



GRADUATE RECORD EXAMINATIONS®

Practice General Test # 3

Analytical Writing Sample Essays
and Commentaries

Large Print (18 point) Edition



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The Graduate Record Examinations Practice General Test #3

Analytical Writing Sample Essays with Reader Commentaries

The Analytical Writing portion of the GRE® General Test consists of one writing task. This document contains the writing topic for Practice Test #3, the scoring guide, and sample responses with commentaries.

Note: Sample responses are reproduced exactly as written, including misspellings, wrong choice of words, typographical and grammatical errors, etc., if any.

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Analytical Writing

Sample Topic Directions

Plan and compose a response to the following issue. A response to any other issue will receive a score of zero. Make sure that you respond according 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.

In an actual test, trained GRE readers will read your response and evaluate its overall quality according to how well you do each of the following:

- Respond to the specific instructions on the issue
- Consider the complexities of the issue
- Organize, develop, and express your ideas
- Support your position with relevant reasons and/or examples
- Control the elements of standard written English

Before you begin writing, you may want to think for a few minutes about the issue and the instructions and then plan your response. Be sure to develop your position fully and organize it coherently, but leave time to reread what you have written and make any revisions you think are necessary.

Sample Topic:

The best way for a society to prepare its young people for leadership in government, industry, or other fields is by instilling in them a sense of cooperation, not competition.

Write a response in which you discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the claim. In developing and supporting your position, be sure to address the most compelling reasons or examples that could be used to challenge your position.

GRE® Scoring Guide

Score 6

In addressing the specific task directions, a 6 response presents a cogent, well-articulated analysis of the issue and conveys meaning skillfully.

A typical response in this category exhibits the following characteristics:

1. It articulates a clear and insightful position on the issue in accordance with the assigned task.
2. It develops the position fully, with compelling reasons and/or persuasive examples.
3. It sustains a well-focused, well-organized analysis, connecting ideas logically.
4. It conveys ideas fluently and precisely, using effective vocabulary and sentence variety.
5. It demonstrates superior facility with the conventions of standard written English (i.e., grammar, usage, and mechanics) but may have minor errors.

Score 5

In addressing the specific task directions, a 5 response presents a generally thoughtful, well-developed analysis of the issue and conveys meaning clearly.

A typical response in this category exhibits the following characteristics:

1. It presents a clear and well-considered position on the issue in accordance with the assigned task.
2. It develops the position with logically sound reasons and/or well-chosen examples.
3. It is focused and generally well organized, connecting ideas appropriately.
4. It conveys ideas clearly and well, using appropriate vocabulary and sentence variety.
5. It demonstrates facility with the conventions of standard written English but may have minor errors.

Score 4

In addressing the specific task directions, a 4 response presents a competent analysis of the issue and conveys meaning with acceptable clarity.

A typical response in this category exhibits the following characteristics:

1. It presents a clear position on the issue in accordance with the assigned task.
2. It develops the position with relevant reasons and/or examples.
3. It is adequately focused and organized.
4. It demonstrates sufficient control of language to express ideas with acceptable clarity.
5. It generally demonstrates control of the conventions of standard written English but may have some errors.

Score 3

A 3 response demonstrates some competence in addressing the specific task directions, in analyzing the issue, and in conveying meaning but is obviously flawed.

A typical response in this category exhibits **ONE OR MORE** of the following characteristics:

1. It is vague or limited in addressing the specific task directions and/or in presenting or developing a position on the issue.
2. It is weak in the use of relevant reasons or examples, or relies largely on unsupported claims.
3. It is limited in focus and/or organization.
4. It has problems in language and sentence structure that result in a lack of clarity.
5. It contains occasional major errors or frequent minor errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics that can interfere with meaning.

Score 2

A 2 response largely disregards the specific task directions and/or demonstrates serious weaknesses in analytical writing.

A typical response in this category exhibits **ONE OR MORE** of the following characteristics:

1. It is unclear or seriously limited in addressing the specific task directions and/or in presenting or developing a position on the issue.
2. It provides few, if any, relevant reasons or examples in support of its claims.
3. It is poorly focused and/or poorly organized.
4. It has serious problems in language and sentence structure that frequently interfere with meaning.
5. It contains serious errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics that frequently obscure meaning.

