



# WritePlacer<sup>®</sup>

## Guide with Sample Essays

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## Introduction to WritePlacer®

Prompts within the ACCUPLACER® System have been carefully designed so that the student can respond quickly and in a variety of ways. Prompts are free of technical or specific literary references and do not require specialized knowledge. The prompts are designed to stimulate critical thinking and are relevant to any number of fields and interests. Students will be asked to draw on a broad range of experiences, learning and ideas to support their point of view on the issue in question.

Scores on WritePlacer range from 1 to 8. An essay that is too short to be evaluated, written on a topic other than the one presented, or written in a language other than English will be given a score of zero.

A prompt consists of a short passage adapted from some authentic text. Following the passage is an assignment that requires the student to focus on the issue addressed in the passage.

## Instructions to Students

The essay gives you an opportunity to show how effectively you can develop and express your ideas in writing. You will first read a short passage and an assignment question that are focused on an important issue. You will then write an essay in which you develop your own point of view on the issue. You should support your position with appropriate reasoning and examples. The position you take will not influence your score.

Your essay will be given a holistic score that represents how clearly and effectively you expressed your position. The following six characteristics of writing will be considered:

- **Purpose and Focus** – The extent to which you present information in a unified and coherent manner, clearly addressing the issue.
- **Organization and Structure** – The extent to which you order and connect ideas.
- **Development and Support** – The extent to which you develop and support ideas.
- **Sentence Variety and Style** – The extent to which you craft sentences and paragraphs demonstrating control of vocabulary, voice and structure.
- **Mechanical Conventions** – The extent to which you express ideas using Standard Written English.
- **Critical Thinking** – The extent to which you communicate a point of view and demonstrate reasoned relationships among ideas.

## Sample Prompt

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### Passage

*An actor, when his cue came, was unable to move onto the stage. He said, “I can’t get in, the chair is in the way.” And the producer said, “Use the difficulty. If it’s a drama, pick the chair up and smash it. If it’s comedy, fall over it.” From this experience the actor concluded that in any situation in life that is negative, there is something positive you can do with it.*

Adapted from Lawrence Eisenberg, “Caine Scrutiny.”

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### Assignment

*Can any obstacle or disadvantage be turned into something good?*

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## Sample Essays

On the pages that follow there are descriptions of each of the eight WritePlacer score points followed by two sample essays that were assigned the indicated score. Annotations are provided for each essay explaining why the essay was given the score it received. Studying these sample essays and the accompanying annotations will point out the elements considered during the scoring process.

## SCORE of 1

### Description of Score of 1

A response in this category demonstrates *no mastery* of on-demand essay writing; the response is severely flawed by *many or most* of the following weaknesses:

- Lacks a viable point of view on the issue
- Demonstrates no awareness of audience
- Fails to present a main idea
- Demonstrates flawed reasoning
- Demonstrates no complexity of thought
- Is disorganized and/or disjointed
- Displays fundamental errors in word choice, usage and sentence structure
- Contains pervasive spelling, grammar, punctuation and mechanical errors

Shown below are sample essays that received a score of 1. The annotations explain why the essay received the indicated score.

#### Sample Essay #1 – Score of 1

The question is can any obstacle or disadvantage be turned into something good? Yes it can, because even in the story he couldn't get in because of the chair and the guy tells him if it's a drama, "Smash it and if it's a comedy fall over it. But when you think about it, if a girl was guilty and was pleading to say on how she was innocent and they catch her in a lie its practically the same thing. But that's not the point but you can change a negative into a positive someway.

#### Annotations

This essay lacks a viable, coherent point of view on the issue. The writer attempts to explain that "you can change a negative into a positive," but the ideas provided are minimal and disorganized, resulting in a disjointed and, at times, incoherent essay (*Yes it can....But when you think about it, if a girl was guilty and was pleading to say on how she was innocent and they catch her in a lie its practically the same thing*). The response demonstrates flawed reasoning, no complexity of thought and displays fundamental errors in sentence structure (*But that's not the point but you can change...*). Demonstrating no mastery, this essay receives a score of 1.

### Sample Essay #2 – Score of 1

Yes, obstacles and disadvantages can be turned into something good because you will know how to over come obstacles and disadvantages in the future. You can help other people with obstacles and disadvantages because you have been in the situation, that needs help. You also can learn from them it can also help you in life and with your sucess.

