



Exemplar Early High School Writing Test Prompt



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Introduction

This booklet explains the ACT Aspire® Early High School 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 Early High School 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)	Early High School	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 and audience as well as the key words and ideas in the assignment. Before you begin writing, generate ideas around the topic. Ask yourself: What do I know about this topic? How can I use my knowledge and experience to explain and analyze this topic?
Development and Support (DAS)	Early High School	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)	Early High School	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)	Early High School	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.

Early High School Analytical Expository Writing

Most of us want the freedom to decide how to live our own lives, but independence requires us to take personal responsibility for our actions. Write an essay in which you explain both the value and the challenge of personal independence. Be sure to support your analysis with reasons and examples.

Common Core State Standards expect students to write proficiently in the expository mode (CCRA.W2). The ACT Aspire Early High School 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 Early High School Writing test marks the third appearance of the expository mode in the ACT Aspire suite of writing assessments. This sample task asks students to explain the benefits and drawbacks of personal independence. While expository tasks at grades 4 and 7 accommodate developing writers by making use, to varying degrees, of scaffolding techniques, this task offers only a sentence of context to stimulate thinking and writing about the topic (*Most of us want the freedom to decide how to live our own lives, but independence requires us to take personal responsibility for our actions.*). Even in its brevity, this sentence models an analytical approach to the larger subject and works to facilitate critical engagement with the task.

Rubric for Early High School 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 Early High School 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: 1112

To be Independent, one often has to wait until they are eighteen in our society before they, by law, are considered truly independent. Once there, they are given the same rights as and freedom that all people should enjoy.

Score Explanation

Analysis (1)

The response demonstrates little understanding of the expository writing task. The writer briefly addresses a value of personal independence (*they are given the same rights as and freedom that all people should enjoy*).

Development (1)

The writer does not provide any relevant support.

Organization (1)

The brief response exhibits no evidence of organizational structure.

Language Use (2)

While errors do not render the response incomprehensible, only a weak ability to convey meaning is demonstrated.

Sample Essay 2

Score: 2223

I think personal independence is a good thing that sometimes gets misused. I think this because not many people understand that because they have a choice doesn't mean there will be no consequences. With having independence there are now responsibilities and challenges that you will face. One is now you can choose right from wrong. And now you must accept whatever comes with your choice. Also you think for yourself. You can not blame your actions on another individual. Independence also has some upsides. You are able to think what YOU want. Do what YOU want to do. And say what YOU want to say. Also you are in charge of you. No one else which means that you are in charge of YOUR life. You do not need someone to make your decisions for you. You are also allowed to make mistakes without being punished for them. In conclusion, personal independence is a wonderful thing but sometimes gets mistreated.

Score Explanation

Analysis (2)

The response demonstrates a rudimentary understanding of the expository writing task, with weak skill in presenting an analysis. The writer briefly addresses the values (*you can choose right from wrong*) and challenges of personal independence. Implications are briefly addressed (*And now you must accept whatever comes with your choice*).

Development (2)

Some supporting ideas that the writer offers are incomplete and lack explanation (*You are also allowed to make mistakes without being punished for them*).

Organization (2)

The response exhibits little evidence of organizational structure. The writer attempts to use transitions between ideas to create connectivity (*Also you; You are also*) and provides a brief concluding statement (*In conclusion, personal is a wonderful thing but sometimes gets mistreated*).

Language Use (3)

The response demonstrates some developing ability to convey meaning. The student uses language in an attempt to emphasize certain ideas (*Do what YOU want to do. And say what YOU want to say*). While word choice is occasionally precise (*blame your actions; make mistakes; punished; mistreated*), the writer's language is predominantly general and repetitive. Sentences lack variety.

Sample Essay 3

Score: 3333

The value of personal independence is that you don't have anybody telling you what to do. You get to do what you want, following the rules of course, but still be free. You don't have your parents telling you what to do anymore. You get to make your own choices like on what house you want to buy, and all that stuff. If you're a teen, then you get to make your own choices of like what you eat and what you want to do with your life. You still have to listen to your parents though but you can still get some freedom. When you are a teen you want to make all the right choices, it could end up backfiring on you when you get older. You should want to do all the good stuff in your life. The challenging part of our personal independence is that you have to make some hard decisions in your life, well you're not used to it because you're used to your parents doing it. You will have to know how to do stuff. You have to go to work so you can pay for bills and have food. Then once you have kids you have to take care of them and not make the wrong choices. You will have to try and make all the right choices so when they grow up they will know what's right and what's wrong. So there are many challenging things for being independent. Independence is a good thing so you need to make the right choices and not let that freedom get taken away from you. You should want to make all the right choices so you can keep your freedom and be able to do what you want and live your life the way you want to. So appreciate your freedom and don't mess it up. Keep it so you can have a future and do what you want in your life and not be stuck with no freedom.