Score 1

A 1 response demonstrates fundamental deficiencies in analytical writing.

A typical response in this category exhibits **ONE OR MORE** of the following characteristics:

1. It provides little or no evidence of understanding the issue.
2. It provides little or no evidence of the ability to develop an organized response (e.g., is disorganized and/or extremely brief).
3. It has severe problems in language and sentence structure that persistently interfere with meaning.
4. It contains pervasive errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics that result in incoherence.

Score 0

A 0 response is off topic (i.e., provides no evidence of an attempt to respond to the assigned topic), written in a foreign language, merely copies the topic, consists of only keystroke characters, or is illegible or nonverbal.

Sample Responses with Reader Commentaries

The following are sample responses and commentary on those responses, which explain how each response was scored. There are responses and scoring comments for essays with scores of 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1.

Reminder: Sample responses are reproduced exactly as written, including misspellings, wrong choice of words, typographical and grammatical errors, etc., if any.

The following sample response received a score of 6:

Whenever people argue that history is a worthless subject or that there is nothing to be gained by just “memorizing a bunch of stupid names and dates,” I simply hold my tongue and smile to myself. What I’m thinking is that, as cliché as it sounds, you do learn a great deal from history (and woe to those who fail to learn those lessons). It is remarkable to think of the number of circumstances and situations in which even the most rudimentary knowledge of history will turn out to be invaluable. Take, for example, the issue at hand here. Is it better for society to instill in future leaders a sense of competition or cooperation? Those who have not examined leaders throughout time and across a number of fields might not have the ability to provide a thorough and convincing answer to this question, in spite of the fact that it is crucial to the future functioning of our society. Looking closely at the question of leadership and how it has worked in the past, I would have to agree that the best way to prepare young people for leadership roles is to instill in them a sense of cooperation.

Let us look first at those leaders who have defined themselves based on their competitiveness. Although at first glance it may appear that a leader must have a competitive edge in order to gain and then maintain a leadership position, I will make two points on this subject. First, the desire to compete is an inherent part of human nature; that is, it is not something that needs to be "instilled" in young people. Is there anyone who does not compete in some way or another every single day? You try to do better than others in your school work or at the office, or you just try to do better than yourself in some way, to push yourself. When societies instill competitiveness in their leaders, it only leads to trouble. The most blatant example in this case is Adolf Hitler, who took competition to the very extreme, trying to prove that his race and his country were superior to all. We do not, however, need to look that far to find less extreme examples (i.e., Hitler is not the extreme example that disproves the rule). The recent economic meltdown was caused in no large part by the leaders of American banks and financial institutions who were obsessed with competing for the almighty dollar. Tiger Woods, the ultimate competitor in recent golfing history and in many ways

a leader who brought the sport of golf to an entirely new level, destroyed his personal life (and perhaps his career -- still yet to be determined) by his overreaching sense that he could accomplish anything, whether winning majors or sleeping with as many women as possible. His history of competitiveness is well documented; his father pushed him from a very early age to be the ultimate competitor. It served him well in some respects, but it also proved to be detrimental and ultimately quite destructive.

Leaders who value cooperation, on the other hand, have historically been less prone to these overreaching, destructive tendencies. A good case in point would be Abraham Lincoln. Now, I am sure at this point you are thinking that Lincoln, who served as President during the Civil War and who refused to compromise with the South or allow secession, could not possibly be my model of cooperation! Think, however, of the way Lincoln structured his Cabinet. He did not want a group of "yes men" who would agree with every word he said, but instead he picked people who were more likely to disagree with his ideas. And he respected their input, which allowed

him to keep the government together in the North during a very tumultuous period (to say the least). My point in choosing the Lincoln example is that competitiveness and conflict may play better to the masses and be more likely to be recorded in the history books, but it was his cooperative nature that allowed him to govern effectively. Imagine if the CEO of a large company were never able to compromise and insisted that every single thing be done in exactly her way. Very quickly she would lose the very people that a company needs in order to survive, people with new ideas, people ready to make great advances. Without the ability to work constructively with those who have conflicting ideas, a leader will never be able to strike deals, reach consensus, or keep an enterprise on track. Even if you are the biggest fish in the pond, it is difficult to force your will on others forever; eventually a bigger fish comes along (or the smaller fish team up against you!).

