

SAT Essay Scoring Guidelines

How the Essay Is Scored

Each essay is independently scored by two readers on a scale from 1 to 6. These readers' scores are combined to produce the 2-12 scale.

Scoring Guide

Score of 6

An essay in this category demonstrates clear and consistent mastery, although it may have a few minor errors. A typical essay:

- Effectively and insightfully develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates outstanding critical thinking, using clearly appropriate examples, reasons and other evidence to support its position
- Is well organized and clearly focused, demonstrating clear coherence and smooth progression of ideas
- Exhibits skillful use of language, using a varied, accurate and apt vocabulary
- Demonstrates meaningful variety in sentence structure
- Is free of most errors in grammar, usage and mechanics

Score of 5

An essay in this category demonstrates reasonably consistent mastery, although it has occasional errors or lapses in quality. A typical essay:

- Effectively develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates strong critical thinking, generally using appropriate examples, reasons and other evidence to support its position
- Is well organized and focused, demonstrating coherence and progression of ideas
- Exhibits facility in the use of language, using appropriate vocabulary
- Demonstrates variety in sentence structure
- Is generally free of most errors in grammar, usage and mechanics

Score of 4

An essay in this category demonstrates adequate mastery, although it has lapses in quality. A typical essay:

- Develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates competent critical thinking, using adequate examples, reasons and other evidence to support its position
- Is generally organized and focused, demonstrating some coherence and progression of ideas
- Exhibits adequate but inconsistent facility in the use of language, using generally appropriate vocabulary
- Demonstrates some variety in sentence structure
- Has some errors in grammar, usage and

Score of 3

An essay in this category demonstrates developing mastery, and is marked by ONE OR MORE of the following weaknesses:

- Develops a point of view on the issue, demonstrating some critical thinking, but may do so inconsistently or use inadequate examples, reasons or other evidence to support its position
- Is limited in its organization or focus, or may demonstrate some lapses in coherence or progression of ideas
- Displays developing facility in the use of language, but sometimes uses weak vocabulary or inappropriate word choice
- Lacks variety or demonstrates problems in sentence structure
- Contains an accumulation of errors in grammar, usage and mechanics

Score of 2

An essay in this category demonstrates little mastery, and is flawed by ONE OR MORE of the following weaknesses:

- Develops a point of view on the issue that is vague or seriously limited, and demonstrates weak critical thinking, providing inappropriate or insufficient examples, reasons or other evidence to support its position
- Is poorly organized and/or focused, or demonstrates serious problems with coherence or progression of ideas
- Displays very little facility in the use of language, using very limited vocabulary or incorrect word choice
- Demonstrates frequent problems in sentence structure
- Contains errors in grammar, usage and mechanics so serious that meaning is somewhat obscured

Score of 1

An essay in this category demonstrates very little or no mastery, and is severely flawed by ONE OR MORE of the following weaknesses:

- Develops no viable point of view on the issue, or provides little or no evidence to support its position
- Is disorganized or unfocused, resulting in a disjointed or incoherent essay
- Displays fundamental errors in vocabulary
- Demonstrates severe flaws in sentence structure
- Contains pervasive errors in grammar, usage or mechanics that persistently interfere with meaning