



GRE

GRADUATE RECORD EXAMINATIONS®

Sample Responses and Reader Commentaries
for Analytical Writing Prompts in
Practice Test 1



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Revised GRE Practice Test 1

Analytical Writing Sample Essays with Commentaries

The Analytical Writing portion of the GRE consists of two writing topics, an Issue topic and an Argument topic.

Analyze an Issue

Sample Issue Topic Directions

Directions: The Analytical Writing portion of the GRE consists of two writing topics: Analyze an Issue and Analyze an Argument. For this section, Analyze an Issue will be the writing topic.

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

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

Sample Issue Topic:

The best ideas arise from a passionate interest in commonplace things.

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement above and explain your reasoning for the position you take. In developing and supporting your position, you should consider ways in which the statement might or might not hold true and explain how those considerations shape your position.

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

Note: 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:

Passion is clearly necessary for a truly great idea to take hold among a people—passion either on the part of the original thinker, the audience, or ideally both. The claim that the most lucrative subject matter for inspiring great ideas is “commonplace things” may seem initially to be counterintuitive. After all, aren’t great ideas usually marked by their extraordinary character? While this is true, their extraordinary character is

as often as not directly derived from their insight into things that had theretofore gone unquestioned. While great ideas certainly can arise through seemingly pure innovation... say, for example, Big Bang cosmology, which developed nearly all of its own scientific and philosophical precepts through its own process of formation, it is nevertheless equally true that such groundbreaking thought was, and is, still largely a reevaluation of previous assumptions to a radical degree... after all, the question of the ultimate nature of the universe, and man's place in it, has been central to human thought since the dawn of time. Commonplace things are, additionally, necessary as material for the generation of "the best ideas" since certainly the success among an audience must be considered in evaluating the significance and quality of an idea.

The advent of Big Bang cosmology, which occurred in rudimentary form almost immediately upon Edwin Hubble's first observations at the Hooker telescope in California during the early 20th century, was the most significant advance

in mankind's understanding of the universe in over 400 years. The seemingly simple fact that everything in the universe, on the very large scale, is moving away from everything else in fact betrays nearly all of our scientific knowledge of the origins and mechanics of the universe. This slight, one might even say commonplace, distortion of tint on a handful of photographic plates carried with it the greatest challenge to Man's general, often religiously reinforced, conception of the nature of the world to an extent not seen since the days of Galileo. Not even Charles Darwin's theory, though it created more of a stir than Big Bang cosmology, had such shattering implications for our conceptions of the nature of our reality. Yet it is not significant because it introduced the question of the nature of what lies beyond Man's grasp. A tremendous number of megalithic ruins, including the Pyramids both of Mexico and Egypt, Stonehenge, and others, indicate that this question has been foremost on humankind's collective mind since time immemorial. Big Bang cosmology is so incredibly

significant in this line of reasoning exactly because of the degree to which it changed the direction of this generally held, constantly pondered, and very ancient train of thought.

Additionally, there is a diachronic significance to the advent of Big Bang cosmology, which is that, disregarding limitations such as the quality of optical devices available and the state of theoretical math, it could have happened at any point in time. That is to say, all evidence points to roughly the same raw intellectual capacity for homo sapiens throughout our history, our progress has merely depended upon the degree of it that a person happens to inherit, a pace that has been increasing rapidly since the industrial revolution. Yet this discovery had to happen at a certain point in time or another—it cannot have been happening constantly or have never happened yet still be present—and this point in time does have its own significance. That significance is precisely the fact that the aforementioned advent must have occurred at precisely the point in time at which it truly could have occurred—that is to say, it marks

the point in our history when we had progressed sufficiently to begin examining, with remarkable substantiated acuity, the workings of the universe across distances that would take millions of human lifetimes to reach or to traverse. The point for the success of this advent must necessarily have been, additionally, the point at which the audience concerned was capable and prepared to accept such a radical line of reasoning.