In the end, it seems most critical for society to instill in young people a sense of cooperation. In part this is true because we seem to come by our competitive side more naturally, but cooperation is more often something we struggle to learn (just think of kids on

the playground). And although competitive victory is more showy, more often than not the real details of leadership come down to the ability to work with other people, to compromise and cooperate. Getting to be President of the United States or the managing director of a corporation might require you to win some battles, but once you are there you will need diplomacy and people-skills. Those can be difficult to learn, but if you do not have them, you are likely to be a short-lived leader.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 6:

This outstanding response earns a score of 6 for presenting an insightful position on the issue and supporting its analysis with compelling reasons and persuasive examples. The response takes the insightful position that competition, though necessary to some aspects of leadership, is less important for young people to learn because it is inherent in the human condition and can lead to dangerous excesses, whereas cooperation is more difficult to learn but more essential. The response follows the task directions by using counterarguments in the

development of its position. For example, the discussion of Lincoln in paragraph 3 explores conflicting sides of his Presidency (the “competition” of the Civil War and the “cooperation” within his Cabinet). In fact, the response skillfully explores the nuances of both cooperation and competition, building its position of agreement with the prompt by looking closely at many sides of both concepts. Additionally, the response demonstrates superior facility with language. There are a few minor errors, mainly typos, but in general the response demonstrates excellent sentence variety and diction. This sentence is typical of the quality of the writing throughout the response: “My point in choosing the Lincoln example is that competitiveness and conflict may play better to the masses and be more likely to be recorded in the history books, but it was his cooperative nature that allowed him to govern effectively.” In this complex sentence, the writer makes skillful use of parallel structure and subordination. Because of its fluent writing and insightful development, then, this response earns a score of 6.

The following sample response received a score of 5:

Cooperation, the act of working as a group to achieve a collective goal, is an important value for young children to learn. Another vital life lesson children can learn is how to be competitive, which is a mindset in which a person feels the need to accomplish more than another person. Both are necessary to become well rounded individuals, but concerning preparing for a future in government, industry or various other fields, a sense of cooperation is much more important.

While not all children are overly competitive in nature, every person has some level of competitive drive inside them. This is a natural thing and is perfectly normal. Unfortunately, if this competitive nature is emphasized, the child will have problems relating socially to other children, and subsequently, will have issues interacting with adults later in life. A fierce competitive drive will blind an individual, causing them to not see situations where group effort will be more greatly rewarded than an individual effort. Take for instance the many teams of people

working for NASA. If the people that make up these teams were all out to prove that they were superior to others, our entire space program would be jeopardized. One needs to look beyond the scope of what is best on an individual level and learn to look at what will most benefit a broad group of people. This is where instilling a sense of cooperation in young children is vital. Cooperation is taught at an early age and must be emphasized throughout life to fully embrace the concept.

In the world of sports a competitive drive is vital; unfortunately, life is not a sports game that simply leads to a winning or losing score. Life is far more complex than this simple idea and there is no winner or loser designation to accompany it. We all have to work together to come to a conclusion that will assist not just ourselves, but others and future generations. In every scenario there will be individuals that have brilliant ideas, but those ideas require other people to build upon, perfect and implement. Take for instance Bill Gates; Bill Gates is responsible for the Microsoft corporation which he invented in his garage. His competitive drive assisted in building his idea, but it was the collaborative effort of many people that

helped propel his invention into the world known product it is today. Without the cooperation of others, his genius invention might never have made it out of his garage.