#### Annotations

This essay attempts to present a point of view (*Yes, obstacles and disadvantages can be turned into something good*) but fails to develop any of its ideas. The absence of support results in a disjointed essay that demonstrates no complexity of thought (*You can help other people with obstacles and disadvantages because you have been in the situation, that needs help*). The response also contains fundamental errors in sentence structure (*You also can learn from them it can also help you in life*). The response demonstrates no mastery and earns a score of 1.

## SCORE of 2

### Description of Score of 2

A response in this category demonstrates *very little mastery* of on-demand essay writing; the response is flawed by *many or most* of the following weaknesses:

- Presents a vague or limited point of view on the issue
- Demonstrates little awareness of audience
- Presents an unclear main idea
- Demonstrates weak critical thinking with little complexity of thought or with flawed reasoning
- Organizes ideas ineffectively, demonstrating a problematic progression of ideas
- Displays numerous errors in word choice, usage and sentence structure
- Contains significant spelling, grammar, punctuation and mechanical errors

Shown below are sample essays that received a score of 2. The annotations explain why the essay received the indicated score.

#### Sample Essay #1 – Score of 2

I live in a house that every body in it came from acting. I remember my mom telling me this it you in find your self bad situation, don't forget your smile with "you". I think she ment that what ever is the difficulty think always positive. For an example, I grow up in place that full with bad poeple and one time some body try to convinse me to smoke. And smoking it very bad thing. So I started to tell joukes on people that canser and after 2 minutes I change the subject. Or that every time I am getting sick and fill not so good. I am trying to see comedy movies as much as I can. Because I have been told that comedy is the best cure. I think that as an actor on the stage you need to be always ready for something rong, and if you ready and prepard. It will be good and life for your self in you all life and not only there. This experience imporent for your benfits, always a positive person and people will love you and get along with you. This mark it the best.

#### Annotations

This essay presents an extremely vague point of view on the issue. The writer discusses the value of thinking "always positive," but the ideas provided are unclear, demonstrating weak critical thinking (*For an example . . . one time some body try to convinse me to smoke. And smoking it very bad thing. So I started to tell joukes on people that canser and after 2 minutes I change the subject*). The response contains numerous and significant errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation and mechanics (*. . . you need to be always ready for something rong, and if you ready and prepard. It will be good and life for your self in you all life and not only there*). Demonstrating very little mastery, this essay receives a score of 2.

## Sample Essay #2 – Score of 2

This sentencis very good and right because you must belive that have a good and positive, something also in a bed situation. I you think so, you succeed in your life. also in a bad situation, you must think a good and be a good.

I have 3, examples from my life:

1 I basketball player I have alot of games and tugh games. I want a great player. I am always think good befor every game and also befor every practice. this thinking help me to secceed. If I lose a game I don't cry I try to take the good things from the bad game, this is not help me if I cry all the time.

2. I had a important text befor 3 years I remember this text all the time, beacuse that I got a high score, because I learned alot before this text, this text all the time in my memory because the way was very difficulte, I thought good befor the text, and I secceeded I all the time thought good and positive.

3. I didn't secceeded in the first, text driving. I didn't cry, I tried to learn from my mistakes. In the second text driving I secceeded beacuse I thought positive and I said to myself that I good driver and I will secceed.

From this exampls I can to learn that I you think good and positive you secceed all the time. Also if you mistake or don't secceed you must to take the good and the positive from your mistakes. I can to say to the end that if you thought good and positive and you learn to take all the positive things. you be enjoy and you will be fun and you succeed, all the time, you need to learn from the mistakes.

Thare arnet perfect people!

Bielive yourself!

### Annotations

This essay presents a point of view (. . . *you must to take the good and the positive from your mistakes*) but is unable to develop its ideas clearly. Although there is an attempt to organize the response around three examples, errors in word choice, usage, sentence structure, spelling, grammar and punctuation are so numerous and significant that meaning is obscured (*I had a important text befor 3 years . . . because I learned a lot before this text, this text all the time in my memory . . . and I secceeded I all the time thought good and positive*). The response demonstrates very little mastery and earns a score of 2.

## SCORE of 3

### Description of Score of 3

A response in this category demonstrates *little mastery* of on-demand essay writing; the response is flawed by *one or more* of the following weaknesses:

- Presents a vague or limited point of view on the issue
- Demonstrates little awareness of audience
- Attempts to develop the main idea though that attempt is inadequate
- Demonstrates weak critical thinking with little complexity of thought or with flawed reasoning
- Provides inappropriate or insufficient examples, reasons, or other evidence to support its position
- Is poorly organized and/or focused or demonstrates serious problems with coherence or progression of ideas
- Displays limited word choice and little sentence variety
- Contains many errors in mechanical conventions of usage, sentence structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation

Shown below are sample essays that received a score of 3. The annotations explain why the essay received the indicated score.

