

Official SAT Practice

Lesson Plans

for Teachers by Teachers

LESSON 10

The SAT Essay—Part Two

Note: This lesson assumes that students have completed Lesson 9 that introduced them to the SAT Essay.

Focus: Becoming familiar with the SAT® Essay scoring and thesis writing

Objectives:

Students will be able to

- understand the aspects by which the essay is scored.
- write an effective thesis statement for a practice essay.

Before the Lesson:

- Make sure students have been exposed to The SAT Essay—Part One (Lesson 9).
- Review the article “Using Khan Academy’s SAT Essay Practice” at <https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat/new-sat-tips-planning/about-official-sat-practice-khan-academy/a/using-khan-academy-sat-essay-practice>.
- Preview and print (if necessary) the student materials.

Introductory Activity | 30 minutes

1. Remind students that the essay is scored on the following aspects:
 - i. *Reading*: How well you demonstrated your understanding of the passage.
 - ii. *Analysis*: How well you analyzed the passage and carried out the task of explaining how the author builds his or her argument to persuade an audience.
 - iii. *Writing*: How skillfully you crafted your response.
2. Assign students to look over one aspect (Reading, Analysis, or Writing) of the scoring guide in the student materials, tracing that aspect from the lowest possible score (1) to the highest (4). Ask students to highlight words or phrases on the scoring guide that show the differences between the scores. For example, students might highlight the phrase “skillful use of textual evidence” under Reading.
3. Ask them to return briefly to the Student Sample 1 that they examined in Lesson 9. That one received a 3 on all aspects. Discuss why that student sample received the scores it did using the rationale below, if necessary. It is important that students understand why this essay was judged to be “proficient.”

Rationale for Student Sample #1 Scores:

Reading—3: This response demonstrates effective comprehension of the source text. Although the central idea is never explicitly stated in the introduction, the writer accurately captures the main focus of Goodman’s argument: his concern for the major decline of foreign correspondents employed by newspapers based in the United States. The writer also accurately paraphrases (Goodman begins with a census from year 2003 and year 2011) and directly quotes important details from the source text, demonstrating effective comprehension. In the second body paragraph, for example, the writer demonstrates understanding of Goodman’s discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of social media, effectively tracing Goodman’s argument from the value of firsthand knowledge to the problem of inaccurate information on social media sites. Overall, this response demonstrates proficient reading comprehension.

Analysis—3: This response demonstrates an understanding of the analytical task and offers an effective analysis of the source text. The writer discusses how various elements of the text are used to build Goodman’s argument and how they contribute to the text’s persuasiveness. For example, the writer discusses Goodman’s use of statistical evidence as well as Goodman’s use of reasoning in the analysis of the social media argument (He further builds and enhances his argument when he states that there must be a way to “engage readers, while retaining the core values of journalism”). The writer then discusses how Goodman makes effective use of rhetoric toward the end of paragraph 7 of the passage by posing a rhetorical question (Goodman utilizes rhetoric after he presents the fundamental advantage of crowd-sourcing on the web, when he asks a rhetorical question). Although the response occasionally relies upon assertions about the elements of persuasive arguments (Goodman’s use of logic occurs throughout his passage; Goodman employs logic, basic reasoning and evidence presentation in order to raise concern, curiosity, and questions from the reader; Reason allows Goodman to construct upon his solid foundation of evidence; Rhetoric seals the deal), the writer provides effective support in other places (for example in the discussion of Goodman’s use of rhetoric in the third body paragraph). Overall, this response demonstrates proficient analysis.

Writing—3: This response is generally cohesive and demonstrates effective use of language. The writer provides an effective introduction that lays out in broad strokes the ways in which Goodman builds his argument (What truly persuades his audience is his use of logic, reason, and rhetoric. These occur in forms of examples, explanations and conclusions, and persuasive and rhetorical statements). The response also includes a summarizing conclusion. The three body paragraphs are structured around the three features the writer has chosen to focus on: logic, reason, and rhetoric. Within each paragraph, there is a clear progression of ideas, though there are few transitions between paragraphs. Although the response sometimes demonstrates awkwardness and repetitive phrasing (Goodman’s use of reason; Goodman uses reason; Goodman also uses reason), the writer’s word choice is generally effective. The response demonstrates some variety in sentence structure and also maintains a formal style and objective tone. Overall, this response demonstrates proficient writing.

4. Ask students to read Student Sample 2 and identify places where the student writer analyzes the author’s use of evidence, reasoning, and stylistic elements. Then, ask them to score the student essay using the scoring rubric and to be prepared to explain why they gave it the score they did. Last, share with them the scores it received and a brief rationale. Clarify any questions or concerns; in particular, be sure that students recognize that this example is mostly a summary of the text and includes very little actual analysis of the tactics the writer uses.