It may be true that an individual can change the world, but only so far as to say that an individual can construct an idea that will inevitably change the world. Once an idea is formulated, it then takes a team of people working collectively towards a common goal to make sure that the brilliant, life-altering idea makes it to fruition. Without the cooperation of many, an idea could simply remain as a picture on a drawing board. It is because of this possibility that instilling a cooperative demeanor in children is much more important than developing a competitive attitude. Competition is a natural thing that will develop with or without encouragement but the same cannot be said for a sense of cooperation.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 5:

Arguing that cooperation is less natural and more important for leadership, this response develops a thoughtful position on the issue and conveys meaning clearly and well. For these reasons it earns a score of 5. Note that it does not develop its reasons and examples as thoroughly as the sample 6 does, but it still presents thoughtful analysis using well chosen examples. For example, the discussion of Bill Gates in paragraph 3 is thoughtful, exploring the ways that both competition (the “competitive drive” that led him to found a company) and cooperation (the “collaborative effort of many people” is what made the company work) were essential to his success as a leader. Throughout the response, then, counterarguments are used to create a nuanced position on the issue. The writer looks at conflicting aspects of competition, which is vital but insufficient for life because life is “more complex” than a sporting event, and cooperation, which is critical but more difficult to learn. In addition, the writer conveys meaning clearly, demonstrating sentence variety and a facility with language that is more than adequate.

There are a few minor errors, mainly typos and misspelled words, but language control in this response is more than adequate (e.g., "One needs to look beyond the scope of what is best on an individual level and learn to look at what will most benefit a broad group of people."). Because of its facility with language and its thoughtful position on the issue, this response earns a score of 5.

The following sample response received a score of 4:

When the generation of today matures, it is important for them to succeed and become the successful leaders in government, industry and other fields. There are many traits that leaders must possess, and cooperation is one of these very important characters. Nonetheless it is important for leaders to have a sense of competition, so as to prevent themselves from being complacent with their position.

Cooperation is needed in order to be a functional person in society, while still adhering to social standards. Most leaders in society, did not start out

as such. A person cannot isolate themselves from others with demeanor and attitude and expect to become an executive. While there may be leaders that have developed this ill attitude towards others, they did not get there by being that way. A person who is able to effectively cooperate with others, will subsequently develop a nexus of supporters. Through collaboration, people are able to develop their studies further and better themselves.

However, it is still important for there to be a sense of competition. Competition is the root of motivation for most. It drives us to become stronger, smarter, and to want more. Nonetheless, the spirit of competition must also be reigned in, and not be allowed to run wild. Competitiveness can lead to abuse of power and distasteful actions, which is quite the opposite of someone who displays cooperativeness.

Some may argue that competition is not needed. That those that are meant to be leaders will not become complacent, because they have their own internal drive to lead. If there was no competition, there would be no world records. Michael Phelps may

not be a leader of government or industry, but he is certainly educated on the technique of swimming, and leader in his field. Would he be as good as he is today if there was not competition? Would the leaders of Microsoft have been motivated to create Bing if there was no Google?

Cooperation helped many leaders get where they are today, and will continue to do so in the future. But leaders, as well as those that aspire to be one, all need to have a sense of competition as well.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 4:

This adequate response presents a clear position on the issue in accordance with the assigned task, arguing that both competition and cooperation are important for leaders. The response uses counterarguments both in the construction of its overall position (comparing the value of both competition and cooperation) and in its discussion of the positive and negative aspects of competition. However, the development of ideas in this response is not as thorough or as persuasive as one would expect

to see in a response that earns a score of 5 or 6. For instance, the example of Microsoft inventing Bing to compete with Google is certainly relevant, but it is not developed with any thoughtfulness. It is simply stated. Other examples are somewhat more fully developed, but there is also some tangential material (e.g., even the writer seems to understand that Michael Phelps does not quite fit into a discussion of leadership). In addition to its adequate development, this response displays adequate control of language. This response does not have the sentence variety or the skillful diction seen in a response that earns a higher score. There are some minor errors present, but nothing that interferes with clarity. Because this response presents a clear position on the issue, expressing meaning with adequate clarity, it earns a score of 4.

The following sample response received a score of 3:

Leadership is a tough task to master. To be a leader means you must be better than a bunch of folks and work with them to accomplish a greater goal. Leadership in any field needs cooperative effort and a leader must be able to inspire and make the human resource at hand to work better. In doing so there is a far cry of an immense responsibility. I therefore stand by taking help from inmates to do the same.