#### Sample Essay #1 – Score of 3

I do believe that any obstacle or disadvantage can be turned into something good. I believe this because people learn many things from their mistakes and that's the only way. In the example that is provided, the actor is obviously confused. The director makes a good point on how to work around it, and in a case where they make use of the chair that's in the way, which helps make it funny, exciting, or depressing. In a play or musical of any type, it adds meaning. Not only does an obstacle or disadvantage get turned into something good, but it can discover new things. Whenever any situation happens, such as in this case, I'd laugh if it's funny, cry if it's dramatic, make a joke out of it, or act like it didn't happen. Just keep in mind that the purpose of life is to learn from mistakes, which can turn into something good.

#### Annotations

Demonstrating weak critical thinking, this essay states a point of view (*I do believe that any obstacle or disadvantage can be turned into something good*) but offers little support beyond an insufficient discussion of the acting example given in the passage. Despite some attempt to develop the main idea, poor organization leads to serious problems in progression of ideas (*Whenever any situation happens, such as in this case, I'd laugh if it's funny, cry if it's dramatic, make a joke out of it, or act like it didn't happen. Just keep in mind that the purpose of life is to learn from mistakes, which can turn into something good*). The response contains many errors in usage and sentence structure. This essay demonstrates little mastery and receives a score of 3.



### Sample Essay #2 – Score of 3

Can any disadvantage turn into something good? Every person answers this question differently, and that is his way to live. Some are optimistic, some are pasimistic, either way, the way we answer this question is, in a way, our way of life.

Some people can look on something that to me it is wonderful and find it terrible, and other can chear me up when something sad happens, and show me a nicer and chearful way of looking on it.

A good example is what happend today, this morning. I came to take this test from my home which is a few drive from the test center for different reasons I came in late in about ten minutes, but instead of being stressed because of it, I was (and still am) quite calm, and actually in very happy and satisfied with my approach to this in compare to my father who took it very hard.

I believe that the ability to look on the bright side, in both better and worse cases, is a recipie for a better and calmer life.

#### Annotations

This essay answers the question “Can any disadvantage turn into something good?” with a vague discussion of optimistic and pessimistic approaches, demonstrating weak critical thinking. Despite providing only limited assertions and an insufficient example, the writer is able to arrive at a point of view, concluding that “the ability to look on the bright side...is a recipie for a better and calmer life.” However, flawed reasoning seriously impedes progression of ideas (*Some people can look on something that to me it is wonderful and find it terrible, and other can chear me up when something sad happens....A good example is what happend today....I came in late in about ten minutes, but instead of being stressed because of it, I was (and still am) quite calm*). Vocabulary is limited and many errors in word choice, usage, and sentence structure occur. Demonstrating little mastery, this essay earns a score of 3.

## SCORE of 4

### Description of Score of 4

An essay in this category demonstrates *developing mastery* of on-demand essay writing. A typical essay

- Develops a viable point of view on the issue
- May stray from audience and purpose
- Demonstrates some critical thinking but may do so inconsistently or use inadequate examples, reasons, or other evidence to support its position
- May lack control of organization or focus, demonstrating some lapses in coherence or progression of ideas
- Contains some errors in sentence structure and use of grammatical conventions such as word choice, usage, spelling and punctuation

Shown below are sample essays that received a score of 4. The annotations explain why the essay received the indicated score.

#### Sample Essay #1 – Score of 4

I think that most of life’s obstacles or disadvantages can be turned into something good. The way you look at situations determines the outcome of a situation because if you look at the situation negatively you don’t have any hope that the outcome would be positive; but if you look at the situation positively you would have a better chance at being successful at what you do. The writer in the passage saw the chair in his way as an obstruction to his performance but the producer had a broader perspective saying that he could use the chair according to what the genre of the play was. For bad things to work out we need to stop being so narrow minded and broaden our perspective on life. If you committed a crime and got caught don’t just concentrate on the bad that happened in your life, use that experience to share with others showing them the hardship that goes with that type of lifestyle discouraging them not to do it. The outcome of a situation is determined by how you look at it.