Both factors, a radical, passionate interpretation of the commonplace and the preparedness to accept such an interpretation, are necessary for the formulation of a truly great idea. If the passion is absent from an inquiry by the thinker or by the bulk of an audience, the idea will die out if it comes to fruition at all. If the material is not sufficiently commonplace to be considered by an informed audience of sufficient size, the same two hazards exist. Given these two factors, the idea must still be found palatable and interesting by the audience if it is to hope to gain a foothold and eventually establish itself in a significant fashion.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 6:

This outstanding response presents a cogent, well-articulated analysis of the complexities of the issue by arguing that (1) great ideas develop from commonplace observations that are interpreted in a radical way; and (2) passion is required of both thinkers and the audience in order for great ideas to take hold.

The argument is based on an extended example (Big Bang cosmology) and has two parts. The first part defines “commonplace things” as universal questions (i.e., the quest to understand the cosmos is commonplace, though complex, because it is an ancient and universal question) and places Big Bang cosmology in context with the scientific breakthroughs of Galileo and the Pyramids of ancient Mexico and Egypt. The second part explains Big Bang as the result of a convergence of factors: both thinkers and the audience must be ready to reevaluate

“previous assumptions” and accept “radical, passionate interpretations.”

The argument’s careful line of reasoning is strengthened by appropriate transitions between paragraphs (“Additionally,” “Both factors, a radical, passionate interpretation of the commonplace and the preparedness to accept such an interpretation, are necessary for the formulation of a truly great idea,” etc.) and within paragraphs (“Not even Charles Darwin’s,” “Yet,” “that is to say,” etc.). Fluent and precise language—advent, rudimentary, diachronic, shattering implications, megalithic ruins—and effective sentence variety also characterize this response as outstanding. Finally, despite the presence of minor errors (overuse of comma and inconsistent use of ellipses in paragraph 1), this response demonstrates facility with the conventions of standard written English.

The following sample issue response received a score of 5:

The statement above comes from the perspective that the best thinkers, inventors, and innovators are the way that they are because they explore passionately the interesting things around them. Yes, I would say that this is definitely true. I understand best the things that interest me, but it is only the things with which I am familiar with and understand in my surroundings. It would be difficult to take passionate interest in the things which I did not have available in my environment.

For example, let's consider some "idea" people in history. The person who invented the basketball hoop, or the game of volleyball, or ice skates, all had interest in those things before they had their brilliant ideas. I do know that the inventor of the basketball hoop used to coach a basketball team of young boys, and they would throw the ball into a fruit basket that was nailed to the wall. Obviously, a basket has a bottom to it, and they would have to fish it out after every successful

throw. So he had the brilliant idea of cutting out the bottom of the basket. It seems so simple to us now, but nobody had ever played basketball like that in his day.

The phrase, "commonplace things" can be rather misleading, I believe. I think every person has slightly different "commonplace things" in their environment depending on their interests, their financial status, and availability of items. What is commonplace for one person may never be known by another. I take passionate interest in things having to do with sewing using patterns, fabrics and threads. However, my mother and grandmother are excellent seamstresses and I had the availability of learning from them. It was a "commonplace thing" for me. I have had some wonderful ideas come out of my passion for this kind of art.

Orville and Wilbur Wright had a passionate interest in things having to do with flight, a rather ordinary thing for the sorts of birds who can fly with their wings, but certainly not people. If I had lived during the Wright brothers' time, I would

probably not have had the same passionate interest in figuring out how to make humans fly, because it is not something that I would have thought possible. But their dreams and visionary possibilities were much bigger than mine would have been at that time. They not only had a passionate interest but they were willing to experiment, to risk financial ruin and ridicule, and even put their lives on the line. So while it is true that the best ideas arise from a passionate interest in commonplace things, there also has to be an element of daring to challenge “norms” and not being able to just accept things as they are. There has to be a desire to make things better and to improve on the present.

There also has to be the element of not being afraid of failure. Most ideas do inevitably fail. Einstein is viewed today as being one of the most brilliant thinkers and “idea” people in all of history. But nobody really talks about how many times his ideas failed. The number is quite amazing. Many people are afraid of failure, so even though they make take a passionate interest in something

commonplace, and have some great ideas, they may never carry them through because of uncertainty that they would work. We must be willing to try!

