

Preparing for the GWT

An Overview of the Test

You will be asked to write one essay on an assigned topic, and you will be allowed 75 minutes to complete your essay. The essay topic will be within the experience of every student, regardless of background or academic major; it will test how well you write rather than how much you know. The topic will call for an essay in which you try to convince the readers to accept a particular argument or point of view. You will be expected to assemble and organize examples, facts, and details to make your argument or point of view clear and convincing. You may draw upon personal experiences and observations to support your points.

The Rubric

As you prepare for the GWT, it is important that you keep in mind how your essay will be scored.

Your essay will be assessed according to the following categories:

- [Response to the topic](#) and [thesis](#),
- [Organization and paragraphing](#),
- [Development](#),
- [Sentence structure and word choice](#),
- [Grammar, punctuation, and mechanics](#).

Each essay is read by two readers and the scores are totaled. The score of the first reader is hidden from the second. The highest possible score is "12" and the lowest is "2." A "7" is a passing score, which means that one reader gave the paper a "3" and the other gave it a "4." If scores differ by more than one point, a third reader will read the essay and make a decision.

Here is the rubric that readers use in grading GWT essays:

- 6 The "6" essay demonstrates *superior* writing ability although occasional faults may be present. An essay in this category:**
- Has a clear thesis which addresses the topic and responds effectively to all aspects of the task;
 - Is logically organized and divided into well-structured paragraphs;
 - Is fully developed with specific details, examples and arguments that cogently support the author's thesis;

- Has an effective, fluent style marked by sentence variety and a clear command of language;
- Is largely free of errors in grammar, punctuation and mechanics.

5 The “5” essay demonstrates *strong* writing ability. An essay is this category:

- Responds to all or most aspects of the topic with a clear thesis (implied or explicit);
- Is organized clearly;
- Is developed with details, evidence, examples and arguments that are relevant to the thesis;
- Has a readable style with effective word choice and some sentence variety;
- Is generally free of errors in grammar, punctuation and mechanics.

4 The “4” essay demonstrates *adequate* writing ability. An essay in this category:

- Provides a thesis that responds to all or most of the topic at least implicitly;
- Is organized in a sequential (if not always logical) manner that is consistent with paragraph conventions;
- Offers some supporting evidence/reasons and attempts to elaborate with some details;
- Is written in correct sentences, and word choices are correct, although possibly vague and/or repetitious at times;
- Demonstrates basic control of grammar, punctuation and mechanics so that sentence level errors, if present, do not distract or confuse the reader.

3 The “3” essay demonstrates *marginal* writing ability with one or more weaknesses. An essay in this category may:

- Provide a weak or unclear thesis and/or an inadequate response to the topic;
- Use an improper or confused organizational structure;
- Provide general, superficial, sparse or irrelevant supporting evidence/reasons;
- Contain confusing sentence structure and vague or imprecise word choice;
- Demonstrate limited control of grammar, punctuation and mechanics through distracting or confusing errors.

2 The “2” essay demonstrates *weak* writing ability with more than one serious weakness. An essay in this category may:

- Respond with a weak or no thesis, or the writer appears to misunderstand the topic;
- Provide very little organizational structure;

- Offer little or no supporting evidence or only evidence that is irrelevant to the topic;
- Be difficult to read or understand due to problems in sentence structure and word choice;
- Contain numerous errors in grammar, punctuation or mechanics that interfere with meaning and suggest a lack of control of written English conventions.

1 The “1” essay demonstrates *very weak* writing ability with severe weaknesses. An essay in this category may:

- Demonstrate little or no understanding of the topic;
- Have no discernible organization and appear random in thought;
- Include no evidence or reasons and may only repeat the central idea;
- Demonstrate an inability to form sentences or choose correct vocabulary;
- Contain numerous errors in grammar, punctuation or mechanics that suggest a lack of familiarity with written English conventions.