#### Annotations

This essay develops the point of view that “most of life’s obstacles or disadvantages can be turned into something good,” demonstrating some critical thinking as it explains the value of positive thinking. However, the evidence provided - one sentence on the chair example and one sentence about breaking the law - is inadequately developed to support the position (*For bad things to work out we need to stop being so narrow minded and broaden our perspective on life. If you committed a crime and got caught don’t just concentrate on the bad that happened in your life*). The response lacks focus and contains some errors in grammar and sentence structure (*use that experience to share with others showing them the hardship that goes with that type of lifestyle discouraging them not to do it*). This essay demonstrates developing mastery and merits a score of 4.

## Sample Essay #2 – Score of 4

There are many things in life that may seem to have a difficult or depressing outlook but if you try some of those things can be turned into something outstanding. For example there may be certain people you may run into on a day to day basis that may seem to carry themselves in a bad way but you have to try to get to know them because you never know that can turn out to be one of the best people in the world.

Many people in our society look at things such as driving a car, to be a very hard obstacle because they feel that it's something that is hard to do, but until they try they will never know. If we'd learn to look at the bright side of things instead of the negative then many things that we face in our life would turn out for the better. When you think you may have down all that is in your power to do to try to get the good out of something, believe me there is always someone who will be able to help you. I know that there are things that may seem too hard or difficult but if you put your mind to it everything will come out for the better. I know there have been some times in my life when I have been in some difficult situations such as the time I lost money out of my wallet and I didn't know what I was going to do. But I stopped worrying about it and it wasn't long before I had my money back. Whenever you come up on something in your life that you may think that there is no way of accomplishing

### Annotations

Demonstrating some critical thinking, this essay develops a point of view (*If we'd learn to look at the bright side of things instead of the negative then many things that we face in our life would turn out for the better*) but provides reasons and examples that are inadequate to support the position. Lapses in progression of ideas occur due to brief support and repetitive generalities (. . . *believe me there is always someone who will be able to help you . . . . I lost money out of my wallet . . . . But I stopped worrying about it and it wasn't long before I had my money back*). Some errors in word choice and sentence structure are present (*For example there may be certain people you may run into...that can turn out to be one of the best people in the world*). Displaying developing mastery, this essay receives a score of 4.

## SCORE of 5

### Description of Score of 5

An essay in this category demonstrates *adequate mastery* of on-demand essay writing although it will have lapses in quality. A typical essay

- Develops a viable point of view on the issue
- May stray from the audience and purpose but is able to refocus
- Demonstrates competent critical thinking, using adequate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position
- Is generally organized and focused but could lack coherence and logical progression of ideas
- Exhibits adequate but inconsistent control of language
- Demonstrates some variety in sentence structure
- Contains some minor errors in sentence structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation

Shown below are sample essays that received a score of 5. The annotations explain why the essay received the indicated score.

#### Sample Essay #1 – Score of 5

In my lifetime, I have seen many ways an obstacle or disadvantage can be turned into a good thing. Sometimes when something bad happens, it can prepare you for the future obstacles to come. For example, if a person gets a serious burn they would panic and not know what to do. If the same thing happend again, the person would be more prepared and have knowledge from the previous experience.

If someone is on crutches, about to open the door, would you open the door for them? If you are the person on crutches you would be at a disadvantage to others. But this can be turned into a good thing. You now have someone to open the door for you, and this is a good way to meet people and make friends.

Sometimes when things aren't going your way, you have to improvise a little. For example, before a basketball game you see that the other team is much taller than your team. The coach might have only made up plays for a short team. The other team is tall, but slow. You use your speed to win the game. In the blink of an eye, you've changed a disadvantage into a good thing.

The best comedians always turn an obstacle or disadvantage into a good thing. If the audience is not laughing at his performance, then he has to change what he's doing. This obstacle about the audience not laughing he could make a joke about, then making the obstacle into a good thing.

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Annotations

This essay demonstrates competent critical thinking, providing adequate reasons and examples to support the claim that “an obstacle or disadvantage can be turned into a good thing.” Although the response offers a variety of adequate supporting examples, it demonstrates an occasional lack of progression of ideas as it jumps from one idea to the next (. . . *if a person gets a serious burn . . . . If someone is on crutches . . . . The best comedians always turn an obstacle or disadvantage into a good thing*). The essay demonstrates adequate but inconsistent control of language and features some minor errors (*If the audience is not laughing . . . . This obstacle about the audience not laughing he could make a joke about, then making the obstacle into a good thing*). Demonstrating adequate mastery, this essay receives a score of 5.