So, yes, it is true that the best ideas arise from a passionate interest in commonplace things, because these are the things that we know, these are the things that we understand, and the things that we want to explore in even more depths. But there must be more elements involved than just taking interest in something. We must be willing to face risks of many kinds in order to separate the ideas that fail from the ones that will triumphantly succeed.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 5:

This strong response presents a well-considered analysis of the complexities of the issue by arguing that great ideas come, not only from a passionate interest in the commonplace, but also from great imagination and a willingness to succeed.

The logic of the response unfolds very smoothly: paragraph 3 explores the term “commonplace” and offers support for the prompt’s position; paragraphs 4 and 5 discuss the related issues of imagination, willingness to experiment, and overcoming failure. The examples are well chosen and generally well developed.

Paragraph 2 offers a relevant, though predictable, sports example (invention of basketball hoop) to examine how commonplace things/familiarity can spark great ideas. A personal example is used in paragraph 3 to further explore the definition of “commonplace” and illustrate how the term is relative to financial status and availability (though only the concept of availability is developed in this example). Paragraph 2 logically extends into paragraph 3, and the same connection is seen between paragraphs 4 and 5. In paragraph 4 the Wright brothers are used to argue that great ideas also come from imagination and a willingness to experiment. The final example, in which Einstein is offered to illustrate the necessity of overcoming failure, is not as fully

developed as the others. The respondent does not explain what failures Einstein endured or how he overcame them, which makes the example less compelling. Overall, the analysis demonstrated in the examples is “perceptive and clear,” but not “insightful and cogent” as required for a score of 6.

While the response expresses ideas clearly, using appropriate vocabulary and sentence variety, it does not use language as fluently and precisely as would a typical 6. Occasional wordiness/awkwardness could be avoided with more precise diction (e.g., “There also has to be the element of not being afraid of failure,” or “I have had some wonderful ideas come out of my passion for this kind of art”).

The following sample issue response received a score of 4:

In agreement with the statement, many great inventions have come from individuals interested in commonplace things. Out of simplicity arises great ideas, and I would consider commonplace things to be simplistic. However, it is hard to say

that the “best” ideas arise from passion in commonplace things, because one could argue that the best ideas involve interest in remarkable things, which is what makes them the “best” ideas.

If the statement is viewed from the standpoint of all ideas from the beginning of civilization, then the statement holds true. Examples of commonplace things are food and shelter. If a person had an abundance of food and needed to transport it, they may have the idea to weave a basket or make some sort of tote in order to load more at once. With that idea, eventually the people would think of things to make the first idea more useful, such as adding wheels to your carrying device. With shelter, first people (Cro-Magnon) may have kept out of weather and unsafe territory by using caves as shelter. From passionate interest in the common shelter a person may have come up with brilliant ideas about structures, architecture, and construction.

In concern with the opposing view that the best ideas arise from remarkable things, one could argue that best ideas are medical breakthroughs

and all other aspects of Science. Working with substances and molecules and creating ions and isotopes is not a commonplace thing. However, it is what the people who make the scientific breakthroughs have passionate interest in expanding.

Looking at the big picture, I would say that if people did not have “passionate interest in commonplace things”, then the idea that led us to the remarkable things would have never occurred. If that is true then the statement holds true because the best ideas do arise from a passionate interest in commonplace things. Though some older ideas may seem obsolete now, there was a time that without those ideas, we would still be in the dark ages.

Overall, I agree with the statement. The best ideas do arise from a passionate interest in commonplace things. Though I do not consider medical breakthroughs coming from interest in commonplace things, our species appears to be reaching the point in which cancer and AIDS could be considered a commonplace thing. If that is true,

then when someone finds a cure for cancer or AIDS it will be one of the best ideas arising from a passionate interest in a commonplace thing. Once again reinforcing the truth of the statement.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 4:

This response presents a competent analysis and conveys meaning adequately.

