conclusion and the evidence presented in support of it.

3rd paragraph: Show three holes in the reasoning of the argument.

4th paragraph: Show how each of the three holes could be plugged up by explicitly stating the missing assumptions.

5th paragraph: Summarize and conclude that because of these three holes, the argument is weak.

Variation 2

1st paragraph: Restate the argument and say it has three flaws.

2nd paragraph: Point out a flaw and show how it could be plugged up by explicitly stating the missing assumption.

3rd paragraph: Point out a second flaw and show how it could be plugged up by explicitly stating the missing assumption.

4th paragraph: Point out a third flaw and show how it could be plugged up by explicitly stating the missing assumption.

5th paragraph: Summarize and conclude that because of these three flaws, the argument is weak.

Write your own template for the Argument topic

On scratch paper, complete the following prompts.

1st paragraph:

2nd paragraph:

3rd paragraph:

4th paragraph:

5th paragraph:

You Are Ready to Write an Argument Essay

You've separated the conclusion from the premises. You've brainstormed for the gaps that weaken the argument. You've noted how the premises support (or don't support) the conclusion. Now it's time to write your essay. Start typing, indenting each of the four or five paragraphs. Use all the tools you've learned in this chapter. Remember to keep an eye on the time. Again, if you have a minute at the end, read over your essay and do any editing that's necessary.

What to Do with Your Time

Now that you know how to construct your essay, you have to practice writing essays in a mere 30 minutes. Here's a guideline for how to use your time.

- Break down the argument: 3–4 minutes
- Find 2–3 assumptions: 3–4 minutes
- Write the essay: 18–20 minutes
- Proofread: 1–2 minutes

As was the case with the Issue essay, not a lot of time is allotted for proofreading. Remember that it's okay to have minor spelling and grammatical errors. Your time is better spent making sure you consider both sides of the issue completely and write an effective essay.

Practice: Writing an Argument Essay

Practice on the following sample argument topic. If you have access to a computer, turn it on and start up a word-processing program (again, you may want to use a very rudimentary one like Notepad to simulate the ETS program you'll see on the real test). Then set a timer for 30 minutes. In that time, read the topic, brainstorm in the space provided in this book, and then type your essay into the computer.

A Sample Argument

The market for the luxury-goods industry is on the decline. Recent reports show that a higher unemployment rate, coupled with consumer fears, has decreased the amount of money the average household spends on both essential and nonessential items, but especially on nonessential items. Since luxury goods are, by nature, nonessential, this market will be the first to decrease in the present economic climate, and luxury retailers should refocus their attention to lower-priced markets.

On scratch paper, complete the following prompts.

Conclusion:

Why? (premises)

Assumptions:

Ways you can pull the argument apart:

Ways the argument could be made more compelling:

When writing your essay, make sure to use terms like *causal*, *analogy*, *sampling*, and so forth. Nothing impresses an ETS grader more than a sentence like “The argument assumes the sample is representative.”

Now use the template you developed earlier in this chapter to type your essay on a computer.

How to Score Your Essay

It’s time to put on your essay-scoring hat and prepare to grade your own essay. (Again, if you’re lucky enough to have a friend who is also preparing for the GRE, you could switch essays.) You’ll need to be objective about the process. The only way to improve is to honestly assess your weaknesses and systematically eliminate them.

Set a timer for two minutes. Read the essay carefully but quickly, so that you do not exceed the two minutes on the timer.

Now ask yourself the following questions about the essay:

1. Overall, did it make sense?
2. Did you address the argument directly?
3. Did you critique the argument thoroughly?
4. Did your introduction paragraph repeat the argument to establish the topic of the essay?
5. Did you avoid injecting your own opinion into the essay?
6. Did your essay have three strong paragraphs critiquing the arguments?
7. Did your critiques make sense?
8. Did you flesh out your points to make the weaknesses of the argument explicit?

9. Did the examples apply directly to the topic?
10. Did the essay have a strong conclusion paragraph?
11. Was the essay well organized?
12. Did you use language that made the organization of the essay obvious?
13. Did you use correct grammar, spelling, and language, for the most part?
14. Was the essay of an appropriate length (four to five paragraphs of at least three sentences each)?