Sample Essay #2 – Score of 5

Life constantly harrasses modern society with a variety of problems and obstacles. But, negatives never come out without its positives. Events such as the Civil War and messages that stem from Romeo and Juliet’s tragic ending include something good even though they show obstacles of life. Therefore, society can gain good things through bad things.

The Civil War broke out in 1861 and left a terrible tear on American culture. Even after horrible battles like in Gettysburg, Americans could still come together in the late 1800’s to form a more unified society. Even after slaughterings of American “brothers” between the North and South, our country still had the ability to transform itself to what it is today.

Moreover, Romeo and Juliet also acts as an excellent example of how disadvantages proves something good in the end. Shakespeare decided to end both the main characters lives at the end of the play but by doing so, he sends the good message of love. Love is the most beautiful thing in the world. Love connects society/people together by acknowledging that through death people can come together (the Capulets and Montagues) that is one of the most beautiful things ever. Life will constantly be filled with problems but they can lead to good.

Annotations

Demonstrating competent critical thinking, this essay develops its point of view (. . . *society can gain good things through bad things*) with adequate examples from history and literature. The evidence provided is generally organized and focused, with only an occasional lack of coherence (*Romeo and Juliet also acts as an excellent example . . . . Shakespeare decided to end both the main characters lives at the end of the play but by doing so, he sends the good message of love. Love is the most beautiful thing in the world*). The essay exhibits adequate but inconsistent control of language (*Life constantly harasses modern society with a variety of problems and obstacles. But, negatives never come out without its positives*). This essay exhibits adequate mastery and earns a score of 5.

## SCORE of 6

### Description of Score of 6

An essay in this category demonstrates *reasonably consistent mastery* of on-demand essay writing although it may have occasional lapses in quality. A typical essay

- Effectively develops a point of view on the issue
- Addresses an appropriate audience and demonstrates a clear purpose for writing
- Demonstrates strong critical thinking, generally using appropriate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position
- Is well organized and focused, demonstrating coherence and a logical progression of ideas
- Exhibits consistent control in the use of language
- Demonstrates adequate variety in sentence structure
- Is generally free of errors in sentence structure, grammar, usage, spelling and punctuation

Shown below are sample essays that received a score of 6. The annotations explain why the essay received the indicated score.

#### Sample Essay #1 – Score of 6

Obstacles and disadvantages are in our lives every second of the day. Whether it is a big test in school in an important subject or a traffic jam keeping us from getting to work on time, we can always count on something going a wry. However, even the biggest obstacles can be turned into something good if enough work is put into it.

Small obstacles, like the big test in school, can be overcome with hard work and determination. If you spend enough time studying beforehand, and doing practice questions to build your confidence, chances are you will do very well. On the other hand, if you procrastinate and do not prepare for the test until the night before it, chances are you will do poorly.

Large obstacles can be overcome with hard work and determination as well, but depending on the size of the obstacle, carefully planning, organization, and coordination are needed as well. For example, in World War II the Allied powers were fighting the Axis powers in battle after battle. The Allies needed to get into Western Europe through France and through a heavily fortified enemy. With careful planning, organization, and coordination, they launched the largest amphibious invasion in history and took the beaches of Normandy in what would be called D-day, and liberate France soon thereafter.

In conclusion, any obstacle can be overcome into something good. Tests can be studied for, traffic jams can be overtaken by detours, and wars can be won against impossible odds. Since obstacles confront us everyday of our lives, we need to be able to overcome them. If we could not, then life would not be enjoyable.

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**Annotations**

This essay effectively develops a point of view (. . . *any obstacle can be overcome into something good*) and provides generally appropriate examples of obstacles overcome with “hard work and determination,” demonstrating strong critical thinking. The response is well organized around its examples, exhibiting coherence and a logical progression of ideas (*Small obstacles, like the big test in school, can be overcome with hard work and determination. If you spend enough time studying . . . chances are you will do very well*). Control of language is consistent, and adequate sentence variety is evident throughout (*With careful planning, organization, and coordination, they launched the largest amphibious invasion in history*). This essay displays reasonably consistent mastery and receives a score of 6.

**Sample Essay #2 – Score of 6**

Life is what you make it. Time after time we are stuck with disadvantages and struggles, but it is how we receive it that makes a world of a difference. It is possible to turn obstacles into building blocks, to reach success.