Rationale for Student Sample #2 Scores

Reading—2: This response demonstrates some comprehension of Goodman’s text. The writer shows an understanding of Goodman’s central idea, stating that news organizations should increase the amount of Foreign news coverage offered to the Americans. While the writer includes some details from the source text (it’s seen very often that when news organization ask for a review by a reader/viewer they might end up to feel marginal); Goodman . . . noticed that the decline was taking place around the time in which America was in the middle of two wars overseas), these details are, for the most part, unconnected to the central idea. The use of textual evidence is limited, and therefore it is unclear whether the writer understands how important details relate to the central idea. Further, the writer demonstrates some evidence of having misinterpreted the argument, stating that Goodman talks about this because he believes that the news should add what the people want to hear and not what the reporters want to talk about. Overall, the response demonstrates partially successful reading comprehension.

Analysis—1: This response demonstrates very little understanding of the analytical task. The writer does identify an argumentative strategy in Goodman’s text when the writer says Goodman appeals to our emotions; however, the writer does not analyze this moment further or provide elaboration about how the example appeals to the audience’s emotions. Instead, the writer reverts to summary and writes that Goodman gives an idea to fix that problem. Throughout the rest of the response, the writer only describes Goodman’s use of evidence by summarizing parts of the text rather than providing analysis. Overall, this response demonstrates inadequate analysis.

Writing—2: This response demonstrates limited cohesion and writing skill. The writer includes a central claim, but the introductory paragraph is not effective. Individual paragraphs display some progression of ideas, but there is little to connect ideas between paragraphs or in the response as a whole. The writer’s word choice is general, and sentence structures follow a simple, repetitive subject-verb structure (Peter S. Goodman offers; He appeals; Goodman gives; He talks). Some language errors (embrace; talking place) detract from the quality of writing throughout the essay but do not seriously impede understanding. Overall, this response demonstrates partially successful writing.

Group/Pair Practice | 10 minutes

1. In pairs or small groups, ask students to examine at least one sample student thesis statement (included in the student handout) and tell them to be prepared to explain why it is an effective statement and how it provides a road map for the rest of the essay.

Independent Practice | 10 minutes

1. Ask students to read the passage “Bag Ban Bad for Freedom and Environment” and track the way the author uses evidence, reasoning, and stylistic elements.
2. Then, students should write their own thesis statement for an essay they would write as a response to the SAT prompt. Be sure to remind students that their job is not to agree or disagree with the author, but to examine how he builds his argument.
3. Last, ask students to share their thesis statements with a partner or small group to receive feedback. Encourage students to ensure that their thesis statements are close to the models they examined previously.

Homework | 50 minutes

- Have students read the article entitled “Using Khan Academy’s SAT Essay Practice” in the Tips and Strategies tab.
<https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/sat/new-sat-tips-planning/about-official-sat-practice-khan-academy/a/using-khan-academys-sat-essay-practice>
- Direct students who feel ready to complete a full response on the Essay practice tab on Official SAT Practice on Khan Academy®. Students can practice writing a complete Essay response and receive instant feedback. Teachers may want to share and discuss an anonymous student’s feedback in the next class. Students who are not ready to complete a full response may want to complete an outline with a fully developed thesis.
- Read at least three more student samples in response to the passage. They can be found here starting on page 205: <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/pdf/official-sat-study-guide-ch-17-about-sat-essay.pdf>.

Student Materials—Lesson 10

Introductory Activity

The SAT Essay Scoring Rubric

Score	Reading	Analysis	Writing
3 Proficient	<p>The response demonstrates effective comprehension of the source text.</p> <p>The response shows an understanding of the text’s central idea(s) and important details.</p> <p>The response is free of substantive errors of fact and interpretation with regard to the text.</p> <p>The response makes appropriate use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating an understanding of the source text.</p>	<p>The response offers an effective analysis of the source text and demonstrates an understanding of the analytical task.</p> <p>The response competently evaluates the author’s use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or feature(s) of the student’s own choosing.</p> <p>The response contains relevant and sufficient support for claim(s) or point(s) made.</p> <p>The response focuses primarily on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.</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>

