



GRADUATE RECORD EXAMINATIONS®

## **Practice General Test # 2**

Analytical Writing  
Sample Essays and Commentaries

Large Print (18 point) Edition



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# Revised GRE® Practice Test 2

## **Analytical Writing Sample Essays with Reader Commentaries**

The Analytical Writing portion of the GRE® test consists of two writing topics, an Issue topic and an Argument topic. This document contains the writing topics for Practice Test 2, the scoring guides for each section, and sample responses with commentaries for each topic.

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

## ***Analyze an Issue***

### **Sample Issue Topic Directions**

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. 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. Standard timing for an issue topic is 30 minutes.

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.

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
- 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 Issue Topic:

"The best way to teach is to praise positive actions and ignore negative ones."

Write a response in which you discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the recommendation and explain your reasoning for the position you take. In developing and supporting your position, describe specific circumstances in which adopting the recommendation would or would not be advantageous and explain how these examples shape your position.

# ***GRE Scoring Guide: Analyze an Issue***

## **Score 6**

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

A typical paper 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 facility with the conventions of standard written English (i.e., grammar, usage, and mechanics) but may have minor errors.
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## **Score 5**

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

A typical paper 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 paper presents a competent analysis of the issue and conveys meaning with acceptable clarity.

A typical paper 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 reasonable clarity.
  5. It generally demonstrates control of the conventions of standard written English but may have some errors.
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### **Score 3**

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

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

1. It is vague or limited in addressing the specific task directions and 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 poorly focused and/or poorly organized.
  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.
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## **Score 2**

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

A typical paper 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 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 unfocused and/or disorganized.
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 paper demonstrates fundamental deficiencies in analytical writing.

A typical paper 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.
  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.
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## **Score 0**

A 0 paper 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 to the Issue Topic, with Reader Commentaries**

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

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

## **The following sample issue response received a score of 6:**

The recommendation presents a view that I would agree is successful most of the time, but one that I cannot fully support due to the “all or nothing” impression it gives.

Certainly as an educator I agree fully that the best way to elicit positive response from students is to make use of students’ positive energy and then encourage actions that you would like to see repeated. It is human nature that we all want to be accepted and achieve on some level, and when people in authority provide feedback that we have done something well, the drive to repeat the action that was praised is bound to be particularly strong.

This blanket statement would obviously pay dividends in situations in which a teacher desires to have students repeat particular behaviors. For example, if an educator is attempting to teach students

proper classroom etiquette, it would be appropriate to openly praise a student who raises his or her hand when wishing to speak or address the class. In such cases, the teacher may also help shape positive behaviors by ignoring a student who is trying to interject without approval from the teacher. In fact, the decision to ignore students who are exhibiting inappropriate behaviors of this type could work very well in this situation, as the stakes are not very high and the intended outcome can likely be achieved by such a method. However, it is important to note here that this tactic would only be effective in such a “low-stakes” situation, as when a student speaks without raising her hand first. As we will discuss below, ignoring a student who hits another student, or engages in more serious misbehaviors, would not be effective or prudent.

To expand on this point, it is important for teachers to be careful when working with the second half of this statement, only ignoring negative actions that are not serious. Take for instance a student who is

misbehaving just by chatting with a fellow classmate. This student might not be presenting much of a problem and may be simply seeking attention. Ignoring the student might, in fact, be the best solution. Now assume the negative action is the improper administering of chemicals in a science experiment or the bullying of a fellow student. To ignore these negative actions would be absurd and negligent. Now you are allowing a problem to persist, one that could potentially lead to much bigger and more dangerous issues. In a more serious situation, addressing the negative actions quickly and properly could stop the problem in its tracks. It is for reasons like this that I do not advocate the idea that a teacher can be successful by simply ignoring negative actions.

I do, however, greatly support the idea that the central focus of teaching should be to build on and encourage positive actions. However, the author's all-encompassing statement leaves too many negative possibilities for the classroom. Perhaps a better way to phrase this statement would be to say, "The best

way to teach is to praise positive actions and ignore negative ones that are not debilitating to class efficiency or the safety of any individual”.

Thus, in the original statement, there are indeed some good intentions, and there could be a lot of merit in adopting its basic principles. Data proves that positive support can substantially increase motivation and desire in students and contribute to positive achievements. In fact, most studies of teaching efficacy indicate that praising positive actions and ignoring negative ones can create a more stable and efficient classroom. It needs to be stressed, however, that this tool is only effective at certain levels of misbehavior. As mentioned above, when the behavior is precipitated by feelings of revenge, power or total self-worthlessness, this methodology will likely not work. It is likely to be very successful, however, when



the drive behind the misbehavior is simple attention seeking. In many of these instances, if the teacher demonstrates clearly that inappropriate behavior does not result in the gaining of attention, students are more likely to seek attention by behaving properly. Should the student choose this path, then the ignoring has worked and when the positive behavior is exhibited, then the teacher can utilize the first part of the theory and support or praise this behavior. Now it is much more likely to be repeated. If the student does not choose this path and instead elects to raise the actions to a higher level that presents a more serious issue, then ignorance alone cannot work and other methods must be employed.