Paragraph 2 offers appropriate and adequately developed examples from “the beginning of civilization” to illustrate how commonplace needs inspire innovation: the need to transport food led to the invention of woven baskets and, eventually, the invention of the wheel; similarly, the need for shelter that drove “Cro-Magnon” to the caves eventually inspired “brilliant ideas about structures, architecture, and construction.”

Paragraph 3, which explores the “opposing view” (the best ideas arise from remarkable things), is less developed. The respondent claims that the best ideas are “medical breakthroughs and all other aspects of Science,” without explaining

what is meant by "Science" or why these types of ideas are the "best." Does "Science" include engineering, computer sciences, and the social sciences? Why are advances in science and medicine better than advances in religion, the arts, or philosophy? The response also fails to acknowledge the commonplace interests (e.g., desire to improve quality of life) that drive medical/scientific research. While the response addresses two sides of the issue, it never delves into complexity the way a 5 or 6 would.

In paragraph 4, the response comes to a new conclusion: without initial interest in commonplace things, interest in remarkable things would be impossible. This is an interesting position that, if developed and supported with well-chosen examples, could lead to complex analysis. However, the conclusion is merely stated, loosely supported with generalities, and then further confounded by shaky logic in paragraph 5.

Ideas are expressed with reasonable clarity and the response generally demonstrates control of language. It is lack of complexity and logical

development that keep this response from earning a higher score.

The following sample issue response received a score of 3:

How do new knowledge came into being? Sometimes it stemed from exsiting knowledge. Sometimes it was born all out of sudden. Both ways seem work well. As I see through this question, I believe that what plays a key role in creating new ideas is a passionate interest.

Throughout history, a myriad of examples help prove the importance of interest. Edison, the greatest inventors in the world, possessed a sharp interest ever since his childhood. In his eyes, every common things were full of mysteries. It was his unique interest which helped him look into the machanism of things around therefore new iders came into his mind and, changed into conceret machines facilitating our lives. Another famous example is that of Newton. A riped apple from a tree fell onto his head one afternoon. For

ordinary people, this kind of trivial instance would slip off their mind at once. However, Newton lost himself in thought of the relation between objects. Finally he found gravitation and opened up a new era of physics.

On the other hand, without interest, the opportunity of great discoveries will pass by. Most people are experiencing ordinary lives everyday. Why don't they come up with great ideas? Because interest is a state of skepticism, a state in which we do not stop to disclose the truth beneath a surface of commonplaces. Interest means the ability to explore the internal correlations. Therefore, with a passionate interest, those commonplace things are no longer commonplace, and new ideas are created.

From what have been discussed above, we can see that interest serves as force to propell the exploration of unknowns, to perfect the structure of human knowledge, and to move towards the ultimate truth.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 3:

This limited response demonstrates some competence in its analysis and in conveying meaning but is obviously flawed.

The response agrees with the prompt by arguing that a passionate interest allows people to see beyond the commonplace and create new ideas (paragraphs 1 and 3). However, the response is limited in presenting and developing this position.

In paragraph 2 the response offers two relevant but underdeveloped examples to illustrate the importance of interest in generating ideas. The Edison example is not persuasive because its development is limited to generalities (“common things were full of mysteries...which helped him look into the machanism of things...therefore new iders came into his mind and, changed into conceret machines”). The response does not provide specific examples of the common “things” that interested Edison nor does it discuss any of

Edison's particular ideas. Thus, it does little to advance the response's position. The Newton example is not penalized for historical inaccuracy. However, like the previous example, it is overly general and underdeveloped.

The response also contains an accumulation of language errors (in usage, word choice, and sentence structure) that often result in a lack of clarity. For instance, the rhetorical device used in paragraph 1 contains frequent errors that render it ineffective. The imprecise language use in the Newton example is particularly unsettling: "Newton lost hisself in thought of the relation between objects. Finally he found gravitation and opened up a new era of physics." While these errors do not generally interfere with meaning, they constitute a lack of language control that precludes a score of 4.