If you could answer “yes” to all or almost all of those questions, congratulations! Your essay would probably receive a score in the 5–6 range. If you continue to practice, and write an essay of similar quality on the Analysis of an Argument essay on the real test, you should score very well.

If you answered “yes” to fewer than 12 of the questions, you have room for improvement. Fortunately, you also know which areas you need to strengthen as you continue to practice.

If you answered “yes” to fewer than five of the questions, your essay would probably not score very well on a real GRE. You need to continue to practice, focusing on the areas of weakness that you discovered during this scoring process.

There are more Argument topics for you to get super familiar with that essay type found in the Practice Tests in the back of this book and online, but if you’d like to practice even more, go to www.ets.org/gre and view the list of real Argument topics. You cannot possibly practice writing essays on all of these real ETS topics, so don’t even try. However, you should spend time reading through them to become familiar with the variety of topics that ETS may give you.

Just Keep Practicing

So now you've read everything you need to know about writing high-scoring essays on the GRE. With a little practice, writing these essays should become second nature, and you'll find yourself sitting at the word processor on test day confident and prepared. Keep it up!

Summary

- Always start by identifying the conclusion of the argument.
- Look for the common types of arguments: Sampling, Analogy, and Causal.
- Brainstorm all of the assumptions that attach the premises to the conclusion.
- Outline your essay on your scratch paper before you start writing.
- Leave yourself two minutes to proofread your essay once you've finished writing.

Part V

Answers and Explanations to Drills and Practice Sets

CHAPTER 4: TEXT COMPLETIONS

Practice: Finding the Clue

1. Your words: *harrowing, difficult, troubled*; Underline: *reflected in the harrowing nature...of his plays*
2. Your words: *tall, high, towering*; Underline: *second highest mountain in the world...reaching more than 28,000 feet high*
3. Your words: *negative, harmful, unhealthy*; Underline: *wind-chill warning is issued...minus 25 degrees Fahrenheit or lower*
4. Your words: *remnants, remains, artifacts OR devices, munitions, projectiles*; Underline: *unexploded shells...from World War II*
5. Your words: *non-interchangeable, distinct, different*; Underline: *use the terms interchangeably...mammoths were hairy with long tusks, while mastodons had low-slung bodies and fatter skulls*
6. Your words: *practical, pragmatic, apolitical*; Underline: *he crafted his policies not with an eye toward their political consequences but instead toward their practical effects*
7. Your words: *amount, volume, workload*; Underline: *he would have to read for hours and hours each day to finish it all*
8. Your words: *derived, descended, transcribed*; Underline: *word “ghoul”...from the Arabic word “Algol”*

Practice: Clues and Transitions

1. Your words: *bad, poor, uneven*; Underline: *top talents... performance as a rookie almost ended his career*; Circle: *but*

2. Your words: *praise, recognition, respect*; Underline: *she brokered a diplomatic solution to a potential crisis*; Circle: *work; she*
3. Your words: *beneficial, health-promoting, healthful*; Underline: *detrimental to one's health*; Circle: *While*
4. Your words: *disconnected, apart, isolated*; Underline: *increasing technological connectivity*; Circle: *Despite*
5. Your words: *attractive, graceful, charming*; Underline: *ugliness and clumsiness*; Circle: *Although*
6. Your words: *gauge, predictor, sign*; Underline: *use holiday sales to gauge future stock prices*; Circle: *prices; thus*
7. Your words: *negativity, misgivings, doubts*; Underline: *it is somewhat ironic...negative view*; Circle: *while...rarely display such*
8. Your words: *(devastating) effects, harms, toxicity*; Underline: *devastating effects on insects*; Circle: *insects; however...the same*

Text Completions Drill

1. **B sorrow**

The blank is describing what *her eyes relayed* and the transition word *despite* indicates that what *her eyes relayed* must be the opposite *the smile that spread from ear to ear*. A good word for the blank is something like “sadness.” Choice (A), *jubilance*, means something joyous, so eliminate it. Choice (B), *sorrow*, is a good match, so keep (B). *Lively* means energetic, so eliminate (C). *[V]ision* offers no contrast to “sadness,” and *mischievousness* or naughtiness is closer to *smile* than to