In conclusion, one can appreciate the credo expressed in this instance, but surely we all can see the potential error of following it through to the extreme.

## **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 6:**

This response receives a 6 for its well-articulated, insightful analysis of the issue. Rather than simply rejecting or accepting the prompt, the writer argues that the recommendation made by the prompt can often be true but is too “all or nothing” to be endorsed without qualification. The writer turns this idea into an insightful position by providing examples and evidence to fully and persuasively support its nuanced argument. The response provides nicely detailed situations that offer compelling support for a claim that the recommendation can, in fact, work. At the same time, it also highlights the recommendation’s limits using additional specific, detailed examples. Particularly persuasive is the fourth paragraph, in which the writer compares the impact of ignoring minor behavioral problems like talking in class to the potential costs of ignoring more serious issues like bullying. Thus, the writer recognizes that the prompt’s claim, as well as his/her own, is inevitably dependent on the specific context for its success or

failure. Throughout the response, the writer demonstrates the ability to convey ideas fluently and precisely, using effective vocabulary and sentence variety. This sentence demonstrates the level of language facility seen throughout the response: "It is human nature that we all want to be accepted and achieve on some level, and when people in authority provide feedback that we have done something well, the drive to repeat the action that was praised is bound to be particularly strong."

## **The following sample issue response received a score of 5:**

I partially agree with the statement “The best way to teach is to praise positive actions and ignore negative ones”. Children should be rewarded when they perform well; however, they should not be ignored for performing sub-optimally. For purposes of this essay, the term “actions” is defined as behaviors within the classroom.

Utilizing positive reinforcements, such as tangible rewards, can be a good method to teach children. If the teacher praises children for actions that are desirable, then the children are more likely to repeat those actions. For example, a student who completes an assignment on time and does a good job is likely to want to do a good job on the next assignment if he gets positive feedback. Likewise, the children who are not currently engaging in the desirable actions may be more inclined to do so in order to receive the positive reinforcement.

Conversely, children should not be ignored for negative actions. If a child is not exhibiting appropriate behavior in the classroom, then it is the teacher's responsibility to encourage the child to perform optimally. Ignoring something doesn't make it go away, actions and consequences do. A student who is being disruptive in class will continue to be disruptive unless the teacher does something about it. However, the teacher's actions need be appropriate.

Before the teacher attempts to modify a child's behavior, the teacher needs to try and identify the reason behind the behavior. For instance, children who leave their seat often, stare in to space, or call out of turn may be initially viewed as having poor behavior. However, the teacher may suspect that the child has an attentional problem, and request that the child be tested. If the child does have an attentional problem, then the teacher can work with a related service, such as occupational therapy, to alter the classroom environment in order to cater to the needs of the child. For instance, the teacher could remove some of the stimulating bulliten board

displays to make the room more calming to the child. If the child becomes more attentive in class then the teacher was able to assist the child without scorning them or ignoring them. The teacher met the needs of the child and created an environment to enable the child to optimally perform in the educational setting.

On the other hand, if the child is tested, and does not have any areas of concern that may be impacting the educational performance in the classroom, then the negative behavior may strictly be due to defiance. In such a case, the teacher still should not ignore the child, because the negative actions may hinder the learning opportunity for the remaining children in the class. As a result, a child who is being disruptive to the learning process of the class should be set apart from the class so that they do not receive the positive reinforcement of peer attention.

The teacher should not ignore the student who is misbehaving, but that does not mean that the teacher just needs to punish. It is better to address the child

privately and make sure the child is aware of the negative actions. Once the child is aware, then the teacher should once again try to determine the reason why the child is behaving in a negative manner. Perhaps the child's parents are in the middle of a divorce and the child is outwardly expressing his frustration in the classroom. Or the academic content of the class may not be challenging enough for the child and so he is misbehaving out of boredom. Whatever the reason behind the behavior, the key factor is that the teacher works with the child to try and identify it. Simply punishing or ignoring the child would not solve the problem, whereas working to create a plan for success in the classroom would. Likewise, rather than punishing and defeating the child, the teacher is working with and empowering the child; a much more positive outcome to the situation.