The following sample issue response received a score of 2:

The above statement reinforces my values and beliefs. I agree that the best ideas arises from a paasionate interest. I agree simply because a person must be able to personally relate to a thing in order to become passionate to the idea. The person behind the best ideas are passionate because the commonplace things have affected the person on a personally level or on a mutual level. The relationship between the commonplace thing and the best idea unites a passionate interest to the person who it has affected. A person must have a desire to build on their passion in order to follow through on his or her idea.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 2:

This response presents a seriously flawed analysis of the issue.

The response agrees with the prompt by arguing that a person must be able to relate to something in order to develop passion for it.

(The connection between things one can “relate to” and “commonplace things” is implied.) The response also states that passion is necessary in order for a person to follow through on an idea. However, neither of these claims is supported with relevant reasons or examples.

Furthermore, flawed word choice and other language control problems make the reasoning hard to follow (particularly in sentences 4 and 5: “The person behind the best ideas are passionate because the commonplace things have affected the person on a personally level or on a mutual level. The relationship between the commonplace thing and the best idea unites a passionate interest to the person who it has affected.” In those sentences the respondent attempts to analyze the relationship between commonplace things, passion, and ideas). Nevertheless, this response is not a 1: the respondent does provide evidence of the ability to understand the issue and attempts to present a position on it.

The following sample issue response received a score of 1:

This topic can be found to be true in many different areas. The best ideas that people have come up with are usually founded be improving commonplace things. For example in order to improve the effieency of writing the typewriter was invented, then following that the computer was invented.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 1:

This response presents a fundamentally deficient discussion of the issue.

The first sentence consists of generic language that can be applied to any prompt. Thus, it neither enhances nor detracts from the analysis. The remainder of the response consists of a statement in support of the prompt and a list of two examples (the typewriter and the computer). The examples offered are potentially relevant but completely undeveloped. Basic errors in usage and grammar

are pervasive, but it is primarily the inability to develop an organized response that makes this response a 1.

This is the end of sample responses and commentaries for the Issue task. Sample responses and commentaries for the Argument task follow.

Revised GRE Practice Test 1.

Analyze an Argument

Sample Argument Topic Directions

Directions: The Analytical Writing portion of the GRE consists of two writing topics: Analyze an Issue and Analyze an Argument. For this section, Analyze an Argument will be the writing topic.

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 analysis and evaluate its overall quality according to how well you do each of the following:

- Respond to the specific instructions on the passage
- Identify and analyze important features of the passage
- Organize, develop, and express your analysis
- 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:

Hospital statistics regarding people who go to the emergency room after roller-skating accidents indicate the need for more protective equipment. Within that group of people, 75 percent of those who had accidents in streets or parking lots had not been wearing any protective clothing (helmets, knee pads, etc.) or any light-reflecting material (clip-on lights, glow-in-the-dark wrist pads, etc.). Clearly, the statistics indicate that by investing in high-quality protective gear and reflective equipment, roller skaters will greatly reduce their risk of being severely injured in an accident.

Write a response in which you

- examine the unstated assumptions of the argument above
and
- explain how the argument depends on the assumptions and what the implications are if the assumptions prove unwarranted.

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

Note: 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:

The argument above is well-presented and appears to be relatively sound at first glance: because of the hospital statistics regarding people who go to the emergency room after roller-skating accidents, the roller skaters should investing in high-quality protective gear and reflective equipment in order to reduce their risk of being severely injured in an accident. However, as more light is shed on the issue and more detailed facts are concerned, it is easy to see that the argument

suffers from several grave fallacies in its assumptions as well as commits a false analogy.

To begin with, as mentioned in the argument, there are two distinct kinds of gear—preventative gear, such as light reflecting material, and protective gear, such as helmets. Preventative gear is intended to warn others, presumably for the most part motorists, of the presence of the roller skater. It works only if the “other” is a responsible and caring individual who will afford the skater the necessary space and attention. Protective gear is intended to reduce the effect of any accident, whether it is caused by another, the skater or some force of nature. Protective gear does little, if anything, to prevent accidents but is presumed to reduce the injuries that occur in an accident. The statistics on injuries suffered by skaters would be more interesting if the skaters were grouped into those wearing no gear at all, those wearing protective gear only, those wearing preventative gear only and those wearing both.