My most difficult school year was during the 8th and 9th grade. The school I was attending placed a lot of stress on me - the homework was unbearable and the teachers seemed to care nothing for it. Many times as I went seeking help but would receive a cold shoulder or a slam in the face. Not only that, but I was not doing well socially with the rest of my peers. It was extremely difficult finding a way to fit in.

I could have stayed and wallowed in my misery but I decided to take the initiative and talk to my parents about the situation. Together we began building the blocks towards my success.

That next year I left the school and we began home school. In one term I taught myself the subjects and this prepared me for what was coming next. My parents with the discipline I needed and I decided it was time to move on. I took a test to enter a very high academic - perhaps the highest on my Island - school to see if I would get in. I reached something beyond my wildest dreams and was accepted. Not only that, but the next year I was appointed head girl and am training to attend Harvard College next year.

My “painful struggle” through my early high-school years lead me to make the right decisions for which school I should attend to make the best of my future. Obstacles are only put to make us stronger, hurdles are placed so that we jump higher.

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Annotations

This essay displays strong critical thinking, effectively developing its point of view (*It is possible to turn obstacles into building blocks, to reach success*) by providing a generally appropriate example from the writer's personal experience. Well organized and focused as it discusses how the writer's "painful struggle" ultimately led to her success, the response exhibits coherence and a logical progression of ideas (*I could have stayed and wallowed in my misery but I decided to take the initiative and talk to my parents about the situation . . . I reached something beyond my wildest dreams and was accepted*). Control of language is consistent, and there is adequate variety in sentence structure (*Not only that, but the next year I was appointed head girl and am training to attend Harvard College next year*). Demonstrating reasonably consistent mastery, this essay earns a score of 6.



## SCORE of 7

### Description of Score of 7

An essay in this category demonstrates *consistent mastery* of on-demand essay writing, although it may have occasional minor errors. A typical essay

- Effectively and insightfully develops a point of view on the issue
- Addresses an appropriate audience and demonstrates a clear purpose for writing in the thesis statement
- Demonstrates outstanding critical thinking, using appropriate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position
- Is well organized and focused, demonstrating clear coherence and smooth progression of ideas
- Exhibits appropriate language, using a varied and accurate vocabulary
- Demonstrates varied sentence structure
- Is practically free of errors in sentence structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation

Shown below are sample essays that received a score of 7. The annotations explain why the essay received the indicated score.

#### Sample Essay #1 – Score of 7

I believe that an obstacle or disadvantage can be turned into something good. Lance Armstrong, the most successful cyclist of all time, had to overcome cancer before achieving such greatness. Another possible example is Louis Armstrong. Louis was born to a single mother and lived a rough life. He was convicted of a crime and was sent to prison which is where he learned how to play the trumpet.

Before he was a seven time Tour de France champion, Lance Armstrong had to overcome cancer, a very extreme obstacle to overcome. Lance was diagnosed with testicular cancer and by the time the doctors found it, it had already spread to his brain, lungs, and other intrinsic organs. After numerous surgeries, Lance was given a fifty percent chance to live. Armstrong did not give up. After months of treatment and another surgery, the doctors found absolutely no cancer in his body. Within a year, Lance was back on the bike. He went on to win seven Tour de Frances in a row and he remains one of the greatest cyclists, if not the greatest cyclist of all time.

Louis Armstrong, one of the greatest Jazz trumpet players of all time, also had to overcome difficult obstacles in his life before achieving greatness. Louis was born to a single mother. They were poverty stricken, and were basically stuck with nothing. As a boy Louis was convicted of a crime and sent to prison. While serving his time, Louis learned how to play the trumpet from a fellow in-mate. Louis immediately fell in love with music. He formed a jazz group when he was released from prison and they started playing at local clubs and bars. On one fateful day, a record company representative heard the group and immediately wanted to sign them. If it weren't for prison Louis might not have ever even picked up a trumpet.

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From these two examples, we can clearly see that obstacles or disadvantages can become something good. Both Louis and Lance overcame extremely difficult obstacles and became some of the best there ever was. They knew that anything was possible and were not discouraged by hardships.

————— **Annotations** —————

This essay demonstrates outstanding critical thinking, effectively and insightfully developing the point of view that “an obstacle or disadvantage can be turned into something good” with two appropriate supporting examples. Well organized and focused, the essay displays clear coherence and a smooth progression of ideas as it explains how the Armstrongs, Lance and Louis, “overcame extremely difficult obstacles and became some of the best there ever was” (*Louis was born to a single mother. They were poverty stricken . . . . He formed a jazz group when he was released from prison . . . . On one fateful day, a record company representative heard the group and immediately wanted to sign them*). The essay displays appropriate language, using a varied and accurate vocabulary, and varied sentence structure appears throughout (*Within a year, Lance was back on the bike. He went on to win seven Tour de Frances in a row and he remains one of the greatest cyclists, if not the greatest cyclist of all time*). Demonstrating consistent mastery, this response merits a score of 7.