## **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 5:**

This strong response presents a thoughtful and well-developed analysis of the issue. In this case the writer argues that teachers need to modify their approach based on context and observation, meaning that a blanket approach cannot be successful. The writer supports this position with relevant reasons and examples that present logically sound support. Note that the task instructions ask writers to discuss situations in which the statement might or might not hold true, and this response does that quite clearly. In the second paragraph, the writer gives an example of a student who completes an assignment on time and receives positive feedback, showing how the recommendation could hold true. Other examples show situations in which it might not hold true, and these various points are brought together to support



the writer's position that teachers have to look at the context of the situation and cannot rely on simply ignoring negative actions. This response also demonstrates facility with language, using appropriate vocabulary and sentence variety. Sentences like this one demonstrate the writer's command of the conventions of standard written English: "If the child does have an attentional problem, then the teacher can work with a related service, such as occupational therapy, to alter the classroom environment in order to cater to the needs of the child." There are some minor errors, but overall the response demonstrates strong control of language. Although the response is clearly stronger than a 4, which would simply present a clear position on the issue according to the task instructions, it does not reach the level of a 6 because it does not develop its points in a way that creates a cogent and insightful position. It does, however, present a generally thoughtful and well-developed analysis of the issue, leading to a score of 5.

## **The following sample issue response received a score of 4:**

I absolutely agree with the first section of the statement above, but find fault with the latter half.

There is no doubt that praising positive actions is an excellent way to teach, and this method is most clearly exemplified when dealing with much younger children. When a young child is learning basic social behavior, it is imperative that he is encouraged to repeat positive actions. For example, when a child voluntarily shares his toys with another, if a teacher rewards that behavior, the child will understand that this is a good practice, and likely share again in the future.

In contrast, if a child displays negative behavior by stealing a toy away from his playmate, it would be very dangerous for the teacher to ignore this action,

for then the child may never recognize that this is unacceptable. In this instance, the child has not learned from the situation at all. So what should a teacher do when faced with such a situation? Punishment is not necessarily the optimal choice, either. Rather than scolding a child for mistreating his playmates and sending him off to a corner, a teacher would be wise to demonstrate the positive alternative: to share his toys instead. In this case, rather than ignoring or punishing negative actions, the teacher could seize the opportunity to reinforce positive behavior, and further extend the child's learning experience.

In summary, positive reinforcement is certainly an excellent method for teaching new methods or behaviors, and encouraging a student to learn more. However to ignore, rather than recognize and correct negative actions, would be a disservice to the student, for he would not know what conclusion to draw from his action.

## **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 4:**

This adequate response follows the task directions and presents a clear position on the issue, supporting its main points with examples that are relevant, if only adequately developed. For instance, the discussion in the second paragraph of a teacher who reinforces the positive behavior of sharing a toy is certainly relevant and on-task (i.e., it describes a situation in which adopting the recommendation would be advantageous). However, the development of this idea does not lead to generally thoughtful or insightful analysis. Instead, it is simply presented as an example. In addition to its adequate development, this response also demonstrates sufficient control of the conventions of standard written English, and its main points are made with reasonable clarity. Some of the sentences demonstrate the syntactical variety normally seen in responses that receive higher scores (e.g., "Rather than scolding a child for mistreating his

playmates and sending him off to a corner, a teacher would be wise to demonstrate the positive alternative: to share his toys instead"). However, the overall use of language in this response is merely adequate.

**The following sample issue response received a score of 3:**

Praising postive actions and ignoring negative ones may be a good way to teach but not the best way. Ignoring negative actions could negate all the postive praises given to an individual, having negative actions go unchecked will lead to habits formed that would overwhelm any positive actions that are complementary to an individuals learning process.

For instance, in a classroom full of eight-year old kids; if during a lesson they are making alot of noise, having this ignored would tell the kids that it is okay to be disruptive in class. The individuals in that class would develop the habit of being distruptive hence hindering

their learning process. However if the eight-year old kids were immediately told to stop the disruption then it will never become a habit.

Every action needs to have a related consequence follow in a learning environment. In the early years of education, the way they are taught becomes a lifelong habit which is hard to change in later years. If negative actions are not assigned a related consequences then teaching becomes ineffective because the students negative actions soon diminish the ability to do well in school. The way positive actions are dealt with should also be done with negative actions rather than being ignored which in turn enhance the learning environment.

### **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 3:**

Although this response has minor errors in its use of language, it receives a 3 primarily for insufficient overall clarity and for the limited development of its

claims. The writer does make an attempt to follow the specific task instructions, and the response has a clear position on the issue, arguing that it is not acceptable practice to ignore negative behaviors. However, the development provided in support of that position is limited. The example of “eight-year old kids” making noise during class can be seen as a situation in which following the recommendation is not advantageous. Instead of developing that point in a logically persuasive way, however, the writer proceeds to make an unsupported assertion about the consequences of following the recommendation (“The individuals in that class would develop the habit of being disruptive hence hindering their learning process”). Another issue that keeps this response at the 3 level is a lack of clarity, particularly in the final paragraph. The final sentence demonstrates this problem with clarity: “The way postive actions are dealt with should also be done with negative actions rather than being ignored which in turn enhance the learning environment.” Problems with the structure of this sentence make it difficult to determine the writer’s intended meaning.