These statistics could provide skaters with a clearer understanding of which kinds of gear are more beneficial.

In addition, the argument is much weakened by the fact that it does not take into account the inherent differences between skaters who wear gear and those who do not. It is at least likely that those who wear gear may be generally more responsible and/or safety conscious individuals. The skaters who wear gear may be less likely to cause accidents through careless or dangerous behavior. It may, in fact, be their natural caution and responsibility that keeps them out of the emergency room rather than the gear itself. Also, the statistic above is based entirely on those who are skating in streets and parking lots which are relatively dangerous places to skate in the first place. People who are generally more safety conscious may choose to skate in safer areas such as parks or back yards.

Moreover, the statistic also can not make sense when come to the conclusion that safety gear prevents severe injuries. The conclusion suggests that it is presumed that people come to the emergency room only with severe injuries. This is certainly not the case. Also, given that skating is a recreational activity that may be primarily engaged in during evenings and weekends when doctors' offices are closed, skater with less severe injuries may be especially likely to come to the emergency room for treatment.

Last but not least, there is absolutely no evidence provided that high quality gear is any more beneficial than other kinds of gear. For example, a simple white t-shirt may be easily caught by others' sight that provide the same or even more preventative benefit as a higher quality, more expensive, shirt designed only for skating. Before skaters are encouraged to invest heavily in gear, a more complete understanding of the benefit provided by individual pieces of gear would be helpful.

Overall, the argument is far from forceful enough to persuade the roller skaters should invest in high-quality protective gear and reflective equipment in order to reduce their risk. Before any final decisions are made about whether the roller skaters should invest in high-quality protective gear and reflective equipment, much work is left for the arguer to do to make his/her argument more logical and cogent.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 6:

This outstanding response presents a comprehensive examination of the argument's root flaws. Specifically, the response exposes several points that undermine the argument:

- that preventative gear and protective gear are not the same
- that skaters who wear gear may be less prone to accidents because they are, by nature, more responsible and cautious

- that the statistics do not differentiate by the severity of the injuries
- that gear may not need to be high-quality to be beneficial

The discussion is smoothly and logically organized, and each point is thoroughly and cogently developed. In addition, the writing is succinct, economical, and contains few minor errors. Sentences are varied and complex, and the diction is expressive and precise.

In sum, this response exemplifies a score of 6 because it presents cogent, well-articulated critique and conveys meaning skillfully.

The following sample argument response received a score of 5:

This argument is too weak to be convincing, relying on the correlation of two incomplete statistics. Correlation does not always imply causation, though it might be tempting to believe it is. Here, the implication is that protective gear will reduce the risk of accident. It assumes that lack of protective gear is the main cause of severe injury

in roller skates, which is not necessarily true under any circumstance.

First, it claims that 75 percent of roller-skaters who have had accidents in streets or parking lots were not wearing any protective gear. This says nothing about the cause or the degree of severity of injuries. Some may have been hit by vehicles in broad daylight, in which case neither padding nor reflective material would have saved a skater. Common sense dictates that padding will reduce your risk of being injured, but in extreme cases, padding may do very little.

The argument also ignores the fact that roller-skating is something of an "extreme sport." While the injured may have been injured with roller skates on the street or in a parking lot, the injuries may have resulted from the skater's predilection for performing dangerous tricks. Often, these tricks involve careful balancing on thin objects while moving at high speed, and it is questionable how much padding would protect a skater. One would need to compare this to the statistics of injuries occurring in skate parks.

Lastly, the last 25 percent of emergency room cases of this type are also ignored. What would be useful are the types of injuries incurred on these people as a basis of comparison. They may all have been injured so severely that they are forced into extended hospital stays. By the same argument as given above, 100% of all skaters wearing protective gear suffered extreme injuries, thus it is imperative that skaters not wear any such accessories at all.