Score	Reading	Analysis	Writing
2 Partial	<p>The response demonstrates some comprehension of the source text.</p> <p>The response shows an understanding of the text’s central idea(s) but not of important details.</p> <p>The response may contain errors of fact and/or interpretation with regard to the text.</p> <p>The response makes limited and/or haphazard use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating some understanding of the source text.</p>	<p>The response offers limited analysis of the source text and demonstrates only partial understanding of the analytical task.</p> <p>The response identifies and attempts to describe the author’s use of evidence, reasoning, and/ or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/ or feature(s) of the student’s own choosing, but merely asserts rather than explains their importance.</p> <p>Or one or more aspects of the response’s analysis are unwarranted based on the text.</p> <p>The response contains little or no support for claim(s) or point(s) made.</p> <p>The response may lack a clear focus on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates little or no cohesion and limited skill in the use and control of language.</p> <p>The response may lack a clear central claim or controlling idea or may deviate from the claim or idea over the course of the response.</p> <p>The response may include an ineffective introduction and/or conclusion. The response may demonstrate some progression of ideas within paragraphs but not throughout the response.</p> <p>The response has limited variety in sentence structures; sentence structures may be repetitive.</p> <p>The response demonstrates general or vague word choice; word choice may be repetitive. The response may deviate noticeably from a formal style and objective tone.</p> <p>The response shows a limited control of the conventions of standard written English and contains errors that detract from the quality of writing and may impede understanding.</p>

Score	Reading	Analysis	Writing
1 Inadequate	<p>The response demonstrates little or no comprehension of the source text.</p> <p>The response fails to show an understanding of the text’s central idea(s) and may include only details without reference to central idea(s).</p> <p>The response may contain numerous errors of fact and/or interpretation with regard to the text.</p> <p>The response makes little or no use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating little or no understanding of the source text</p>	<p>The response offers little or no analysis or ineffective analysis of the source text and demonstrates little or no understanding of the analytic task.</p> <p>The response identifies without explanation some aspects of the author’s use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or feature(s) of the student’s choosing.</p> <p>Or numerous aspects of the response’s analysis are unwarranted based on the text.</p> <p>The response contains little or no support for claim(s) or point(s) made, or support is largely irrelevant.</p> <p>The response may not focus on features of the text that are relevant to addressing the task.</p> <p>Or the response offers no discernible analysis (e.g., is largely or exclusively summary).</p>	<p>The response demonstrates little or no cohesion and inadequate skill in the use and control of language.</p> <p>The response may lack a clear central claim or controlling idea.</p> <p>The response lacks a recognizable introduction and conclusion.</p> <p>The response does not have a discernible progression of ideas.</p> <p>The response lacks variety in sentence structures; sentence structures may be repetitive. The response demonstrates general and vague word choice; word choice may be poor or inaccurate.</p> <p>The response may lack a formal style and objective tone.</p> <p>The response shows a weak control of the conventions of standard written English and may contain numerous errors that undermine the quality of writing.</p>

STUDENT SAMPLE #2

In the article “Foreign News At a Crisis Point”, Peter S. Goodman argues that the news organizations should increase the amount of Foreign news coverage offered to the Americans.

Peter S. Goodman offers many explanations of why the American public needs more professional Foreign news coverage. He appeals to our emotions when he states that it’s seen very often that when news organization ask for a review by a reader/viewer they might end up to feel marginal. Goodman gives an idea to fix that problem and says, “Crowd-Sourcing is a fundamental advantage of the web, so why not embrace it as means of piecing together a broader and more textual understanding of events?” He talks about this because he believes that the news should add what the people want to hear and not what the reporters want to talk about.

He also states a fact from the American Journalism Review, the AJR sampled many news papers from across the country and they observed that the space of which belonged to foreign news had shrunk by 53% over the previous quarter-century. Goodman took this into consideration and noticed that the decline was taking place around the time in which America was in the middle of two wars overseas. It was also around the time the government viewed the consequences and merits of global war on terrorism.

Peter S. Goodman offered many reason for which Foreign news should be increased so the American public could view it and they all have great support and add relevance to the viewer.

Pair/Group Activity

Sample student thesis statements:

1. Goodman’s argument becomes powerful through the use of pathos, using evidence, and also embracing reasoning.
2. Peter S. Goodman builds a solid argument for the growing need for foreign news coverage and utilizes concrete evidence, logical reasoning and persuasive appeals to not only expose the paucity of international news feeds, but also convince his audience that it is crucial that news organizations increase the amount of foreign news coverage provided to Americans.
3. Peter S. Goodman uses many different types of evidence to support his claims and persuade his audience that news organizations should increase the amount of professional foreign news coverage provided to Americans.
4. Goodman builds an argument to persuade his audience that news organizations should increase the amount of professional foreign news coverage to the Americas through the presentation of statistics, connections to social media as well as using specific diction to establish his argument.