## **The following sample issue response received a score of 2:**

I don't agree with this affirmation, because I think is very important to praise positive actions but also is important to sign the negative ones, in some situations according to the students level, grade, etc., could be better to put more emphasis in the positive things and if not ignore all the negative ones, do not give so much importance to them, this is particularly important in the lowest levels of education.

But in another situations you must sign the negative things, trying to avoid that the students can repeat them in the future, because I think you can also learn from the negative situations.

For this reason I believe that is important to praise positive actions but is also important no to ignore the negative ones, because in a given situation the student



can have troubles recognising what is right and what is wrong. And finally as a conclusion I think that the best way to teach is combination of praise positive things but also to sign the negative ones.

### **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 2:**

This response clearly fits several characteristics of a 2, as defined by the scoring guide. It is seriously limited in its development, organization, and focus. The response repeats itself rather than developing any of its statements, pointing to an inability to organize a response capable of supporting any specific claims with relevant reasons or examples. Additionally, serious language control problems frequently interfere with meaning. Thus, even though the writer does seem to be making an attempt to respond to the specific task instructions, the response merits a score of 2.

## **The following sample issue response received a score of 1:**

Write a response in which you discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the recommendation and explain your reasoning for the position you take. In developing and supporting position, describe specific circumstances in which adopting the recommendation would or would not be advantageous and explain how these examples shape your position.

Author says that The best way to teach is to praise positive actions and ignore negative ones. I agree to this recommendation. Explaining, I strongly believe that the best way to teach is not to praise positive action and ignore negative ones but is making everyone to be a good ones. Specific circumstances lead me which adopting the recommendation as the following:

First, we will lost the good children who have negative maner if we ignore them. Children are future, not all. Praise in negative should not be, teaching to children to best way. I strongly believe adopting this recommeindation would be not advantages.

second, negative ones in today may be a great people in the future. Not only ones behave do worse they are teenage. Teenage in today is not easy for all! Negative ones can not better, if only prainse positive actions, ignore negativeone. Negative ones may not positive be having, but if we praise them only, they not think they should be positive person later.

conclusion, specific circumstances are which adopting the recommendation would not be advantage, I am not agree to the the recommendation. Ignore negative manor when they will not be positive behavrio in futre. But they can, if do not ignore them. we should not ignor negative person but should make them think that they can be a good man future like positive person.

## **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 1:**

This response has severe and pervasive problems in language and sentence structure that, as stated in the scoring guide, consistently interfere with meaning and result in incoherence. The response begins by repeating the prompt, but then the severe problems with language control and organization undermine any evidence of the ability to understand the prompt or to present and develop a clear position. For example, it is not clear what the writer means by the claim that the best way to teach is “makeing everyone to be a good ones.” Severe problems with language control in that sentence and throughout the response prevent it from developing a coherent position on the issue or responding to the specific task instructions. Although the writer makes an attempt at organization, with points marked as first, second, and conclusion, the response actually exhibits little or no evidence of the ability to develop any potential understanding of the prompt into a logical position on the issue.

# ***Analyze an Argument***

## **Sample Argument Topic Directions**

You will be given a short passage that presents an argument and specific instructions on how to respond to that passage. 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. Standard timing for an argument topic is 30 minutes.

**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.

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
- Identify and analyze important features of the passage
- Organize, develop, and express your evaluation
- Support your analysis 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 passage and the instructions and then plan your response. Be sure to develop your analysis fully and organize it coherently, but leave time to reread what you have written and make any revisions you think are necessary.

## **Sample Argument Topic:**

The argument to be analyzed is as follows:

The following appeared in an article written by Dr. Karp, an anthropologist.

“Twenty years ago, Dr. Field, a noted anthropologist, visited the island of Tertia and concluded from his observations that children in Tertia were reared by an entire village rather than by their own biological parents. However, my recent interviews with children living in the group of islands that includes Tertia show that these children spend much more time talking about their biological parents than about other adults in the village. This research of mine proves that Dr. Field’s conclusion about Tertian village culture is invalid and thus that the observation-centered approach to studying cultures is invalid as well. The interview-centered method that my team of graduate students is currently using in Tertia will establish a much more accurate understanding of child-rearing traditions there and in other island cultures.”

Write a response in which you discuss what specific evidence is needed to evaluate the argument and explain how the evidence would weaken or strengthen the argument.

# ***GRE Scoring Guide: Analyze an Argument***

## **Score 6**

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

A typical response in this category exhibits the following characteristics:

1. It clearly identifies aspects of the argument relevant to the assigned task and examines them insightfully.
2. It develops ideas cogently, organizes them logically, and connects them with clear transitions.
3. It provides compelling and thorough support for its main points.
4. It conveys ideas fluently and precisely, using effective vocabulary and sentence variety.
5. It demonstrates facility with the conventions of standard written English (i.e., grammar, usage, and mechanics) but may have minor errors.



