



Exemplar Grade 7 Writing Test Prompt



discoveractaspire.org

Introduction

This booklet explains the ACT Aspire[®] Grade 7 Writing test by presenting a sample test prompt. The prompt is accompanied by an explanation of the task the prompt poses, ideas for improvement, and scored student responses that illustrate student writing at different score points on the test rubric. The exemplar test prompt included here is representative of the range of content and types of questions found on the ACT Aspire Grade 7 Writing test. Educators can use this resource in several ways:

- Become familiar with ACT Aspire Writing test prompts.
- Help reinforce or adjust teaching and learning objectives.
- Learn how ACT Aspire improvement idea statements can help students identify key skills they have not yet mastered.
- See examples of actual student writing that have been scored and annotated according to the Writing test analytic scoring rubric.

Writing Framework

The ACT Aspire Writing assessments consist of a single 30-minute summative writing task at each grade in grades 3 through 8 and early high school (grades 9 and 10). The tasks target one of three primary modes of writing: reflective narrative, analytical expository, or persuasive/argumentative. The assessments are designed to provide a strong indication of whether students have the writing skills they will need to succeed as they begin work at their next grade level. All writing tasks are designed to target a depth of knowledge (DOK) level 3.¹ Student responses are evaluated according to analytic rubrics that assess the generation, development, organization, and communication of ideas in standard written English.

Because there is one extended writing task at each grade level, ACT Aspire rotates through the three modes to ensure coverage across the grades.

The reflective narrative mode appears at grades 3 and 6. The analytical expository mode appears at grades 4 and 7 and at early high school. The persuasive/argumentative mode appears at grades 5 and 8. The ACT Aspire assessments are designed to give students at every grade level an opportunity to display the higher-order thinking skills needed for meaningful reflection, analytical explanation, or persuasive argumentation.

¹ Norman L. Webb, “Depth-of-Knowledge Levels for Four Content Areas,” last modified March 28, 2002, <http://facstaff.wcer.wisc.edu/normw/All%20content%20areas%20%20DOK%20levels%2032802.doc>.

Taken as a whole, the ACT Aspire Writing assessments are intended to reflect an integrated continuum of writing ability that advances in skill and complexity grade by grade. This continuum culminates in the ACT® writing test, which provides a measure of student readiness for the writing demands of college. The ACT Aspire assessments cover Common Core State Standards that pertain to writing as well as the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards, which are derived from ACT research.

Foundations

The ACT Aspire assessments represent an extension into earlier grades of the philosophy of writing and assessment found in established ACT high school writing tests—the ACT writing test and the ACT QualityCore® English constructed-response assessments. The ACT writing test was designed from extensive research identifying the essential skills needed for success in entry-level college writing. Data validate that test takers who perform adequately on the ACT writing test are likely to succeed in their first-year college composition courses. Thus our claim that the ACT writing test is a reliable measure of a student’s readiness for college-level writing is supported with empirical evidence.

The ACT QualityCore End-of-Course Assessments were designed to help more high school students achieve the level of writing readiness they will need for college and career success. ACT QualityCore took shape from *On Course for Success*, a research project conducted by ACT and The Education Trust, which examined the curricula of high schools where students excel despite facing socioeconomic challenges.² ACT then built the ACT QualityCore assessments around the high academic standards found in these schools, with the intention of helping more schools understand and incorporate into their classrooms the level of academic rigor needed for their students’ success. There are four ACT QualityCore constructed-response assessments, one at each grade from 9 through 12. The demanding 45-minute tests encourage critical thinking and accomplished composition in the modes of reflective narrative (grade 9), literary analysis (grade 10), persuasive writing (grade 11), and expository writing (grade 12).

The ACT Aspire Writing assessments draw upon this rich research base for their design and reflect the same principles of writing that are found in the ACT writing test and in the ACT QualityCore constructed-response assessments.

Writing Competencies and Analytic Scoring

The Writing Test is scored with a four-domain analytic scoring rubric. Each grade level has a unique rubric because the writing tasks assess different writing modes, but the underlying design is the same across grades.

Each of the four rubric domains corresponds to a different trait of the writing sample; traits in the writing sample are evidence of the writing competencies described below. In addition to an overall writing test score, students receive scores in four reporting categories that correspond to these analytic rubric domains.