Source	Reading	Analysis	Writing
4 Advanced	<p>The response demonstrates thorough comprehension of the source text.</p> <p>The response shows an understanding of the text’s central idea(s) and of most important details and how they interrelate, demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of the text.</p> <p>The response is free of errors of fact or interpretation with regard to the text.</p> <p>The response makes skillful use of textual evidence (quotations, paraphrases, or both), demonstrating a complete understanding of the source text.</p>	<p>The response offers an insightful analysis of the source text and demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the analytical task.</p> <p>The response offers a thorough, well-considered evaluation of the author’s use of evidence, reasoning, and/or stylistic and persuasive elements, and/or feature(s) of the student’s own choosing.</p> <p>The response contains relevant, sufficient, and strategically chosen support for claim(s) or point(s) made.</p> <p>The response focuses consistently on those features of the text that are most relevant to addressing the task.</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>

Independent Practice

Read the following passage and track the following information in the chart below. Be prepared to write your own thesis statement as if you were writing an essay about the passage. Remember, you should NOT explain whether you agree or disagree with the author, but examine how the author builds the argument.

Evidence	Logical Reasoning	Stylistic Elements

Adapted from Adam B. Summers, “Bag Ban Bad for Freedom and Environment.”
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- 1 Californians dodged yet another nanny-state regulation recently when the state Senate narrowly voted down a bill to ban plastic bags statewide, but the reprieve might only be temporary. Not content to tell us how much our toilets can flush or what type of light bulb to use to brighten our homes, some politicians and environmentalists are now focused on deciding for us what kind of container we can use to carry our groceries.
- 2 The bill . . . would have prohibited grocery stores and convenience stores with at least \$2 million in gross annual sales and 10,000 square feet of retail space from providing single-use plastic or paper bags, although stores would have been allowed to sell recycled paper bags for an unspecified amount. The bill fell just three votes short of passage in the Senate . . . and Sen. Alex Padilla, D-Los Angeles, who sponsored the measure, has indicated that he would like to bring it up again, so expect this fight to be recycled rather than trashed.
- 3 While public debate over plastic bag bans often devolves into emotional pleas to save the planet or preserve marine life (and, believe me, I love sea turtles as much as the next guy), a little reason and perspective is in order.
- 4 According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, plastic bags, sacks, and wraps of all kinds (not just grocery bags) make up only about 1.6 percent of all municipal solid waste materials. High-density polyethylene (HDPE) bags, which are the most common kind of plastic grocery bags, make up just 0.3 percent of this total.
- 5 The claims that plastic bags are worse for the environment than paper bags or cotton reusable bags are dubious at best. In fact, compared to paper bags, plastic grocery bags produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions, require 70 percent less energy to make, generate 80 percent less waste, and utilize less than 4 percent of the amount of water needed to manufacture them. This makes sense because plastic bags are lighter and take up less space than paper bags.
- 6 Reusable bags come with their own set of problems. They, too, have a larger carbon footprint than plastic bags. Even more disconcerting are the findings of several studies that plastic bag bans lead to increased health problems due to food contamination from bacteria that remain in the reusable bags. A November 2012 statistical analysis by University of Pennsylvania law professor Jonathan Klick and George Mason University law professor and economist Joshua D. Wright found that San Francisco’s plastic bag ban in 2007 resulted in a subsequent spike in hospital emergency room visits due to E. coli, salmonella, and campylobacter-related intestinal infectious diseases. The authors conclude that the ban even accounts for several additional deaths in the city each year from such infections.

- 7 The description of plastic grocery bags as “single-use” bags is another misnomer. The vast majority of people use them more than once, whether for lining trash bins or picking up after their dogs. (And still other bags are recycled.) Since banning plastic bags also means preventing their additional uses as trash bags and pooper scoopers, one unintended consequence of the plastic bag ban would likely be an increase in plastic bag purchases for these other purposes. This is just what happened in Ireland in 2002 when a 15 Euro cent (\$0.20) tax imposed on plastic shopping bags led to a 77 percent increase in the sale of plastic trash can liner bags.
- 8 And then there are the economic costs. The plastic bag ban would threaten the roughly 2,000 California jobs in the plastic bag manufacturing and recycling industry, although, as noted in the Irish example above, they might be able to weather the storm if they can successfully switch to producing other types of plastic bags. In addition, taxpayers will have to pony up for the added bureaucracy, and the higher regulatory costs foisted upon bag manufacturers and retailers will ultimately be borne by consumers in the form of price increases.
- 9 Notwithstanding the aforementioned reasons why plastic bags are not, in fact, evil incarnate, environmentalists have every right to try to convince people to adopt certain beliefs or lifestyles, but they do not have the right to use government force to compel people to live the way they think best. In a free society, we are able to live our lives as we please, so long as we do not infringe upon the rights of others. That includes the right to make such fundamental decisions as “Paper or plastic?”