## **Score 5**

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

A typical response in this category exhibits the following characteristics:

1. It clearly identifies aspects of the argument relevant to the assigned task and examines them in a generally perceptive way.
2. It develops ideas clearly, organizes them logically, and connects them with appropriate transitions.
3. It offers generally thoughtful and thorough support for its main points.
4. It conveys ideas clearly and well, using appropriate vocabulary and sentence variety.
5. It demonstrates facility with the conventions of standard written English but may have minor errors.

## **Score 4**

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

A typical response in this category exhibits the following characteristics:

1. It identifies and examines aspects of the argument relevant to the assigned task but may also discuss some extraneous points.
2. It develops and organizes ideas satisfactorily but may not connect them with transitions.
3. It supports its main points adequately but may be uneven in its support.
4. It demonstrates sufficient control of language to convey ideas with reasonable clarity.
5. It generally demonstrates control of the conventions of standard written English but may have some errors.

## **Score 3**

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

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

1. It does not identify or examine most of the aspects of the argument relevant to the assigned task, although some relevant examination of the argument is present.
2. It mainly discusses tangential or irrelevant matters, or reasons poorly.
3. It is limited in the logical development and organization of ideas.
4. It offers support of little relevance and value for its main points.
5. It has problems in language and sentence structure that result in a lack of clarity.
6. It contains occasional major errors or frequent minor errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics that can interfere with meaning.

## **Score 2**

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

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

1. It does not present an examination based on logical analysis but may instead present the writer's own views on the subject.
2. It does not follow the directions for the assigned task.
3. It does not develop ideas, or is poorly organized and illogical.
4. It provides little, if any, relevant or reasonable support for its main points.
5. It has serious problems in language and sentence structure that frequently interfere with meaning.
6. It contains serious errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics that frequently obscure meaning.

## **Score 1**

A 1 response demonstrates fundamental deficiencies in analytical writing.

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

1. It provides little or no evidence of understanding the argument.
  2. It is extremely brief and/or disorganized, providing little evidence of an organized response.
  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.
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## **Score 0**

A 0 paper is off topic, written in a foreign language, merely copies the topic, consists of only keystroke characters, is illegible, or is nonverbal.

## **Sample Responses to the Argument Topic, with Reader Commentaries**

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

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

## **The following sample argument response received a score of 6:**

It might seem logical, at first glance, to agree with the argument in Dr. Karp's article that children in Tertia actually are raised by their biological parents (and perhaps even, by implication, that an observation-centered approach to anthropological study is not as valid as an interview-centered one). However, in order to fully evaluate this argument, we need to have a significant amount of additional evidence. The argument could end up being much weaker than it seems, or it might actually be quite valid. In order to make that determination, we need to know more then analyze what we learn.

The first piece of evidence that we would need in order to evaluate Dr. Karp's claims is information about whether or not Tertia and the surrounding island group have changed significantly in the past 20 years. Dr. Field conducted his observational study 20 years

ago, and it is possible that Tertia has changed significantly since then. For example, if we had evidence that in the intervening years Westerners had settled on the island and they introduced a more typical Western-style family structure, it would certainly weaken Dr. Karp's argument. In that case, the original study could have been accurate, and Dr. Karp's study could be correct, as well, though his conclusion that Dr. Field's method is ineffective would be seriously weakened.

Another piece of evidence that might help us evaluate this claim involves the exact locations where Dr. Karp's interviews took place. According to this article, Dr. Karp and his graduate students conducted interviews of "children living in the group of islands that includes Tertia." If we were to learn that they never interviewed a single Tertian child, it would significantly weaken the conclusion. It could turn out to be the case, for example, that children on Tertia are raised communally, whereas children on other islands nearby are raised by their biological parents.



In order to fully evaluate this article, we would also need to learn more about the interview questions that Dr. Karp's team used. What exactly did they ask? We don't know, nor do we know what the children's responses actually were. What did they say about their biological parents? The mere fact that they speak more frequently about their biological parents than they do about other adults does not mean that they are raised by their biological parents. It would significantly undermine Dr. Karp's argument if it turned out that the children said things like how much they missed their parents or how their parents had left them in a communal environment. Without knowing WHAT the children said, it is hard to accept Dr. Karp's conclusion.

It is slightly more difficult to discuss the evidence we might need in order to evaluate the more interesting claims in Dr. Karp's article, namely his extension of the results of his study to a conclusion that interview-centered methods are inherently more valid than observational-centered approaches. In order to fully evaluate this claim, in fact, we would need to look

at many more examples of interview-based and observation-based anthropological studies and we would also need to look into different study designs. Perhaps Dr. Field did not conduct an effective observational study, but other observational approaches could be effective. In order to make such grandiose claims, Dr. Karp really needs a lot of additional evidence (ideally a metaanalysis of hundreds of anthropological studies).

