

Six-Point Holistic Scoring Rubric for the ACT Writing Test

Papers at each level exhibit *all* or *most* of the characteristics described at each score point.

Score = 6

Essays within this score range demonstrate effective skill in responding to the task.

The essay shows a clear understanding of the task. The essay takes a position on the issue and may offer a critical context for discussion. The essay addresses complexity by examining different perspectives on the issue, or by evaluating the implications and/or complications of the issue, or by fully responding to counterarguments to the writer's position. Development of ideas is ample, specific, and logical. Most ideas are fully elaborated. A clear focus on the specific issue in the prompt is maintained. The organization of the essay is clear: the organization may be somewhat predictable or it may grow from the writer's purpose. Ideas are logically sequenced. Most transitions reflect the writer's logic and are usually integrated into the essay. The introduction and conclusion are effective, clear, and well developed. The essay shows a good command of language. Sentences are varied and word choice is varied and precise. There are few, if any, errors to distract the reader.

Score = 5

Essays within this score range demonstrate competent skill in responding to the task.

The essay shows a clear understanding of the task. The essay takes a position on the issue and may offer a broad context for discussion. The essay shows recognition of complexity by partially evaluating the implications and/or complications of the issue, or by responding to counterarguments to the writer's position. Development of ideas is specific and logical. Most ideas are elaborated, with clear movement between general statements and specific reasons, examples, and details. Focus on the specific issue in the prompt is maintained. The organization of the essay is clear, although it may be predictable. Ideas are logically sequenced, although simple and obvious transitions may be used. The introduction and conclusion are clear and generally well developed. Language is competent. Sentences are somewhat varied and word choice is sometimes varied and precise. There may be a few errors, but they are rarely distracting.

Score = 4

Essays within this score range demonstrate adequate skill in responding to the task.

The essay shows an understanding of the task. The essay takes a position on the issue and may offer some context for discussion. The essay may show some recognition of complexity by providing some response to counterarguments to the writer's position. Development of ideas is adequate, with some movement between general statements and specific reasons, examples, and details. Focus on the specific issue in the prompt is maintained throughout most of the essay. The organization of the essay is apparent but predictable. Some evidence of logical sequencing of ideas is apparent, although most transitions are simple and obvious. The introduction and conclusion are clear and somewhat developed. Language is adequate, with some sentence variety and appropriate word choice. There may be some distracting errors, but they do not impede understanding.

Score = 3

Essays within this score range demonstrate some developing skill in responding to the task.

The essay shows some understanding of the task. The essay takes a position on the issue but does not offer a context for discussion. The essay may acknowledge a counterargument to the writer's position, but its development is brief or unclear. Development of ideas is limited and may be repetitious, with little, if any, movement between general statements and specific reasons, examples, and details. Focus on the general topic is maintained, but focus on the specific issue in the prompt may not be maintained. The organization of the essay is simple. Ideas are logically grouped within parts of the essay, but there is little or no evidence of logical sequencing of ideas. Transitions, if used, are simple and obvious. An introduction and conclusion are clearly discernible but underdeveloped. Language shows a basic control. Sentences show a little variety and word choice is appropriate. Errors may be distracting and may occasionally impede understanding.

Score = 2

Essays within this score range demonstrate inconsistent or weak skill in responding to the task.

The essay shows a weak understanding of the task. The essay may not take a position on the issue, or the essay may take a position but fail to convey reasons to support that position, or the essay may take a position but fail to maintain a stance. There is little or no recognition of a counterargument to the writer's position. The essay is thinly developed. If examples are given, they are general and may not be clearly relevant. The essay may include extensive repetition of the writer's ideas or of ideas in the prompt. Focus on the general topic is maintained, but focus on the specific issue in the prompt may not be maintained. There is some indication of an organizational structure, and some logical grouping of ideas within parts of the essay is apparent. Transitions, if used, are simple and obvious, and they may be inappropriate or misleading. An introduction and conclusion are discernible but minimal. Sentence structure and word choice are usually simple. Errors may be frequently distracting and may sometimes impede understanding.

Score = 1

Essays within this score range show little or no skill in responding to the task.

The essay shows little or no understanding of the task. If the essay takes a position, it fails to convey reasons to support that position. The essay is minimally developed. The essay may include excessive repetition of the writer's ideas or of ideas in the prompt. Focus on the general topic is usually maintained, but focus on the specific issue in the prompt may not be maintained. There is little or no evidence of an organizational structure or of the logical grouping of ideas. Transitions are rarely used. If present, an introduction and conclusion are minimal. Sentence structure and word choice are simple. Errors may be frequently distracting and may significantly impede understanding.

No Score

Blank, Off-Topic, Illegible, Not in English, or Void

ACT Plus Writing Essay Comments

Essay Comments, derived from the Scoring Rubric, are selected by ACT readers to help student writers understand the strengths and weaknesses of their essays.

The Comments appear in their entirety on the Student Report. The code numbers for the selected Comments are listed on the High School and College Reports. Complete text for each Comment Code appears below.

No Writing Results

01. The pages submitted for the Writing Test could not be scored. No scores are reported if the pages are blank or were marked void at the test center, or if the essay is illegible, is not written in English, or does not respond to the prompt.
02. A Combined English/Writing score and Writing subscore can be reported only when there is a valid English score. Because there were no responses to any items on the multiple-choice English Test, no Writing results are reported.

Make and Articulate Judgments

20. Your essay responded to the prompt by taking a position on the issue.
21. Your essay responded to the prompt by taking a clear position on the issue.
22. Your essay acknowledged counterarguments on the issue but did not discuss them.
23. Your essay showed recognition of the complexity of the issue by addressing counterarguments.
24. Your essay showed recognition of the complexity of the issue by partially evaluating its implications.
25. Your essay addressed the complexity of the issue by fully responding to counterarguments.
26. Your essay addressed the complexity of the issue by evaluating its implications.

Develop Ideas

30. Your essay provided very little writing about your ideas. Try to write more about the topic.
31. The ideas in your essay needed to be more fully explained and supported with more details.
32. Your essay used some specific details, reasons, and examples, but it needed more of them.
33. Your essay adequately supported general statements with specific reasons, examples, and details.

34. General statements in your essay were well supported with specific reasons, examples, and details.
35. Your essay effectively supported general statements with specific reasons, examples, and details.

Sustain Focus

40. Your writing did not maintain a focus on the issue. Try to plan your essay before you write.
41. Your essay focused on the general topic rather than on the specific issue in the prompt.
42. Your essay maintained focus on the specific issue in the prompt.

Organize and Present Ideas

50. Your essay lacked organization. Try to plan and arrange your ideas logically.
51. Your essay was not clearly organized. Try to plan and arrange your ideas logically.
52. Your essay showed basic organizational structure, but the ideas needed to be more clearly connected.
53. The organization of your essay was adequate, but the rigid structure seemed to limit discussion.
54. Your essay was well organized, making it easy to understand logical relationships among ideas.
55. The logical sequence of ideas in your essay fit its persuasive purpose well.

Communicate Clearly

60. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors made your essay difficult to understand.
61. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors were distracting. Proofread your writing.
62. Using correct grammar and more varied sentence structures would improve your essay.
63. Using more varied sentence structures would make your essay clearer and more engaging.
64. Using more sentence variety and precise word choice would make your essay clearer and more engaging.
65. Some varied sentence structures and precise word choice added clarity and interest to your writing.
66. Your essay showed a good command of language by using varied sentences and precise word choice.