Like the say 'when going gets tough the tough gets going'. So there is no point of getting bogged down rather plan more ways to get the work done and one of the sureshot approach is by working together. I believe to the core of my heart that there can be nothing equal to cooperation and unity in a work field. As simple as it sounds if one can do a work in hermit atmosphere at certain efficiency, a number of brains working together can be more efficient. An atmosphere where everyone works holding hands and when someone falls there are people to make him

stand again makes a much better picture in my mind everytime.

Competition is not a evil it can inspire some one to work better and looking to do better can be considered good. But am afraid what fear here is that when you compete with someone you set you limits to that person. So once you do better than him/her you tend to be relaxed and that is where when the real evil creeps in.

With cooperation you have a goal and associated effort to work for the same. Rather than individual petty and competition to be better placed than an friend it would be far more appreciable to keep working for the common goal. That way even the goal gets more defined at some level. So lets all drop all this boundaries of individualism and keep working for a common goal, and if you want to compete then compete with yourself and get better than what you were yesterday.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 3:

This response displays some competence in presenting a position according to the task directions, but it earns a score of 3 because frequent minor errors do interfere with clarity. The writer agrees with the prompt that cooperation is more important, and it explores some counterarguments in its assertion that competition “can inspire some one to work better and looking to do better can be considered good.”

However, almost every sentence in this response has at least one minor error. Some of the errors are typos or minor mechanical problems like missing spaces after punctuation. But other errors have more impact on meaning. Missing words, incorrect sentence boundaries, and improper verb forms contribute to a lack of clarity throughout the response. This sentence is typical of the limited language control seen throughout this response: “So there is no point of getting bogged down rather plan more ways to get the work done and one of the sureshot approach is by working together.” Because of its limited clarity, then, this response earns a score of 3.

The following sample response received a score of 2:

Both a sense of cooperation and competition is needed to be a good leader. If one is focused on competition and ignores or refuse to work with others then there would be problems for that leader. A leader needs to be able to get along, cooperate and know how to interact with others and allies. Treaties and allies require cooperation. Trade agreements and aid as well. A leader cannot achieve much alone. Competition is also needed to encourage people to be the best. If no one does there best to obtain a goal how would a leader be chosen. What kind of leader would that make? The best way for a society to prepare its young is to instill a sense of both competition and cooperation.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 2:

This response earns a score of 2 for its seriously limited development. There is a clear position on the issue, as the writer argues that the “best way for a society to prepare its young is to instill a sense of both competition and cooperation.” However, the writer provides few, if any, relevant reasons or examples to support and develop this position.

The discussion of cooperation is supported only by very generic assertions like the notion that “treaties and allies require cooperation.” And there is even less development in the discussion of competition. In order to receive a higher score, the response would need to provide more support for its position. Language control in this response is adequate, but the response earns a score of 2 because of its seriously limited development.

The following sample response received a score of 1:

Best way for a society to prepare it's young people for leadership in government, industry, or other fields is by instilling in them a sense of coopertion, not competition. This statement is very true, whether we mean leadership in government, industry, or any other fields.

For leadership in government, industry, or other fields some people argue that the best way for society to prepare it's young people is by instilling in them a sense of cooperation. Other people argue that the best way is through competition. It can be difficult for many people to decide between these two choices. There are many arguments that support both sides. I fully agree that the best way is to instilling in them a sense of cooperation, not competition.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 1:

This response earns a score of 1 because it demonstrates little evidence of the ability to develop a position on the issue. Instead of developing a position, the response simply repeats the language of the prompt, adding some generic language that could be applied to any Issue prompt. For example, consider these sentences: "It can be difficult for many people to decide between these two choices. There are many arguments that support both sides." This is a totally generic analytical framework that has not been filled in with any specific exploration related to this prompt. The writer is clearly making an attempt to respond to the prompt, and the final sentence does seem to indicate a position on the issue. So the response does not merit a score of 0. However, the vast majority of the response is simply repetition of language from the prompt and/or generic material. Thus, it earns a score of 1.

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