Clearly, then, we need to have additional evidence in order to get a more complete understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of Dr. Karp's article. We need to know about Tertia and the surrounding islands, whether or not they have changed over the past 20 years. We also need to know about study design (Dr. Karp's and Dr. Field's). And we really need a lot more information if we want to extend the results of a study about one island culture to all anthropological fieldwork.

## **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 6:**

This outstanding response clearly addresses the specific task directions and presents a cogent, insightful analysis by specifically detailing the impact that different pieces of evidence would have on the argument. The introductory paragraph sets up the organization of the response, and each body paragraph provides the sort of compelling development typical in responses that receive a score of 6. For example, after the writer discusses possible evidence that Tertian child-rearing practices have changed over the past 20 years, he or she clearly explains the impact information about those changes might have on the argument, saying, “In that case, the original study could have been accurate, and Dr. Karp’s study could be correct, as well, though his conclusion that Dr. Field’s method is ineffective would be seriously

weakened.” Not only is this argument compelling, but it also demonstrates sophisticated syntax and facility with language. There is more insightful development in the fifth paragraph, in which the writer examines Dr. Karp’s claims about interview-based studies. Although there are a few typos and minor errors here, nothing in the response distracts from the overall fluency of the writing. Sentences like this one demonstrate the fluent and precise diction and varied syntax that are evident throughout the response: “It could turn out to be the case, for example, that children on Tertia are raised communally, whereas children on other islands nearby are raised by their biological parents.” Because of its compelling and insightful development and fluent and precise language, this response fits all of the bullet points for a 6.

**The following sample argument response received a score of 5:**

There seems to be an abundance of evidence that, if we were to examine it closely, might make us reconsider Dr. Karp's argument here. If we look first at the evidence that might weaken this argument, we can see a lot of the problems with Dr. Karp's article. It would certainly weaken the argument if we were to discover that Dr. Karp and his students did not actually conduct any of their interviews on the island of Tertia itself. Looking closely at the article, we see that Dr. Karp claims the interviews were conducted with children from the island group that includes Tertia. There is no evidence that they interviewed Tertian children. It would definitely weaken the argument if we were to learn that they interviewed children only on islands close to Tertia. Those islands may or may not have similar child-rearing traditions, and geographic proximity does not guarantee societal similarity.

Another piece of evidence that would weaken the argument could come from transcripts of the interviews themselves. Dr. Karp's article makes the claim that the children "spend much more time talking about their biological parents than about other adults," but he gives no indication of what exactly they say about their biological parents. After all, the children may be talking about how they never see their parents.

One more important piece of evidence that might undermine the argument Dr. Karp is making in this article. He admits that twenty years have passed since Dr. Field's study was conducted, but he does not provide evidence that proves child-rearing techniques have not changed significantly in that time. Any number of factors could have led to a significant shift in how children are raised. Influences from other cultures, significant catastrophic events, or a change in government structures could have led to a change in family dynamics. Any evidence of such changes would clearly undermine Dr. Karp's argument.

If we went looking for evidence that could strengthen the argument, we might also find something interesting. Obviously, some of the evidence above might strengthen the argument if they were NOT as discussed above (e.g., if there were evidence that the Tertian islands have NOT changed since Dr. Field's study or if there were transcripts that showed the children spoke about how much they loved living with their biological parents). However, if we discovered that there are numerous interview-based studies that confirm Dr. Karp's findings, it would go a long way toward bolstering his claim about Tertian child-rearing AND his claim about interview-centered studies being more effective. Another piece of evidence that would strengthen Dr. Karp's argument is undermining Dr. Field's original study. Maybe Dr. Field was sloppy, for example.

Dr. Karp's article, then, ends up looking like something of an empty shell. Depending on the evidence we find to fill it out, we may discover that it is quite convincing, or we could determine that he is full of hot air.

## **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 5:**

This strong response presents a generally thoughtful and well-developed analysis of the argument, and it follows the specific task directions quite clearly. This writer approaches the task by first discussing the evidence that might weaken Dr. Karp's argument and then, in somewhat less depth, considering the evidence that could strengthen it. In both cases the writer analyzes the ways in which the evidence would bear on the argument. For example, the writer notes, "Influences from other cultures, significant catastrophic events, or a change in government structures could have led to a change in family dynamics. Any evidence of such changes would clearly undermine Dr. Karp's argument." Although the development presented here is strong, the response does not present the compelling development required for a 6. For instance, in the first paragraph there is some repetition, and in the third paragraph the reader must fill in the implications of potential "changes" in Tertia, which



are not fully fleshed out. How could a catastrophic event or a change in governmental structure have led to changes in child rearing traditions? The development, then, is strong but not outstanding. Also, the response demonstrates some facility with language, though it does not convey meaning skillfully enough to merit a score of 6. In general, the response demonstrates strong writing skills, in spite of some minor errors like the sentence fragment that begins paragraph three. Sentences like this one demonstrate the quality of the writing seen throughout the response: "Those islands may or may not have similar child-rearing traditions, and geographic proximity does not guarantee societal similarity." In terms of writing skill and analysis, then, this response earns a score of 5.