² ACT and The Education Trust, *On Course for Success: A Close Look at Selected High School Courses That Prepare All Students for College and Work* (Iowa City, IA: ACT, 2004).

Reflective Narrative/Analysis/Argument

The name of the first rubric domain corresponds to the mode of writing assessed at the grade level. Regardless of the mode, this rubric domain is associated with the writer's generation of ideas. Scores in this domain reflect the ability to generate productive ideas and engage with the writing task. Depending on the mode, writers generate ideas to provide reflection, analysis, or persuasive and reasoned argument. Competent writers understand the topic they are invited to address, the purpose for writing, and the audience. They generate ideas that are relevant to the situation.

Development and Support

Scores in this domain reflect the writer's ability to develop ideas. Competent writers explain and explore their ideas, supporting them with reasons, examples, and detailed descriptions. Their support is well integrated with their ideas. They help the reader understand their thinking about the topic.

Organization

Scores in this domain reflect the writer's ability to organize ideas with clarity and purpose. Competent writers arrange their writing in a way that clearly shows the relationship between ideas, and they guide the reader through their reflection, analysis, or argument about the topic.

Language Use

Scores in this domain reflect the writer's ability to use language to convey their ideas with clarity. Competent writers make use of the conventions of grammar, syntax, and mechanics. Their word choice is precise, and they are also aware of their audience, adjusting voice and tone to enhance their purpose.

Task Templates

The ACT Aspire writing tasks are built from task templates that have been designed to elicit the writing competencies discussed above. Through these templates we strive to generate writing tasks that give students with a wide range of abilities a reasonable opportunity to demonstrate their best writing. Thus, the templates call for writing topics that are accessible in language and concept to a large majority of students at a given grade level, that are free from cultural bias, and that do not require of students any preexisting specialized or background knowledge. At the same time, each template is designed to provide an opportunity for students to think critically if they can, and to demonstrate the upper range of their composition skills.

Improvement Ideas

ACT Aspire includes simple improvement ideas at the reporting category (skill) level on student and parent reports. These improvement ideas are provided for the lowest performing skill for each subject tested. The skills are always ordered from highest performing to lowest performing based on the percentage of points correct. If the percentages for two or more skills are tied, the skill with the lower number of total points is displayed first.

Keep in mind that the order of skills listed on reports may not always be exemplary of where to focus learning. For example, the skills in which a student performed within the ACT Readiness Range may not always be listed first, and the skills in which a student did not perform within the ACT Readiness Range may not always be listed last. Also, keep in mind the total number of points possible in each skill when interpreting the percentage correct.

There are two levels of improvement idea statements (low and high) for ACT Aspire summative reporting. Low statements are given on the report if the student's lowest skill score is below the ACT Readiness Range for that particular skill. High statements are given on the report if the student's lowest skill score is at or above the ACT Readiness Range for that particular skill.

Improvement Idea Statements

Reporting category	Grade	Low statement (scored below ACT Readiness Range)	High statement (scored at or above ACT Readiness Range)
Ideas and Analysis (IAA)	7	Try prewriting strategies such as brainstorming and questioning for generating ideas about a topic; rewrite an essay to include additional ideas and perspectives that strengthen the essay's main idea; identify and discuss reasons for selecting one subject for analysis over others.	Understand the assignment: learn to identify the purpose, audience, and key words. Before you begin writing an essay, ask: What is most important about this topic? What do I want my reader to understand? Think about how you might use specific details to support your analysis.
Development and Support (DAS)	7	Review model essays to identify and discuss what types of evidence and examples writers use to support their claims; think about which types of support will be most persuasive to different audiences; review your writing to identify areas where you can explain your points with more detail or precision.	Read model essays to identify and discuss how the author uses detailed descriptions and examples to explain a given topic. Practice using detailed descriptions and examples to make your main ideas clearer to the reader. Consider how you might support your ideas with reasons.
Organization (ORG)	7	Discuss the purpose and importance of the opening paragraph for directing the rest of the essay; practice arranging sentences within a paragraph so that discussion logically builds and progresses; review your writing to recognize when an essay wanders away from its main claim.	Use clustering, concept mapping, or another visual organizer to identify the relationships among the ideas in your essay. Practice arranging the details and examples so the main ideas in the essay logically build and progress. Review your essay to recognize when it wanders away from its main ideas.
Language Use and Conventions (LUC)	7	Read and discuss the works of skilled writers to become more familiar with correct language use; practice proofreading to identify obvious errors and missing words; revise your writing with a focus on clearly communicating your intended meaning while avoiding vague or imprecise word choices.	Read and discuss the works of skilled writers; use a dictionary to learn any unfamiliar words or phrases; practice proofreading your or others' work to identify obvious errors and missing words; regularly write in a journal to get more practice using both new and familiar words.