The use of statistics is a shaky way of bolstering an already decent argument. There are too many implications derived from the data the way it is presented. As such, the numbers are an indirect method of supporting the need for more protective accessories in skating. The argument could be improved by providing more statistics detailing the nature of injuries and a better representative group with which to compare data. One simply cannot compare injuries caused by carelessness or recklessness as opposed to general accidents, at least not statistically, as carelessness will improve the chances of injury. As it stands,

the argument has too many holes with which it can be torn apart.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 5:

This strong response sets out to critique the argument's use of statistics and its assumption that lack of protective gear causes more severe injuries, and it does just that. The response identifies and critiques insufficiencies of the statistics that cause the argument to be less than compelling:

- that the statistics do not differentiate between the causes or severity of the injuries
- that the statistics only represent people who skate in parking lots and streets, and that these people may engage in more dangerous activities than those who skate in skate parks
- that no information is given about the extent of the injuries for the other 25 percent who were wearing protective gear, and that their injuries might have been comparable to or worse than those who did not wear gear

The respondent develops each of these points by offering alternative explanations and, in paragraphs 2 and 3, by calling for additional data that would be needed to confirm or refute the argument's assumptions. The response does not analyze the argument as insightfully or develop its critique as fully as required for a 6, but the clear organization, strong control of language, and substantial degree of development warrant more than a score of 4.

The following sample argument response received a score of 4:

This argument is based on the claim that investing in high-quality protective gear and reflective equipment, roller skaters will reduce the risk of being severely injured in an accident. This is based on a statistic that states that 75 percent of the people who go to the emergency room after a roller-skating accident had not been wearing any protective clothing or light-reflecting material. However, this argument makes many assumptions which weaken the argument as a whole.

First, the argument assumes that the people who went to the emergency room after roller-skating injuries were skating properly. The accidents could have been avoided if the skaters were following skating rules, such as where to skate and obeying laws of traffic. Any violations to these skating rules could have been the reason the skaters were injured. However, the argument fails to address this issue, which makes it unsound.

Second, the argument assumes that the skaters who were injured did not take any abnormal risks. The accidents could have occurred because of the risks taken by the skaters. Readers do not know if the statistics were collected from a representative sample. The data could have been collected from a group of young males who tend to take risks greater than those of older women, but the argument does not address this issue. The argument assumes that the statistics sample the population accurately, which provides weakness to this argument.

Last, the argument assumes that protective equipment will solve the problem of severe roller-skating injuries. In actuality, the assumptions that the argument makes prior to this assumption creates a great deal of skepticism for readers. There are many external factors that were not addressed in this argument and that would alter the conclusion if they were considered. It weakens the argument to assume that the addition of protective gear would directly reduce the risk of being severely injured in an accident.

For all these reasons, the argument can be viewed as fundamentally unsound. The argument could be strengthened by addressing whether or not the skaters followed rules and laws effecting skating. It could be strengthened by identifying the risks taken by the skaters from which the data was collected. And the argument could be greatly stenghtened by eliminating any external forces or addressing them in the argument. All of these adjustments would provide the agrument with a solid foundation.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 4:

This response presents a competent critique of the argument and conveys meaning adequately.

After paraphrasing the argument in paragraph 1, the respondent analyzes some questionable assumptions:

- that skaters who went to the emergency room had been skating properly and obeying traffic laws
- that skaters who went to the emergency room did not take any abnormal risks
- that statistics were collected from a representative sample
- that protective equipment will solve the problem of severe roller-skating injuries

At first glance, the response appears well organized and each point seems equally developed. However, it is not clear that “skating properly” and “not tak[ing] any abnormal risks” are two separate issues as suggested by the

organization of the response. Rather than organizing information logically, the respondent attempts to fit the critique into a formulaic package. In addition, the discussion in paragraph 4 offers little in the way of analysis, instead relying on empty generalities. Despite appearances, discussion of the points listed above is only adequately developed and competently presented. The response is not thorough or thoughtful enough to merit a score of 5.

The writer's general control of language also supports a score of 4. The paper is free of significant or persistent errors. Diction is apt and sentence construction is generally skillful.