## **The following sample argument response received a score of 4:**

Dr. Karp's arguments that his research proves that observation-centered research is invalid and that his interview-centered method "will establish a much more accurate understanding of child-rearing traditions there and in other island cultures" need more support. While the findings from Dr. Karp's interviews do challenge Dr. Field's results, one then cannot make the assumption that Dr. Field's research is invalid. This essay will attempt to explain three ways in which Dr. Karp can strengthen his argument.

First, Dr. Karp should provide more information about the content of the interviews. Misinterpretation from observation can be as likely as misinterpretation in interviews. It is possible that while children may spend more time talking about their own biological parents, other people from the village are still assisting in most of the rearing of the child. Perhaps asking the children how much time they spend with their parents, who

disciplines them, and other specific questions about rearing would provide a more complete answer about who exactly is raising the children.

Second, Dr. Karp could provide some information about societal changes in the past twenty years. If there have been significant changes on the island of Tertia, it is possible that both anthropologists are correct. Twenty years ago, the entire village raised children, and now, biological parents raise their own children. Recent events could explain the change - such as introduction of Western mass media or changes in government (monarchy to democracy). Perhaps even interviewing adults to get a better understanding on child rearing. Not to mention, interpreting information from children and using that information to generalize about an entire island is not the most effective means.

Thirdly, Dr. Karp needs more proof that the observation-centered approach to studying cultures is invalid. A potential mistake in one article can hardly invalidate an entire method of research. Other

anthropologists who employ the interview-centered method need to dispute the work of anthropologists who use the observation-centered approach. Only when a significant amount of research can be disproved can an entire method of research be invalidated.

To conclude, Dr. Karp needs to do more research and provide more evidence before his large claims can be fully supported. In fact, it will take more than Dr. Karp alone to prove observation-centered method of research is invalid and further, that the interview-centered method is better. In terms of his own research, Dr. Karp needs to conduct more interviews on the Tertia islands and scientifically prove Dr. Field's research wrong.

## **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 4:**

This adequate response manages to identify some important features of the argument, presenting a competent examination and generally following the task directions. The response does not merit a score of 5 or 6, however, because it does not present compelling or insightful development. The response identifies basic points about the content of the interviews, possible changes in Tertia, and observation-centered studies, but these points are developed only adequately. Development in paragraph four ("Thirdly...") is generic and thin, and the final paragraph just recapitulates the assertions made earlier. The response does follow the specific task instructions, but it does not develop its discussion of specific evidence fully. For example, there is a claim that "specific questions about rearing would provide a more complete answer about who exactly is raising the children," but the response does not explain what sorts of questions would give which answers or how those answers would strengthen or weaken the

argument. Also, language control in this response is merely adequate, not strong. There are some typos and other errors (e.g., a sentence fragment in paragraph 3: "Perhaps even interviewing adults to get a better understanding on child rearing"), but the response generally demonstrates control of the conventions of standard written English, and main points are made with reasonable clarity. Because of its adequate control of language and competent analysis, this response earns a score of 4.

**The following sample argument response received a score of 3:**

It will be very inappropriate to condemn Dr. Field's observations and findings. A critical look and analyses of the argument shows that details of Dr. Field's work was not given out. In fact, it is sad on the side of the writer to think that Dr.Fields work is invalid.

First, the fact that the children of Tertia spend much time talking about their biological parents than about other adults in the village can be interpreted in a different way. The writer did not give any clue on what exactly the children were saying about their biological

parents. It could be that they were talking about their parents irresponsibility of rearing them by themselves than leaving them in the hands of the whole community to bring them up. In fact, the argument could have been strengthened if the writer gave what exactly the children were talking about.

On the other hand, the writer failed on his or her part as a researcher to look at the time frame from the time Dr. Field did his analyses to the the time writer also conducted His or Her research. This would have given him the insight as what new developments has taken place within the twenty years gap that Dr. Field did His analyses. The writer's argument would have given a lot of meaning if the writer had research into the cultural developments that has taken place since the time Dr. fields last visited and didcompleted His work at Tertia.