Sample Prompt

This section presents a sample prompt, a written explanation of the task, a task-specific scoring rubric, and sample student responses. The sample task has been developed to DOK level 3.

Grade 7 Analytical Expository Writing

You are going to write an **essay** to explain the role of tradition in our lives.

Think about something you do that you would call a tradition—a meaningful activity you do regularly with family or friends that is important to you. What is this tradition, and why is it meaningful to you and the people you share it with? Write an essay to **explain** why this tradition is important to you, and **discuss** the role traditions play in our lives. Be sure to use reasons and details in your explanation.

Common Core State Standards expect students to write proficiently in the Expository mode (CCRA.W2). The ACT Aspire Grade 7 Writing test, which is an expository writing exercise, affords students the opportunity to meet this expectation. This writing task expands the expository mode by asking students not just to explain a topic or subject, but to arrive at insight and deeper understanding by way of exploration and analysis.

The Grade 7 Writing test marks the second appearance of the expository mode in the ACT Aspire suite of writing assessments. While the grade 4 expository task utilizes heavy scaffolding to accommodate students in their earliest stages of development as writers, this task uses grade-appropriate scaffolding that is light by comparison. This sample task asks students to explain a tradition that is important to them and the role traditions play in their lives. The task provides a targeted question meant to stimulate analysis of the writer's chosen subject (*What is this tradition and why is it meaningful to you and the people you share it with?*).

Rubric for Grade 7 Analytical Expository Writing

	Analysis	Development	Organization	Language Use
<p>Score: 6 Responses at this score point demonstrate effective skill in writing an analytical essay.</p>	<p>The response critically engages with the task, and presents a complex analysis that addresses implications and complications of the subject. There is skillful movement between specific details and generalized ideas.</p>	<p>Ideas are thoroughly explained, with skillful use of supporting reasons and/or detailed examples. The writer's claims and specific support are well integrated.</p>	<p>The response exhibits a skillful organizational strategy. A logical progression of ideas increases the effectiveness of the writer's analysis. Transitions between and within paragraphs strengthen the relationships among ideas.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates the ability to effectively convey meaning with clarity. Word choice is precise. Sentence structures are varied and clear. Voice and tone are appropriate for the analytical purpose and are maintained throughout the response. While a few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics may be present, they do not impede understanding.</p>
<p>Score: 5 Responses at this score point demonstrate capable skill in writing an analytical essay.</p>	<p>The response engages with the task, and presents a thoughtful analysis that discusses implications and complications of the subject. There is purposeful movement between specific details and generalized ideas.</p>	<p>Ideas are capably explained, with purposeful use of supporting reasons and/or detailed examples. The writer's claims and specific support are sometimes integrated.</p>	<p>The response exhibits a purposeful organizational strategy. A logical sequencing of ideas contributes to the effectiveness of the writer's analysis. Transitions between and within paragraphs consistently clarify the relationships among ideas.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates the ability to capably convey meaning with clarity. Word choice is usually precise. Sentence structures are clear and often varied. Voice and tone are appropriate for the analytical purpose and are maintained throughout most of the response. While errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics may be present, they do not impede understanding.</p>
<p>Score: 4 Responses at this score point demonstrate adequate skill in writing an analytical essay.</p>	<p>The response is appropriate to the task, and presents an analysis that recognizes implications and complications of the subject. There is clear movement between specific details and generalized ideas.</p>	<p>Ideas are adequately explained, with satisfactory use of supporting reasons and/or examples.</p>	<p>The response exhibits a clear but simple organizational structure. Ideas are logically grouped. Transitions between and within paragraphs clarify the relationships among ideas.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates the ability to clearly convey meaning. Word choice is sometimes precise. Sentence structures are occasionally varied and usually clear. Voice and tone are appropriate for the analytical purpose, but may be inconsistently maintained. While errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics are present, they rarely impede understanding.</p>