**Sample Essay #2 – Score of 7**

It is true that any obstacle or disadvantage can be turned into something positive. In a negative situation there is always a lesson that is learned, or a goal that is achieved. This idea is supported by aspects of “A Doll’s House” and the road to the Revolutionary War.

“A Dolls House”, a play by Heinrick Ibsen, proves that an unfortunate situation can have a fortunate outcome. The play tells the story of Nora Holmes and her quest for personal independence. Nora’s situation at the begining of the play seemed promising. Nora was married to Torvald, had two children, and had a stable financial situation. However beneath the facade, Nora’s life was not satisfactor to her. Torvard treated Nora as a child and did not respect her opinions as an adult. After a particularly harsh incident in which Torvard threatened her position in the family, Nora knew that she had to leave permanently. She either had to continue to endure the pain and emotional distress caused by her husband, or learn from this obstacle and use it to achieve her goal. When Nora finally left, she walked into her new life as an independent woman.

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The events that unfolded on the path to the Revolutionary War, support the thought mentioned above. At the start of the process, the colonies were a group of separate entities under the rule of Britain. Each colony led an individual existence and grew and prospered under British rule. However, after a number of happy years, the British decided to tighten its hold on the colonies. They limited the freedoms of the colonists with acts such as the Sugar Act, Stamp Act, and Townshend Acts. The colonists were outraged at this sudden removal of freedoms which they felt were rightfully theirs. To overcome this obstacle, the colonists knew they would have to join together and unite against the common enemy. When the colonies Declared Independence, they were no longer a group of separate entities, but one United whole that went on to become one of the Strongest Nations.

Any obstacle or challenge can be looked at from a positive angle. The examples mentioned above prove that there is always something positive that can result from a negative situation. We should look at challenges not as unfortunate experiences, but as chances to improve ourselves and our lives.

————— **Annotations** —————

Demonstrating outstanding critical thinking, this essay effectively and insightfully develops its point of view (*It is true that any obstacle or disadvantage can be turned into something positive*) by providing appropriate examples from literature and history as support. The response is well organized and focused, displaying clear coherence and a smooth progression of ideas (*“A Dolls House” . . . tells the story of Nora Holmes and her quest for personal independence . . . She either had to continue to endure the pain and emotional distress caused by her husband, or learn from this obstacle and use it to achieve her goal*). Practically free of errors, the essay shows appropriate use of language and variety in sentence structure (*We should look at challenges not as unfortunate experiences, but as chances to improve ourselves and our lives*). This essay exhibits consistent mastery and receives a score of 7.

## SCORE of 8

### Description of Score of 8

An essay in this category demonstrates *clear and consistent mastery* of on-demand essay writing with a few minor errors. A typical essay

- Effectively and insightfully develops a point of view on the issue
- Addresses an appropriate audience and demonstrates a clear purpose for writing in the thesis statement
- Demonstrates outstanding critical thinking, using effective examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position
- Is well organized and clearly focused, demonstrating clear coherence and smooth progression of ideas
- Exhibits skillful use of language, using a varied, accurate, and apt vocabulary
- Demonstrates varied and effective sentence structure
- Is free of major errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation

Shown below are sample essays that received a score of 8. The annotations explain why the essay received the indicated score.

#### Sample Essay #1 – Score of 8

An obstacle or disadvantage may appear to be a setback, though either has the ability to be turned into something good. For instance, Rosa Parks participated in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 60s and was jailed for her involvement. Though her jail time was initially a setback and an obstacle she had to overcome, it eventually led to the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the gradual desegregation of the United States. Similarly, the Dean of Students at my school has to overcome the obstacle of paraplegia each day, yet he describes himself as a stronger and more sensitive individual as a result. Rosa Parks and my Dean are clear examples of obstacles being turned into something good.

In Montgomery, Alabama during the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans were required to sit in the back of public buses. One day Rosa Parks refused to sit in the back of the bus and was sent to jail for her acts of civil disobedience. This action resonated with African Americans nationwide but particularly in Montgomery. The African American people staged a boycott and contributed to the desegregation which was a goal of their movement. Rosa Parks served as a symbol of what was possible if one would simply take a stand and turn their situation from unjust and degrading to one that made a profound difference in today's society.