Also, as a reader, the tone this writing is not very convincing. It almost seems like Dr. Karp is making Dr. Fields look bad, instead of supporting his own research with information. He really only says one sentence about his own research, the rest of it is about how Fields work is not as good and saying

things about Fields work. He needs to have more details about his own work to really sell the reader on it. He needs to write more about what the interview-centered method is, since he does not even say what it is. This will be more convincing if it is less of an attack on Dr. Field and more about the researches.

On the whole the writer's work is incomplete and His or Her criticisms are unfounded. The writer needs to change the qualitative way of His or Her research into a more quantitative approach. If done in this way the impact of His or Her findings will be very strong and convincing.

### **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 3:**

Although this response analyzes some important features of the argument, it is limited in development and often lacks acceptable clarity in expressing its ideas. In particular, this response contains occasional major errors and frequent minor errors that can



interfere with meaning. Misused words, subject/verb agreement problems, and other lapses occur throughout the response. In addition to the problems with language control, the response demonstrates limited relevant development. It is true that the response makes an attempt to follow the specific task instructions, identifying the fact that the argument might be strengthened by evidence that the children were talking in a positive manner about their parents. However, the response does not explain exactly how this evidence would strengthen the argument. Similarly, there is discussion of the elapsed time between the two studies, but the response does not clarify how information about the “cultural developments” over the past 20 years would strengthen the argument Dr. Karp is making. Additionally, some of the points the response is making are not actually relevant to an analysis of the logic of the argument. The discussion of Dr. Karp’s tone in the fourth paragraph, for example, is a rhetorical critique, not a logical one. There is an attempt to talk about evidence (“He needs to have more details...”), but the focus in this paragraph is

on “selling” the reader, not creating a persuasive argument. Because of its limited development and language control, this response earns a score of 3.

**The following sample argument response received a score of 2:**

The argument is on the article written by Dr. Karp , an anthropologist and his study and the new plan to study the same in the tertia region.Dr.Karp has written an article on Children in Tertia and about the culture.

The arguement is that they have not mention the type of intreview and the type of questions of the interviwes.They haven't indicate the education level in the children and the background of the children. What are all the things the team is going to observe and study on the child rearing tradition is not clearly mention.

The team is going to study and correlate the tradition with the other island culture but there is a possibility of different environment of other island or different biological parents. The resource availability on one island is different than the other is also a possibility . In that situation it is not possible to correlate the culture between to iceland.

There is a possibility , Dr. Field's interview time , lacking of infrastructure in the tartia. There was no developement of schools and other refreshment activity or the parents may not spent enough time with the children due to various reasons and that effect to the children , so they might have spend more time talking about their biological parent.

To support the argument more information about the nature, cultural background and also the type of infrastructure presence in the area is require, the kind of study carring out in the study area is require. Which would help to give more support the argument.

## **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 2:**

This response demonstrates serious weaknesses in analytical writing. There seem to be some attempts at logical analysis, though none that specifically and clearly examine the evidence that might weaken or strengthen the argument. Additionally, there is little or no relevant or reasonable support for the writer's points. In large part, the lack of logical development seems to be due to the serious and frequent problems with language control seen throughout the response. There are basic errors in just about every sentence of the response, and these errors frequently interfere with meaning. This sentence exemplifies the problems seen throughout the response: "There was no developement of schools and other refreshment activity or the parents may not spent enough time with the children due to various reasons and that effect to the children , so they might have spend more time talking about their biological parent." The writer is attempting to discuss some points that are relevant to an analysis of this argument, but meaning is

obscured by all of the errors present. However, some meaning can be discerned, and these errors are not severe enough to drop the score to a 1.

**The following sample argument response received a score of 1:**

Twenty years ago Dr field an anthropologist found result after reserch that in small village of tertia children reared by entire village but according to dr karp he talked most of the children that they talk about there boilological parents. so it conclude that the reserch of dr field is unvalid now and what type of methods dr field used may be not cover all aspects of there culture and also other cultures of other islands. reared the children by entire village is not logical but in some cultures there are some surprizing customs . so may be dr field did not anlysed the culture of that island on various parameters , which we are using now a days.intrveiw with children and observing their behaviour is important because some time the person talk one thing and behave in different way look like either he not telling correct or he is showing his altitude in misguiding way. i think the

behaviour of the children shows proper report of reserch and you can observe their altitude to the other adult peoples of the village and to their own biological parents. The expert reserch scholer can easily feel their emotions and behaviour during some time stay with their culture. dr field maybe more research time, maybe, for longer.

### **Comments on sample essay receiving score of 1:**

This fundamentally deficient response mainly consists of a summary of the prompt, and although there is some evidence of understanding, the response provides little evidence of the ability to develop and organize an analysis of the argument. Also, severe problems in language persistently interfere with meaning. In fact, the material that does not come directly from the prompt is more or less incomprehensible.

**End of Revised GRE® Practice Test 2. Analytical Writing Sample Essays with Commentaries.**