Score Explanation

Analysis (3)

The response is somewhat appropriate to the task. The writer addresses several values (*You get to do what you want; You don't have your parents telling you what to do anymore; you get to make your own choices*) and challenges of personal independence. Implications are addressed (*You should want to make all the right choices so you can keep your freedom and be able to do what you want and live your life the way you want to*).

Development (3)

Explanations of ideas are limited (*You should want to do all the good stuff in your life. The challenging part of our personal independence is that you have to make some hard decisions in your life*) but include some relevant examples (*You have to go to work so you can pay for bills and have food. Then once you have kids you have to take care of them*).

Organization (3)

The response exhibits some evidence of organizational structure. Some ideas are logically grouped. The writer attempts to use transitions between ideas to create connectivity (*When you are a teen; So there are many challenging things*).

Language Use (3)

The response demonstrates some developing ability to convey meaning. The writer's language is predominantly general and repetitive (*stuff*). Sentence structures lack variety (*You get; You should; You will*). Errors do not impede understanding.

Sample Essay 4

Score: 4444

The thrill of being on your own without an authority watching your every move can be exciting, but most of the time you aren't quite ready for it. Whether it's being in high school getting your license, buying your first apartment, having your first child, and many other things, there's going to be challenges along the way to gain your own freedom and independence. You have to earn it with maturity and having the idea that life isn't always going to be easy. There's still going to be rules, laws, things you're required to do, and more, but that's part of growing up. Having personal independence means you'll have freedom along with valuable and challenging things to come.

Firstly, independence means you'll have to work to stay dependent in your life. You'll need money to live your life the way you want, because without money, you'll get nowhere. Money is basically the root of everything you do, meaning there's not a whole lot that's free in this world for you to take for granted. You need to earn your way to freedom. Your parents or guardians aren't going to buy you food and clothes for the rest of your life. A car is almost a necessity when it comes to independence because getting to places on your own to have the freedom to do whatever you want to do won't get you that far if you're riding a bike. Travelling the world means you'll need money, too. You'll have to pay your own insurance on everything and you'll have to buy your own food and keep yourself in shelter because being independent means it's you and only you.

Secondly, making your own decisions is a big part of being independent because you don't have your parents to do that for you when you're older. You need to make important, life-changing decisions that will affect everything you do. Sometimes it's hard to make decisions like this, but it's part of growing up. You are allowed to consult other people for advice while making important decisions, but you can't exactly do that all the time because in the end, it's your life, not theirs.

Lastly, the best part of being independent is being able to be anything you want to be. You won't have those terrible things you have to do in order to become independent anymore, like taking those huge tests in high school that will basically determine your future, or getting a good GPA to actually be able to become something in life, and all of that other stuff. You have the freedom to be an artist, musician, teacher, firefighter, and etc. because from that point and forward, it's your own life and you finally have your own complete control over it. It's going to be a bumpy road at first but if you work hard for your goals you can accomplish anything.

Score Explanation

Analysis (4)

The student provides a clear analysis in response to the task. Values and challenges (*Firstly, independence means you'll have to work to stay dependent in your life*) of personal independence are offered. The writer recognizes the complications and implications that come with independence (*The thrill of being on your own without an authority watching your every move can be exciting, but most of the time you aren't quite ready for it*).

Development (4)

Ideas are adequately explained with supporting details and relevant examples (*You'll need money to live your life the way you want, because without money, you'll get nowhere. Money is basically the root of everything you do, meaning there's not a whole lot that's free in this world for you to take for granted*).

Organization (4)

The response exhibits evidence of a simple organizational structure. Ideas are logically grouped and sequenced within paragraphs. The student includes an introduction that presents the ideas that will follow in the essay, as well as a brief concluding statement in the final paragraph. The writer uses formulaic transitions between (*Firstly; Secondly; Lastly*) and topic sentences within the paragraphs to clarify the relationships among ideas.