Rubric for Grade 7 Analytical Expository Writing *(continued)*

	Analysis	Development	Organization	Language Use
<p>Score: 3 Responses at this score point demonstrate some developing skill in writing an analytical essay.</p>	<p>The response is somewhat appropriate to the task, with an analysis that is oversimplified or imprecise. Implications or complications are only somewhat clear or relevant. Specific details and generalized ideas are somewhat connected.</p>	<p>Explanations of ideas are limited, but include some use of supporting reasons and/or relevant examples.</p>	<p>The response exhibits some evidence of organizational structure. Some ideas are logically grouped. Transitions between and within paragraphs sometimes clarify the relationships among ideas.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates some developing ability to convey meaning. Word choice is general and occasionally imprecise. Sentence structures show little variety and are sometimes unclear. Voice and tone are somewhat appropriate for the analytical purpose but are inconsistently maintained. Distracting errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics are present, and they sometimes impede understanding.</p>
<p>Score: 2 Responses at this score point demonstrate weak or inconsistent skill in writing an analytical essay.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates a rudimentary understanding of the task, with weak or inconsistent skill in presenting an analysis. Implications or complications are not clearly relevant. Any connections between specific details and generalized ideas are unclear or incomplete.</p>	<p>Explanations of ideas are unclear or incomplete, with little use of supporting reasons or examples.</p>	<p>The response exhibits only a little evidence of organizational structure. Logical grouping of ideas is inconsistent or unclear. Transitions between and within paragraphs are often missing, misleading, or poorly formed.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates a weak ability to convey meaning. Word choice is rudimentary and frequently imprecise. Sentence structures are often unclear. Voice and tone may not be appropriate for the analytical purpose. Distracting errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics are present, and they impede understanding.</p>
<p>Score: 1 Responses at this score point demonstrate little or no skill in writing an analytical essay.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates little or no understanding of the task. The response lacks connections between specific details and generalized ideas.</p>	<p>Ideas lack explanation, with virtually no use of supporting reasons or relevant examples.</p>	<p>The response exhibits no evidence of organizational structure. Ideas are not logically grouped. Transitional devices may be present, but they fail to relate ideas.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates little or no ability to convey meaning. Word choice is imprecise and difficult to comprehend. Voice and tone are not appropriate for the analytical purpose. Sentence structures are mostly unclear. Errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics are pervasive and significantly impede understanding.</p>
<p>Score: 0 Unscorable</p>	<p>The response is blank, voided, off-topic, illegible, or not written in English.</p>			

Sample Essay 1

Score: 1122

A tradition is some thing a person or group of people do repeadly. One tridition my family has is on a holiday is to name the turcky. We have many more. But none is as spicel this one, on x-as eve me and my little sister take ur baths and put on our new pjs. then our mom reads how the grinch stole x-mas.

Score Explanation

Analysis (1)

The response demonstrates little understanding of the task. The writer provides a limited definition of a tradition and lists some activities. The statement (*But none is as spicel [special as] this one*) is not enough to explain the significance or why it is special to him/her. There are no generalized ideas to explain the role of tradition in the writer's life.

Development (1)

Ideas lack explanation, and there are no relevant reasons or examples given. The few details provided are not relevant to the task of explaining why this tradition is meaningful or what role traditions play in the life of the writer.

Organization (2)

This response exhibits a little evidence of an organizational structure, and there is some sense of order (*One tridition my family has is on a holiday is to name the turcky. We have many more. But none is as spicel this one*).

Language (2)

Due to the brevity of the response and the density of language errors, the writer demonstrates a weak ability to convey meaning. Though these errors are distracting, the reader can work through them and understand the intent. Word choice is imprecise, and sentence structures are unclear (*But none is as spicel this one; on x-as eve me and my little sister take ur baths and put on our new pjs*). Voice and tone are appropriate, but because there is so little information it is difficult to determine if the writer has control.

Sample Essay 2

Score: 2223

A very important tradition in my family is making red velvet cupcakes on every christmas. This is important becuase my grandma has been doing it for around 20 years with my mom ,aunts and uncles today. Its tradition that the youngest ones were allowed to lick the bowls and spoons.Also that that the young adults ice the cupcakes with red,green,and white icing. Our family plans to use the recipe for more and more years to come.

