PRAXIS I Essay Writing
Tips & Techniques

You will have 30 minutes to complete an essay from a writing prompt that requires no specialized knowledge.

Here is what you should be able to do in order to perform well:
  o Write an essay that is appropriate for the assigned task and for the intended audience
  o Organize and develop ideas logically, making clear connections between them
  o Provide and sustain a clear focus or thesis
  o Use supporting reasons, examples, and details to develop clearly and logically the ideas presented in the essay
  o Demonstrate facility in the use of language and the ability to use a variety of sentence structures
  o Construct effective sentences that are generally free of errors in standard written English

Keep in mind you are expected to write only about 4-5 paragraphs, or around 750-1000 words. Do not over plan. Once you have your main idea or thesis written down somewhere and try to come up with about three topic sentences for each paragraph. Make a key-word list for supporting details you will use for each topic sentence.

It is suggested you spend your time in this manner:
Think about the topic (2 minutes)
Compose a thesis statement (3 minutes)
Write a brief outline that includes your topic sentences and supporting details (3 minutes)
Write the essay (15 minutes)
Proofread and edit (7 minutes)

Each topic is an opinion statement and you are asked to either agree or disagree with it. Some sample prompts similar to ones you might find on the PRAXIS are:
  • All schools should have student dress codes.
  • Every member of society should be required before the age of twenty-one to perform at least one year of community or government service, such as in the Peace Corps, etc.
  • Schools should operate year-round.
  • Studying a foreign language should be a college requirement for anyone planning to be a teacher.
  • Competition is a destructive form in society.

How will the essay be graded?
The essay will be graded on a scale of 1-6, with 1 being a poorly written paper and 6 being an extremely well written paper. Two raters holistically grade the essay, meaning that they use their informed judgment about the overall quality of your essay rather than a detailed analysis. There is no guarantee that your results on the actual test will be the same as they are on a practice tutorial. There is no score that is considered passing. Your essay score will be combined with your multiple-choice score; a higher score on one will offset a lower score on the other. Moreover, the overall passing score for the entire test is re-calibrated for each administration of the test and cannot be determined in advance.

How to practice for the essay portion:
  • Randomly choose one of the essays topics, set a timer for 30 minutes, & write a complete essay
  • Visit the Writing Lab to show the consultants your essay
  • Write a second or third essay, using the advice of the consultants, & return to the Writing Lab
  • Consider taking an entire Writing practice exam with the objective portion and the essay exam together for a more complete experience

For more assistance, see:
  o CSL’s Study Skills appointments: http://csl.cofc.edu/study-skills/test_prep.php
  o ETS’s Test at Glance: http://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/PRAXIS/taag/5720/glance.htm
Here are some sample essays to help you judge where your writing may fall.

An essay which received a grade of “2”

**What should be the involvement of parents in today’s schools?**

Parents should definetely be involved in today school. A lot of times there are students who don’t have good parents. I don’t mean that there parents are bad or anything, I just mean that they don’t help them in school. Parents should help their kids out with homework at night. If they help there kids then maybe, there kids will know how to do their homework better.

When I was in high school I had examples of this. My friend, for example had parents that didn’t help him at all when he did his work. Sometimes his dad would let the tv run all night and he wouldn’t think a thing about it. But sometimes his mom would have helped him out. A lot of times parents don’t understand what your trying to do in school. With algebra, and some subjects parents parents don’t really understand how to do it. Parents should try to help when they can though.

An essay which received a grade of “6”

**Which of your possessions would be the most difficult for you to give up or lose? Discuss why.**

The one possession which would be most difficult for me to lose is my journal. In many ways it would be like losing a part of myself, because it contains so much of what I am. In addition to a record of daily events, it contains a history of my life, mementos from things I have done, and a record of my thoughts and feelings.

I use my journal to help me remember parts of my past that I enjoy living over in my mind. I often pick it up to scan a particular trip or event, or to re-read and savor a particular incident. My favorites are the trips we have taken as a family across the United States and throughout Europe. As a read these entries I can almost feel and see and smell the campgrounds, hear the cuckoos and cowbells, picture the mountains and cool streams. It is almost like being there.

One of my major reasons for writing my journal is for my children. As we took these trips, they were too young to write their own records. But I wrote for them, so that they too can relive and enjoy these times over and over. When they do read, their most frequent comment is “Oh, yeah. I had forgotten all about that.” I’m glad that I can help keep these precious memories alive for them.

The children also figure in another reason that I write daily. I want them to get to know me better. As we go through the trials of daily family life, sometimes we’re not as close as we’d like to be, but the journal can serve as a bridge to bring us closer together. When they read about my trials in growing up, they know that I can understand some of what they are going through.

The last reason I write may be the most important. I write for me. I write so that I can know who I am and what I am becoming. I include in my journal my ups and downs, my disappointments as well as my triumphs. I include my negative feelings as well as positive, and I record my failures as well as my successes. This gives me a record on which I can judge myself. Am I making progress? Am I a better person today than I was ten years ago? I can look back and see how I handled a similar situation and learn from it. I can see where disappointments gave way to triumphs and I can hold on through today’s trials as well. I can even read of the great times that came to an end and know that the current high will also subside and not be devastated when it does.

My journal is my most important material possession, the one I would hate to lose the most.

**Adapted from:** Raforth, Ben, and Nathan Snyder. “Praxis I Essay Writing Test.” The IUP Writing Center Webpage. 2001