The following sample argument response received a score of 3:

In many roller skating accidents the person injured is not wearing appropriate protective equipment. The statement assumes that the cause of the accident was the injured persons lack of high-quality protective gear and reflective equipment. The statment does not address the fact

that accidents can occur and injuries may result even if a person does have the appropriate high-quality protective gear and reflective equipment.

The hospital statistics does show that 25% of those injured in roller-skating accidents in a street or parking lot were wearing some form of protective clothing although they were still injured. This shows that there is a 1 in 4 chance that someone wearing protective equipment will still be injured if involved in an accident. The argument depends purely on assumptions that the accidents that roller-skaters are involved in are minor and not life threatening. There was a greater amount of life-threatening injuries such as roller-skater versus automobile, the fact that they wore protective equipment would be of little help to the injured person.

More analysis would need to be done before deciding if the high-quality protective gear and reflective equipment would greatly reduce the risk of being severely injured in an accident. One must consider what types of accidents roller-skaters are most likely to get into and whether they would be

injured despite the fact that they wear protective equipment.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 3:

This response demonstrates some competence in its critique of the argument and in conveying meaning but is obviously flawed.

This response suffers from poor reasoning, both in its interpretation and in its criticism of the argument. First, the response misstates the argument's conclusion in paragraph 1: "The statement assumes that the cause of the accident was the injured persons lack of high-quality protective gear and reflective equipment." From this faulty reading of the prompt, a slew of illogic progresses.

The response focuses its critique on the 25 percent of skaters who suffered injuries despite having worn some type of protective or reflective equipment. From this fact, the respondent draws a faulty conclusion that there is a 1 in 4 chance that someone wearing protective equipment will still be

injured in an accident. Even if that followed from the original statistics, the respondent does not explain how such a fact weakens the argument.

In the end the response does offer two potentially relevant points of criticism:

- that the type of injuries is not addressed
- that the type of accidents is not addressed

However, these points are undeveloped; the response calls for more information about types of accidents and injuries but does not explain how such information would strengthen the argument.

There are a few minor errors in writing. However, it is lack of development and poor reasoning that force a score of 3.

The following sample argument response received a score of 2:

The judgement is questionable. First, the the statistics focus on the protective equipment of rollerskating, but it shows us that statistics in streets or parking lots. Isn't it strang? whether the equipment is useful or not should be test in the rollerskating field.

Second, the statistics only show the 75 percent of people who go to the emergency room without protective equipment, but how about the people who wear equipment. Maybe the people with protective equipment become careless and they are dead in accidents, so they are not counted in these statistics.

In order to make consumer believe the use of the protective equipments, the statistics should show the injure population with and without equipments and the noninjure population with and without equipments. Moreover, it should divide the injure conditions. There is a large different from bone break and skin break.

Finally, without more detailed, I do not think the judgement is correct.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 2:

This response demonstrates serious weaknesses in analytical writing. The response

attempts critique based on logical analysis but fails to provide reasonable development.

The response offers three other points of critique:

- the statistics are “questionable” because they only represent skaters who skate in the street or parking lots (“it shows us that statistics in streets or parking lots. Isn’t it strang?”)
- the statistics are misleading because they do not include skaters who have died while wearing protective equipment
- the statistics should differentiate between type of injuries (“it should divide the injure conditions”)

While these are valid points of critique (that are often used in more successful responses), this response fails to provide relevant and reasonable support for them. In addition, this response has serious problems in the use of language and sentence structure that interfere with meaning (see examples above).

The following sample argument response received a score of 1:

If the assumptions contained within this argument are true then it could be correlated that not only would protective gear assist in reducing injury occurrence amongst rollerbladers but could also initiate city code to enforce such gear to be worn. If the argument is a falsehood and the injury could be connected more to the time of day injury occurred or even the sport itself then there will no change in the injury occurrence rate.

Comments on sample essay receiving score of 1:

This fundamentally deficient response offers two hypothetical scenarios: what would happen if the argument were true; and what would happen if the argument were false. There is no evidence of an ability to understand or analyze the argument. In addition, each of the two sentences contains minor errors in grammar. However, it is primarily the lack of critique that forces a score of 1.

