

Official SAT Practice

Lesson Plans

for Teachers by Teachers

LESSON 20

The SAT Essay—Part Four

Note: This lesson assumes that students have already completed Lessons 9, 10, and 19, all of which focus on the SAT® Essay.

Focus: Writing an SAT Essay response and getting peer feedback

Objective:

Students will write a full response to the SAT Essay and receive feedback from a peer.

Before the Lesson:

- Make sure students have been exposed to Lessons 9, 10, and 19 about the SAT Essay.
- Preview and print (if necessary) the student materials.

Introductory Activity | 25 minutes

1. Ask students to look at the “Writing” portion of the SAT Essay Scoring Guide, specifically Level 4. Discuss the key elements of an essay that need to be in place for students to receive a 4 in “Writing.” They can be summarized as:
 - a. Effective use of language.
 - b. Precise claim.
 - c. Skillful introduction and conclusion, and clear organization throughout.
 - d. Variety of sentence structures, formal diction.
 - e. Strong command of conventions.
2. Ask students to look at one or more of the sample student introductions in response to the article about plastic bags, and to discuss what makes each one effective. Be sure to note how each has a specific and precise claim. Each of the samples received a 3 or higher in Writing.
3. Next, ask students what tends to make an effective conclusion. What is it supposed to do? While conclusions are not always crucial, especially in timed writing, an effective one can help strengthen a student’s writing. Ask students to look at the two student sample conclusions. The first one is a merely functional conclusion that restates the main points of the essay, while the second one does that in addition to adding a stylistic flourish or two.
4. In addition to having an introduction and a conclusion, the essay is expected to have body paragraphs that are clear and cohesive. In other words, they should focus on a single topic of analysis and help the reader move through the paragraph easily. Ask students to examine the sample body paragraphs in their student materials and be sure that they note that the entire focus of the first paragraph is on the use of statistics and the second is all about the sarcastic tone. Point out as well that the student writer provides multiple examples of each and uses transitions within each paragraph to help guide the reader through the analysis and essay as a whole. Point out to students that the analysis accompanying the examples is critical.
5. Share with students that the remaining parts of the Writing portion of the Scoring Guide focus on sentence variety, conventions, and word choice, which are all aspects that they have already examined as part of earlier lessons. Remind them, however, that they should adopt a formal, academic tone for the writing of this essay.

Independent Practice | 20 minutes

1. Ask students to return to the article they read in Lesson 19, “Let There Be Dark,” and to remind themselves of the claim they wrote about the author’s use of evidence, persuasive elements, and reasoning.
2. Students should begin a draft of a full essay that responds to the prompt, taking the time to write an introduction and body paragraphs that focus on individual strategies the author uses.

Homework | 30 minutes

- Students should complete the draft of their essay and use the scoring rubric to evaluate the draft’s strengths and weaknesses.

Student Materials—Lesson 20

Introductory Activity

Advanced (4)	Proficient (3)
<p>Writing</p> <p>The response is cohesive and demonstrates a highly effective use and command of language.</p> <p>The response includes a precise central claim.</p> <p>The response includes a skillful introduction and conclusion. The response demonstrates a deliberate and highly effective progression of ideas both within paragraphs and throughout the essay.</p> <p>The response has wide variety in sentence structures. The response demonstrates a consistent use of precise word choice. The response maintains a formal style and objective tone.</p> <p>The response shows a strong command of the conventions of standard written English and is free or virtually free of errors.</p>	<p>The response is mostly cohesive and demonstrates effective use and control of language.</p> <p>The response includes a central claim or implicit controlling idea.</p> <p>The response includes an effective introduction and conclusion . The response demonstrates a clear progression of ideas both within paragraphs and throughout the essay.</p> <p>The response has variety in sentence structures. The response demonstrates some precise word choice. The response maintains a formal style and objective tone.</p> <p>The response shows a good control of the conventions of standard written English and is free of significant errors that detract from the quality of writing.</p>

Sample Introductions, conclusions, and body paragraphs from student responses to the plastic bag article:

Introduction #1

The style and features an author use can help persuade the audience if clearly used. Adam B. Summers in the essay “Bag ban bad for freedom and environment” uses factual evidence, word choice, and emotion to build his argument. In doing this, Summers successfully persuades his audience into believing “Paper or Plastic” is a personal right.

Introduction #2

In the wake of environmental concerns in the United States, a bill in California which would ban plastic bags for groceries failed to make it through the state Senate by a small margin. In his article “Bag ban bad for freedom and environment” (2013), Adam Summers asserts that the plastic bag ban would be harmful for consumers and the environment. He conveys this through citing statistics, appealing to the audience’s emotions and sense of self-interests, and utilizing sarcastic diction. The intended audience for this article is primarily readers who support the proposed bag ban and intend to help it pass.

Introduction #3

In Adam B. Summers’ “Bag ban bad for freedom and environment” editorial for the San Diego Union-Tribune, he argues against the possible laws hindering Californians from using plastic bags at grocery stores. He believes they would do more harm than good, and that “a little reason and perspective is in order.” By the end of this piece the reader will likely find themselves nodding in agreement with what Summers has to say, and this isn’t just because he’s right. Summers, like any good writer, employs tactical reasoning and persuasive devices to plead with the audience to take his side. In this article, he demonstrates many such devices.

Conclusion #1

Summers provides multiple ways to persuade some one and any one with different beliefs. This build many persusive arguments and cause and effects fact based conclusions.

Conclusion #2

It is through many rhetorical devices that Summers sells his argument. Powerful diction, qualification, ethos, pathos, logos, and informative facts all contribute to an exceptionally well-written argument. It is his utilization of these practices and more that make this article worthy of recognition. Once one reads the piece, they’ll be nodding along in accordence with Summers, and it isn’t for no reason.

Body paragraph #1

The author's statistics cited throughout the article reinforce his argument and provide a solid base. In the fourth paragraph he mentions the most common plastic grocery bags, which "make up just 0.3 percent of solid municipal waste materials. The author also cites the "77 percent increase in the sale of plastic trash can liner bags" as a result of a similar ban in Ireland. These statistics appeal to the reader's logic and ensure that they can follow a logical path to support the author and oppose the ban. The statistics provide solid evidence that are enhanced by the numbers and cannot be easily argued against.

Body paragraph #2

The author's sarcastic tone throughout the article conveys the conception that those people supporting this bill are misinformed and incorrect. In the sixth paragraph, the author says "The claims that plastic bags are worse for the environment than paper bags or cotton reusable bags are dubious at best." He also leads the reader to infer that supporters of the bill believe plastic bags are "evil incarnate" and "use government force to compel people to live the way they think best." In the first paragraph, the author talks of how "Californians dodged yet another nanny-state regulation." This sarcastic tone causes the audience to lose faith in these Environmentalists. It also causes the reader to question the motives of the bill and its supporters.

Independent Practice

As you read the passage below, consider how Paul Bogard uses

- evidence, such as facts or examples, to support claims.
- reasoning to develop ideas and to connect claims and evidence.
- stylistic or persuasive elements, such as word choice or appeals to emotion, to add power to the ideas expressed.

Write an essay in which you explain how Paul Bogard builds an argument to persuade his audience that natural darkness should be preserved. In your essay, analyze how Bogard uses one or more of the features in the directions that precede the passage (or features of your own choice) to strengthen the logic and persuasiveness of his argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant features of the passage.

Your essay should not explain whether you agree with Bogard's claims, but rather explain how Bogard builds an argument to persuade his audience.