Score Explanation

Analysis (2)

The writer demonstrates a weak ability to write an analytical essay. There is enough information to make the connection between the tradition and why it is meaningful or significant, but it is unclear or incomplete (*This is important becuase my grandma has been doing it for around 20 years*). How does the fact that grandma has been doing this a long time make it meaningful to the writer?

Development (2)

There are a few supporting examples to attempt to explain why making cupcakes every Christmas is important to the writer (*Its tradition that the youngest ones were allowed to lick the bowls and spoons.Also that that the young adults ice the cupcakes with red,green,and white icing*). It is not clear how the details about making cupcakes make this activity important.

Organization (2)

The response exhibits a little evidence of an organizational structure. The few ideas presented are grouped, and the transition word “also” connects the ideas.

Language (3)

There is a developing ability to convey meaning in this response. Word choice is mostly general, but there is some precise word choice (*allowed to lick the bowls and spoons*). Overall, the writer demonstrates some ability to control sentence structure, and voice and tone are appropriate. Language errors are distracting but do not impede understanding.

Sample Essay 3

Score: 3333

A tradition in my family is to go to boating very summer. This is imperotan tbecause this is where my Dad grew up and he wants to share it with his family. As a family, we go boating at Lake Mohave in Las Vagas, Navada. As a family I mean, grandparents form both side aunts, uncles and cousins. We always stay in a tiny trailer my mom and dad bought, its right on the beach. It is important to me because you get to make new memories with the people you love and and fun to be around. Thisu tradion is important to me because mt mo has always told me that ever since I was eight months old i have been boating and staying at the same exact trailer. People all around the world have different traditions, and some may have the same. Having a tradition is important because you are able to have something special with in your family or friendships. You get to make new memories with the people you love and it always gives you something to look forward to and plan for! Another tradition within my live is, before EVERY volleyball game my team and I gather hands, bow our heads and pray. This is important to me because it helps with my understanding of chirst and to give thamks. This is also improtant to me because it bring me closer to my teammates. As i move on with me volley ball I would like to share this tradition with othe rteams.

Score Explanation

Analysis (3)

An oversimplified analysis is offered in this response (*Having a tradition is important because you are able to have something special with in your family or friendships*). The specific details and generalized ideas are somewhat connected (*It is important to me because you get to make new memories with the people you love and and fun to be around. Thisu tradion is important to me because mt mo has always told me that ever since I was eight months old i have been boating and staying at the same exact trailer*). The writer never gets beyond the idea that spending time at Lake Mohave makes memories. How do these memories affect the writer's life?

Development (3)

Some supporting reasons are included that help to explain why the boating trip is meaningful to the writer (*This is important because this is where my Dad grew up and he wants to share it with his family. As a family, we go boating at Lake Mohave in Las Vegas, Nevada. As a family I mean, grandparents from both side aunts, uncles and cousins*).

Organization (3)

The response shows some evidence of organization with a logical grouping of ideas about the boating trip and the prayer before the volleyball game. Transitions such as “because” sometimes clarify the relationships among ideas.

Language (3)

The writer displays a developing ability to convey meaning, with general word choice (*People all around the world have different traditions, and some may have the same*) and repetitive sentence structures (*It is important to me because*). Voice and tone are appropriate to the task. Language errors are distracting but seldom impede understanding.

Sample Essay 4

Score: 4344

A tradition that I always do with my family is that we eat dinner every night together. This is a important tradition to me because it gives me time to talk to my parents and discuss important subjects or just to talk just like we are friends. It's a tradition to us because it is a requirement that we do every night no matter what has happened during their or my day. Eating at the dinner table is just like being at a therapy session because if one of us have a problem we talk to each other and find a way to solve the problem and that being at the dinner table bonds us all together to be a happy family. Without this tradition, I would not be the person who I am today because of the fact that whenever I am at the dinner table I always learn something new. Being at the dinner table also teaches me table manners because my parents always get after about either, saying "Sir" or "Ma'am," or having my elbow on the table, or having my legs crossed on the chair. I believe traditions play a major role in our lives even though we don't even know that it is a tradition because it makes us who we are or what we believe in. If you didn't have a tradition, then you really don't know what you believe in and that you also wouldn't be able to remember happy times with your family. Whatever kind of tradition you have, there is always a reason why you do this tradition and why this tradition is important to you. A tradition is just a meaningful activity that you do regularly with your friends or family and if you don't have a tradition then you are missing out on a lot of things in life. A tradition is a major role in our lives but most people don't even realize how much affect it has on our lives. Everyone has one special tradition and that makes us who we are today.