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The Dean of Student at my school, was an English teacher, a track coach, and the Dean of Students before the roof of his barn collapsed on him a few years ago. He had always been a strong man who genuinely cared for his students. Who respected and loved him. After his accident, he lost the use of his legs and feet and his life drastically changed. He had become unable to care for himself and lost great-amounts of self esteem. He ultimately decided he had to get his life back so he learned how to live independently through physical training courses, he learned to drive a car, and he returned to school. His experience which could have destroyed him and the goals he had actually allowed for him to build strength he never knew he had. Through his actions he made a severe disadvantage into a very positive life change.

Through their varying experiences, Rosa Parks and my dean demonstrate that any obstacle or disadvantage can be turned into something good.

————— **Annotations** —————

This essay demonstrates outstanding critical thinking as it insightfully develops a point of view (*An obstacle or disadvantage may appear to be a setback, though either has the ability to be turned into something good*), supporting it with effective, fully developed examples. Well organized and focused as it shows how people’s actions can make “a severe disadvantage into a very positive life change,” the response exhibits clear coherence and smooth progression of ideas (*After his accident, he lost the use of his legs and feet and his life drastically changed . . . His experience which could have destroyed him and the goals he had actually allowed for him to build strength he never knew he had*). The essay exhibits a skillful use of language, using a varied, accurate, and apt vocabulary (*This action resonated with African Americans nationwide*), and a varied sentence structure appears throughout. Displaying clear and consistent mastery, this essay earns a score of 8.

**Sample Essay #2 – Score of 8**

In times of desperation, it is often difficult to see the positives in a situation. More often than not, our survival instinct demands that we obliterate any obstacles in our path, without heeding the potential consequences. However, I believe, using Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* and early American history, that it is indeed possible to use these apparent disadvantages as a means to improve yourself.

The hero of *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff, was by any account, a man of humble origins. Not only was he an orphan without a last name, but he was also abused and tormented by other children—such as Hindley—of his new household. Constantly frustrated at every turn in life, Heathcliff as a boy could not marry Catherine—who he loved—partially because of his lowly social status. After Catherine left to marry her new husband, Heathcliff undertook a journey, in which he amasses a good deal of money and seemingly elevates his place in society.

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Although these changes are superficial, Heathcliff, used the adversity facing him as a boy as motivation to improve himself, to marry Catherine; thus his early obstacles were turned into something good (at least for him). From Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, it is evident that obstacles can be transformed into motivation, a very positive emotion.

In the 1770's, America was under the rule of a tyrant in England. Legislation, such as those that were called the "Intolerable Acts" that forbid such practices as forming a militia in Massachusetts, and the infamous "Stamp Act", which was essentially a tax forced on Americans to gain revenue for the British Empire, were passed continuously against Great Britain's colonies in America. The Quartering Act forced Americans to allow British soldiers to live in their homes, which resulted in many fights and the situation was not good. However, the early American political leaders used these dire times to rally the American people. The country, incensed by British practices, joined those rebellious leaders, such as Patrick Henry, George Washington, and John Adams, to fight in the Revolutionary War against a corrupt monarchy. If the American people had not suffered through these indignities leading up to the Revolutionary War, the United States of America probably would not exist today.

Clearly, when one is faced by obstacles at every turn, it is extremely difficult to try to twist negative experiences into positive ones. However, if one takes the model shown by Heathcliff of *Wuthering Heights* and America's early political leaders, one can use these bad experiences to totally change one's life for the better.

————— **Annotations** —————

Demonstrating outstanding critical thinking, this essay effectively and insightfully develops its point of view (. . . *it is indeed possible to use these apparent disadvantages as a means to improve yourself*). Using the effective examples of Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* and America in the pre-Revolutionary War era to illustrate how "obstacles can be transformed into motivation," the well-organized and focused response displays clear coherence and smooth progression of ideas (*In the 1770's, America was under the rule of a tyrant in England . . . However, the early American political leaders used these dire times to rally the American people*). The essay features a skillful use of language, displaying a varied, accurate, and apt vocabulary, and demonstrates variety in sentence structure (*More often than not, our survival instinct demands that we obliterate any obstacles in our path, without heeding the potential consequences*). This essay exhibits clear and consistent mastery and merits a score of 8.