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English Essay Writing Guide

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ACCUPLACER Writing Essay

This test measures how effectively you write. It is important to note that proficient writing is critical to your academic success.

Your essay will be scored only on your ability to express, organize, and support your opinions and ideas, and not the position you take on the topic. The following aspects of writing will be considered when reviewing your essay:

- Focus: How clear your main idea or point of view is
- Organization: How logical and structured your essay is
- Development: How well-developed your ideas are
- Support: How strong your arguments are
- Sentence Structure: How effective your sentence structure is
- Mechanics: How correctly you wrote without mistakes

What is in this free ACCUPLACER pdf?

- Three writing assignments
- Three sample essays; one for each of the assignments
- Three-step writing guide
- Four-step essay proofreading check list

Use the writing assignments to test your essay writing skills. Use the sample essays to see examples of how essays should be structured.

Use the three-step writing guide to help you plan your essays. Learn the four-step essay proofreading check list and remember to apply it once you have finished writing your essay.

Writing Assignment 1

Write a multiple-paragraph essay of about 300–600 words on the topic below. You should use the available time to plan, write, review, and edit what you have written. Read the assignment carefully before you begin to write.

Many senior citizens continue to drive long after it ceases to be safe for them and for everyone else on the road. Some people believe that senior citizens should be required to take road tests in order to renew their licenses after a certain age. Others argue that senior citizens are adults who should be trusted to keep driving as long as they deem themselves able. Write an essay in which you take a position on whether or not driving tests should be required for senior citizens. Be sure to defend your position with logical arguments and appropriate examples.

Writing Assignment 2

Write a multiple-paragraph essay of about 300–600 words on the topic below. You should use the available time to plan, write, review, and edit what you have written. Read the assignment carefully before you begin to write.

There are high schools that require all students to dress in school uniforms. Some students at these schools argue that uniforms take away their freedom to express themselves through fashion. Other students argue that wearing a uniform helps prevent socio-economic classification based on the financial ability to purchase expensive items of clothing. Write an essay in which you take a position on whether or not school uniforms should be required. Be sure to defend your position with logical arguments and appropriate examples.

Writing Assignment 3

Write a multiple-paragraph essay of about 300–600 words on the topic below. You should use the available time to plan, write, review, and edit what you have written. Read the assignment carefully before you begin to write.

When it comes to choosing a college, many students struggle with the decision of whether to go to an in-state college or one out of state. There are arguments for both options. Write an essay in which you take a position on whether it is better to attend an in-state or out-of-state college. Be sure to defend your position with logical arguments and appropriate examples.

Sample Essay 1

Last year, I was on a road trip with two friends when suddenly our car was hit from behind. My friend had stopped at a red light, but the driver behind us did not. We were surprised to find that it was not a neglectful teenager, texting and listening to loud music, who had failed to stop in time. It was an elderly man. This event raises the following question: shouldn't drivers over the age of 65 be required to take a road test every two years in order to assess their capabilities behind the wheel?

There are many reasons why senior citizens should be tested for their driving ability, but there is one strong argument to the contrary: seniors are among the safest drivers on the road, as they are not known as risk-takers and are more likely to enforce seatbelt use.

Unfortunately, though, this is not enough, and there are too many other factors that need to be considered.

One of the reasons that drivers over 65 should take a road test in order to renew their licenses is that perception skills, such as vision and hearing, vital to safe driving, decline with age. Many seniors have difficulty reading street signs or recognizing even familiar places. Driving at night, in particular, is difficult for many seniors as glare from oncoming headlights often presents a problem. Hearing loss makes it difficult to notice car horns and sirens that alert drivers to move out of the way or to pull over, and missing those warnings puts the driver and everyone else on the road in a perilous situation.

Senior citizens also suffer from decreased physical abilities such as gross and fine motor skills and especially quick reflexes. When a driver cannot react in time to something or someone suddenly appearing in the road, it can be dangerous to everyone involved. Oftentimes, seniors have difficulty turning the steering wheel quickly or using the brakes as they should and, therefore, are not be able to maneuver the car safely.

Some senior citizens begin to suffer from mental conditions associated with old age such as Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, and dementia long before they even realize they have it. These conditions, which weaken cognition, severely reduce the chances of arriving safely at their destination.

In conclusion, it is incontrovertible that senior citizens must be tested every two years on their driving skills. Their lives, and ours, depend on it.

Sample Essay 2

Think of your first day of high school. You are running late, and you are nervous about making a good first impression, so you have emptied out your closet trying to find the best first-day outfit. Wouldn't it be so much easier if you wore a uniform to school and you only had to throw it on and go, without any thought and stress of what to wear? This is one of the many arguments for making school uniforms mandatory.