Score Explanation

Analysis (4)

This response is appropriate to the task and recognizes some implications of having a special tradition (*This is a important tradition to me because it gives me time to talk to my parents and discuss important subjects*). The movement from specific details to generalized ideas is clear because the details provide an explanation of why dinner together is important (*Eating at the dinner table is just like being at a therapy session because if one of us have a problem we talk to each other and find a way to solve the problem and that being at the dinner table bonds us all together to be a happy family. Without this tradition, I would not be the person who I am today because of the fact that whenever I am at the dinner table I always learn something new*).

Development (3)

The explanation of ideas is limited, with some use of supporting examples. Some ideas are repetitious and not explained (*Whatever kind of tradition you have, there is always a reason why you do this tradition and why this tradition is important to you. A tradition is just a meaningful activity that you do regularly with your friends or family and if you don't have a tradition then you are missing out on a lot of things in life*).

Organization (4)

The response exhibits a clear and simple organizational structure. Ideas are logically grouped, and transitions such as “because” and “also” clarify the relationships among ideas. Ideas also transition from one to another to further demonstrate the simple organizational plan.

Language (4)

The writer demonstrates the ability to clearly convey meaning, with some precision in word choice (*just like being at a therapy session*). Sentence structures are occasionally varied and clear. Voice and tone are appropriate and consistently maintained throughout the essay. There are few language errors, and these errors do not impede understanding.

Sample Essay 5

Score: 5555

A tradition means a lot to my family. It is something that we always do together and something that makes us come closer together. A tradition that means the most to me is on Christmas Eve, we all make tacos as a family, everyone has a specific job to help make this action happen. This reminds us to work together as a whole and not to become frustrated.

Ever since I can remember, we have always eaten my mom's homemade tacos on Christmas Eve. Since my brother and I have grown much older, we began a new tradition that is just adding something to the tradition we already followed. We all gather and decide on what we are each going to do to help the dinner be to its best. We have to work together. Of course one person is assigned to one thing but the area we are in is only so big. We must work around and with each other. This brings us closer. Typically, my mom is in charge of the shells, my brother the table places, my step dad the beans and rice, and I do the condiments. All of this comes together as one whole and produces a great dinner.

We are a family who becomes frustrated easily. Very easily. The Taco Tradition makes us be patient with one another. Not only does it make us respect each other a little more for what each of us do, it shows that when the times comes, we really can work together. I very much appreciate what this tradition has done for my family. It has brought us closer and made us better than we thought we could be.

Then after everyone has finished their task, we sit down and eat. We say grace to our God for everything He has done for us. And then we dig in. We engage in conversation and talk about what we want the New Year to bring us. I am so thankful for this tradition and thankful that we get to do it together as a family, as a whole.

Score Explanation

Analysis (5)

The writer presents a thoughtful analysis that discusses the implication of having a tradition (*something that makes us come closer together*). A complication is also discussed (*We are a family who becomes frustrated easily. Very easily. The Taco Tradition makes us be patient with one another*). The specific details purposefully guide the reader from the description of making tacos to the generalized idea of why it *reminds us to work together as a whole and not to become frustrated*.

Development (5)

Specific details about how the family overcomes their frustration serve to explain how they become closer as a result. The writer capably integrates specific examples with the generalized idea or claim.

Organization (5)

There is a purposeful organizational structure, with a logical sequencing of ideas that contributes to the effectiveness of the analysis. Ideas effectively transition from one to another, both within each paragraph and overall, lending a cohesiveness to the essay.

Language (5)

The writer demonstrates the ability to capably convey meaning with precision in word choice and varied sentence structures (*We are a family who becomes frustrated easily. Very easily. The Taco Tradition makes us be patient with one another*). Voice and tone are consistently maintained, and language errors are minor.

Sample Essay 6

Score: 6666

Every week, I look forward to Friday night. Throughout the week, as I struggle with the daily affairs of life, I think about the end of the week. It is a time when I can finally relax and enjoy the company of my large family (I have 3 brothers and 3 sisters). But, most of all, we always know what will be for supper on Friday night. Fresh, homemade pizza. I don't think there has been a normal Friday in my life when I did not enjoy my Mother's pizza.

