

Praxis Core Essays

You be writing two 30-minute essay sections that each require a response based on an essay topic. The two essays assess your ability to write effectively in a limited amount of time.

The first essay is the Argumentative Essay—use your own experiences, observations, and readings to answer it; include examples and reasons to support your points.

The second essay is the Source-based Essay (also called Informative/Explanatory Essay) — from two sources provided by Praxis, you extract information to “identify important concerns related to the issue” (ETS 6).

The ETS Web site states, “The topic [for the two essays] attempts to present situations that are familiar to all educated people; no topic will require any specialized knowledge other than an understanding of how to write effectively in English” (6).

Your essays will be scored holistically for its overall quality. To achieve a good score, your essays should address the questions clearly and directly. Your paragraphs should be focused and contain supporting points, illustrations, or examples. There should be some variety in the language and syntax, but you should avoid an excessively formal or creative style.

Here is what you should be able to do in order to perform well:

- Write essays that are appropriate for the assigned task and for the intended audience.
- Organize and develop ideas logically, making clear connections between them.
- Provide and sustain a clear focus or thesis.
- Use supporting reasons, examples, and details to develop clearly and logically the ideas presented in the essay.
- Demonstrate facility in the use of language and the ability to use a variety of sentence structures.
- Construct effective sentences that are generally free of errors in standard written English.

What to Expect for the Argumentative Essay

The test provides a prompt with which you agree or disagree. You will have 30 minutes to write your response.

A Sample Argumentative Topic

---“Epicureanism, the school of philosophy derived from the teachings of the Greek philosopher Epicurus (341-270 BCE) holds that the meaning of life is simply to experience pleasure. This philosophy opposes the teachings of the metaphysical philosopher Plato (428-327 BCE), who

This content is based on:

Educational Testing Service. “Core Academic Skills for Educators: Writing (5722).” *Praxis Prepare for a Test*. 2015. Web. 10 April 2015.

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believed that the point of life was to discern and achieve moral good as established by the gods. Sadly, Epicureanism is more popular today, and this is why society is falling apart.”

“Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this point of view. Support your position with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations, or reading” (Kirkland and Cleveland 253).

Another Sample Argumentative Topic

“Minimum-wage jobs are a ticket to nowhere. They are boring and repetitive and teach employees little or nothing of value. Minimum-wage employers take advantage of people because they need a job.”

“Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this point of view. Support your position with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations, or reading” (ETS 31).

Some sample writing prompts similar to ones you might find for the Argumentative Essay on the PRAXIS:

- High school students should have to pass a standardized test before they graduate.
- Parents are not playing enough of a role in schools today. They need to be more involved in their children’s education. That is why schools are not doing so well today.
- To improve education in the US, we need to have school open year-round.
- It is very clear that studying a foreign language should be a college requirement for anyone planning to be a teacher.
- If schools want to have some semblance of control over students, the schools should have student dress codes.

Don’t over plan. Once you have your main idea or thesis written down somewhere, try to come up with about 3 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 (5 minutes)

Write a brief outline that includes your topic sentences and supporting details (3 minutes)

Write the essay (18 minutes)

Proofread and edit (2 minutes)

How will the Argumentative Essay be graded?

The essay will be graded on a scale of 1-6, with 1 being a poorly written paper equivalent to an “F,” and 6 being an extremely well written paper equivalent to an “A.” 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. They do not count the errors in your paper, and

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there is no guarantee that your results on the actual test will be the same as they are on a practice tutorial.

According to the ETS, “Remember that how well you write is much more important than how much you write, but to cover the topic adequately, you will probably need to write more than one paragraph” (31).

To see how some sample essays were graded, go to the ETS site

<https://www.ets.org/s/praxis/pdf/5722.pdf> to find argumentative essays graded from 6 to 1.

What to Expect for the Source-Based Essay

The Praxis test gives you 30 minutes to read two short passages on a topic and then plan and write an essay on that topic. Your writing is an informative essay, using the two sources provided.

A Sample Source-Based Topic

“Copyright protection grants the author of a creative work (such as a book, film, painting, or recording) the sole right to copy, publish, or profit from the work. Copyright protection lasts for a specific term. If a copyright is not renewed or if a work reaches a certain age, copyright protection no longer applies and the work is considered to be in the public domain, meaning that any person can reproduce it without paying for the right to do so. Both of the sources address the way in which artists create new works and how copyright protection affects artistic creation, and particularly whether copyright protection of existing works hinders or promotes creativity.

“Read the two passages carefully, and then write an essay in which you identify the most important concerns regarding the issue and explain why they are important. Your essay must draw on information from BOTH of the sources. In addition, you may draw on your own experiences, observations, or reading. Be sure to CITE the sources whether you are paraphrasing or directly quoting” (ETS 37).

Go to the ETS site <https://www.ets.org/s/praxis/pdf/5722.pdf> to locate the sources and sample essays (See pp. 38-40).

How will the Source-based Essay be graded?

The essay is graded holistically, from 6 to 1. The highest 6 “insightfully explains why the concerns are important, supporting the explanation with effective links between the two sources and well-chosen reasons, examples, or details” (ETS 35-36).

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Suggestions for the Source-based Essay

Draw on information from *both* sources.

Use your own experience, observations, or reading.

Be sure to cite both sources, correctly (directly quoting or just paraphrasing or merely summarizing).

When paraphrasing, summarizing, or quoting from the sources, cite each source by referring to the author's last name, the title of the source, or any other clear identifier.

Here is how one writer referred to a source:

"In his piece, Kembrew McLeod attacks the "seeming randomness" ("Freedom of Expression: Copyright Bozos and Other Enemies of Creativity") of the standards for copyright laws. He compares the differences between quoting from text versus quoting sound, such as song lyrics, as well as other aspects of the law. . ." (ETS 39)

To practice for the essays

--randomly choose one of the Argumentative essay topics and do the same for the Source-based Essay.

--set a time for 30 minutes for each writing.

--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.

For more assistance, see <https://www.ets.org/s/praxis/pdf/5722.pdf>

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