Although the main argument against school uniforms is that they take away a teenager's sense of individuality and self-expression, there are many other ways high school students can define their uniqueness. Shoes, accessories, and hair styles are often not regulated and allow a student's originality to shine through. The use of nail polish and other cosmetics, as well as backpacks, scarves, and socks, helps students add their personal style to their school uniforms.

School uniforms keep students focused on their studies rather than their appearance. When everyone is dressed the same, students can avoid being judged on their ability to afford brand-name clothing, which tends to be expensive. In addition, uniforms help cut down on bullying, teasing, and cliques, as they create a level playing field among students. Uniforms help students feel socially accepted and decrease peer pressure.

Wearing school uniforms helps enhance school pride, unity, and community spirit. Just like with sports uniforms, students feel like "part of a team" when they are all dressed the same. They recognize others wearing the same uniform as "family" and feel a sense of belonging to something greater than themselves.

Another argument for school uniforms is that it cuts down on gang-related activity at school, as gang colors and insignia are almost completely impossible to display. There is also a reduction in gang recruitment and crime at schools that have mandatory school uniforms, as gang members lose credibility without their "look."

Lastly, there is an increase in safety and security in schools where students wear uniforms as they make it difficult for strangers or even students from other schools to "blend in." An outsider is noticed immediately and can be approached and inquired about the purpose of his or her visit.

In conclusion, the use of school uniforms should be considered positive because it helps students focus on learning, enhances school identity and pride, prevents gang activity, and improves safety.

Sample Essay 3

The fall of senior year is a time to make decisions. Your life is about to change. You are seriously considering leaving the comfort of your home town and going away to college. There are so many factors in deciding whether to go out of state or stay in one's home state for college—none more important than financial. If someone's family simply cannot afford the tuition plus room and board of an out-of-state college, there is really no other issue to consider. When a student and his or her parents put themselves into crippling debt, it can lead to a financial disaster. But what if money is not an issue, or what if you qualify for financial aid or scholarships? How do you decide whether to stay or whether to go?

The disadvantage of going to an in-state college is that this is the time to become independent and learn how to live without your family. Having your parents around all the time will make it difficult to really learn to live on your own as an adult. Also, if you stay at home, you might not get a chance to develop new friendships as you will likely spend time with your friends from high school.

The advantage of going out of state to college is that there may be more opportunities in other colleges than what is offered in your home-state college. For example, if you are looking for a specific major or specialized program, there are innumerable possibilities all around the country. Another advantage is that if you leave your state, you have the chance to experience new lifestyles and live somewhere other than where you grew up. Living in a dorm far away from home, while lonely and even scary at first, can open up social possibilities that living at home cannot. You will be free to join a community of other students like yourself and develop new friendships. However, you will have to be self-disciplined, which is another positive learning experience, as your parents will not be watching to see if you attend classes or study.

In conclusion, if you can afford to, you should apply to out-of-state colleges in order to experience everything your college years have to offer

Three-Step Writing Guide

1. **Introduction:** Your introduction should mention the topic and display an understanding of it by stating your position and making the topic come alive for the reader.

Introduction examples: To grab the reader's attention, start your essay with an unusual fact or statistic, fascinating statement, short anecdote, thought-provoking quotation or question, or a vivid description.

Topic or claim sentence: End your introduction with a claim or thesis worded as a question or a statement. You want your audience to believe the claim, so it should be convincing.

2. **Body of the essay:** Concentrate on your thesis in the body of your essay. Do not deviate from the main topic too much, or your essay will lose focus.

Sub-claims: Give three or more reasons why the reader should believe your claim. They should be supported with facts.

Conflict: Provide the other side of the argument, and then explain why your position is better. Your goal is to encourage the audience to agree with you.

3. **Conclusion:** Use some of the same methods that you used in your introduction to convince your reader that your position is correct. Make sure your conclusion is linked back to your introduction.

Four-Step Essay Proofreading Checklist

1. Capitalization

- a. The beginning of a new sentence
- b. The word “I”
- c. A proper noun (the **name** of a person, place, company, brand)
- d. An acronym (e.g., USA or PETA)

2. Punctuation

- a. When a sentence begins with a modifying phrase or subordinating conjunction, use a comma between the modifying phrase or subordinate clause and the independent clause.
- b. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction.
- c. Separate two sentences with a period or semi-colon, except when they are connected by a coordinating conjunction—in which case, separate them with a comma.

3. Tenses

- a. Every sentence must contain a conjugated verb.
- b. The first verb in a sentence—and only the first verb—should be conjugated.
- c. Every sentence should be written in a tense (present perfect, past simple, future progressive, etc.).

4. Mechanics

- a. Check whether you have used the correct part of speech: noun, adjective, verb, or adverb.
- b. Beware of double negatives. If you used a double negative by mistake, replace one of the negation words with “any.”

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