When my parents first got married, my Dad hated pizza, period end of sentence. However, my mother informed on that first Friday her plans for supper. "We will have pizza tonight," she would say. My Dad, who didn't really care to argue with her, would agree and "choke down" his pizza. Well, today, he doesn't in any way choke down his pizza. In fact, he devours it. The point of this is that ever since the beginning of our family, we have had pizza on Friday night, and every since my mother can remember, her mother made homemade pizza on Friday night. And, you guessed it right, every since my grandmother can remember, she had pizza on Friday night. Pizza has been a family Friday night meal for as long as we can remember.

Having pizza on Friday night doesn't seem like a very meaningful activity, but it brings my family together. Everyone of us looks forward to it, and, when we get to it, we all enjoy it together. Friday night is a time when all of us are relaxed, not worrying about schooling or business or any other serious matters. We all temporarily put it behind us. When we sit down on Friday night, it is like the inauguration of the weekend. Then, after pizza and a church meeting, we all do something together, whether it is working together raking leaves, or playing a big kickball game, or simply sitting around and telling jokes. Though things may change in our lives, we can always count on having pizza on Friday night. It brings the night together.

Believe it or not, it is very important to our family. You may ask, well, why? It is important because it not only brings our family together, but it creates a link between the young and the old. Us young kids now have a bond with our grandparents, though it may sound strange, because we all share this simple Friday night tradition. In our family, that link between the young kids and the old grandparents and everyone in between is invaluable. You cannot put a price on it because we appreciate each other's presence. From a young age, you can always ask, "Grandpa, what did you have for supper tonight?" Then they would answer, "I can't remember, can you guess for me?" We would then enthusiastically announce after a few 'guesses', "PIZZA!" Because of this, we always had something to talk about with the elder members of our family.

Especially at this time in the history of the world, traditions are invaluable. As simple as they may be, like I have showed, they are something that will always stay the same. As I speak, the world is rapidly changing. It changes in technology, it changes in people, and most of all, life is fragile. You never know what life will be like tomorrow. But, with traditions, you know that they will never change. I will give you an example. At the young age of 19, my brother was diagnosed with ALS, or Lou Gherig's disease. It is a terminal disease, and there is no cure. The week that my eldest brother was diagnosed, everyone felt like there lives would never be the same. My brother would never play catch again with me, he could never do what he used to do, he would never run again, and he could hardly communicate. But, that Friday night, guess what we had for supper. We had pizza, and it was like a normal Friday night. It felt like what it was life before our lives changed. For this reason, a tradition so small can ammeliate and cheer up a situation so overwhelming and sad. For me, it was that same experience. I will never forget it, nor ever give up this priceless tradition for the rest of my life.

Score Explanation

Analysis (6)

The response critically engages with the task by presenting a complex analysis that addresses the implications of having a simple tradition. The writer offers an implication regarding tradition (*it brings my family together*), it provides some details about possible traditions, and it moves skillfully to a generalized idea (*Though things may change in our lives, we can always count on having pizza on Friday night. It brings the night together*). He/she continues, discussing the role of tradition with further implications (*it creates a link between the young and the old*). The theme that traditions bring the family together because they don't change is skillfully explained and woven throughout the essay.

Development (6)

Carefully chosen details are used to explain why the simple tradition of having pizza on Friday night is meaningful to the writer. The writer provides further clarification of why it is so important by offering an example of his/her brother and the family's need to find comfort in traditions (*you know that they will never change*). Even though the details offered never allow the analysis to get beyond the fact traditions are important because they don't change, they also serve to provide different ways this happens in the writer's life, allowing a deeper understanding of why this is so important.

Organization (6)

The response is skillfully organized to enhance the writer's analysis. It begins with a discussion of how pizza night came to be a tradition and proceeds to carefully explain why it is so important to the family. There is a logical progression of ideas, and transitions, both within and between paragraphs, contribute to the cohesiveness of the writing.

Language (6)

The writer effectively demonstrates the ability to clearly convey meaning. Word choice is precise throughout (*inauguration of the weekend; creates a link between the young and the old; appreciate each other's presence*), and sentence structures are varied and clear. Voice and tone are appropriate and maintained, and language errors are minor.