Language Use (4)

The response demonstrates the ability to clearly convey meaning. The writer's language is generally precise (*maturity; required; root of everything; Travelling the world; shelter; life-changing decisions; consult other people; determine your future*). Sentence structures are varied and mostly clear. Errors are present but do not impede understanding.

Sample Essay 5

Score: 5555

Independence, like most things, has pros and cons. Living here in the USA, independence is greatly emphasized. Independence can hold great power and is needed by all people. Likewise, with great power comes great responsibility. The desire for independence seems to spark strongest when teenhood is entered.

Teenagers naturally feel the need to break away from their parents. This is a natural occurrence, and it happens in multiple species. Teenhood is the stage just before adulthood, therefore it is necessary for teens to want to stop depending on their parents and become their own, independent person. It is important for teens to strive for independence because doing so allows them to learn and live freely as an adult. Otherwise, they will not understand the basic principles of living independently.

Most teens, unfortunately, do not understand the responsibility that comes with their newly acquired independence. This causes a lot of stress between both the teen and the parents/guardians. When given a free rein, a lot of teens will take advantage of it. Others may be afraid of this new freedom, because they have never experienced such a thing before. It depends entirely on the teens themselves and on what kind of upbringing they have had. If a teen has never been given a free rein and their parents have always been a bit too protective and controlling, independence can seem a bit scary and overwhelming. Another way that teens with strict parents could react to having new independence as a coming adult is they may take advantage of it. They may use their independence and freedom in a negative, unproductive way. This is seen all too much in the media and movies, showing teenagers having secret parties, going out to drink, smoking, etc. Perhaps that is why parents sometimes feel the need to be so strict, because they fear that their teen will take advantage of growing up and that they will use their new freedom in a negative, unhealthy way. This causes a lot of trust issues between parent and child, and is

the main reason that responsibility should be reinforced just as much as the right to independence is.

Responsibility seems to have a negative impact when talked about. Many teenagers do not understand responsibility, depending on their upbringing and their parents' role in their life so far. A lot of teens do not know how to take responsibility for their actions, and this may be because they have never had the chance to experience it themselves as a child. This is why it is important for parent and child to have trust in each other, and it is the perfect example as to why having a strict control on the child/ teen can cause problems for the teen down the road to adulthood.

Responsibility should be enforced and talked about just as much as the right to independence is because doing so allows the teen the most benefits of growing up. They will learn not only the importance of independence and freedom, but also the responsibilities that come with it. It is not good to shelter a child up to teenhood and then let them go into adulthood without first teaching them throughout their lives what comes with independence. This can cause stress on both the teen and the parents. Perhaps the most important lesson to teach a child or teen is the importance of responsibility that comes with new independence, because then a teen will be prepared and know what to expect in the real world.

Score Explanation

Analysis (5)

The response engages with the task by going beyond values and challenges to discuss the difficulties of wanting freedom while simultaneously learning the responsibility that goes with it. Implications and complications of this tension (*This can cause stress on both the teen and the parents; they may use their independence and freedom in a negative, unproductive way*) are discussed through the purposeful movement between specific details (*Perhaps that is why parents sometimes feel the need to be so strict, because they fear that their teen will take advantage of growing up*) and general ideas (*This causes a lot of trust issues between parent and child, and is the main reason that responsibility should be reinforced just as much as the right to independence is*).

Development (5)

Ideas in the response are capably explained, as in the first body paragraph that carefully explains the difficult process of moving toward independence as a teenager. The response uses examples that are both purposeful and detailed (*This is seen all too much in the media and movies, showing teenagers having secret parties, going out to drink, smoking, etc.*). Development is purposeful throughout, with some claims and support integrated (*If a teen has never been given a free rein and their parents have always been a bit too protective and controlling, independence can seem a bit scary and overwhelming*).

Organization (5)

A purposeful organizational strategy contributes to the effectiveness of the writer's analysis. This strategy is to start with a simpler view of independence as a normal part of teen life, to complicate it by the drawbacks of gaining independence, and to end by explaining the value of the overall struggle.

Language Use (5)

Word choice in the response is usually precise and demonstrates the ability to convey ideas with clarity (*This is a natural occurrence, and it happens in multiple species*). Likewise, sentence structures are varied and clear (*It is important for teens to strive for independence because doing so allows them to learn and live freely as an adult. Otherwise, they will not understand the basic principles of living independently*).

Sample Essay 6

Score: 6666

At first the concept of independence sounds only positive. It connotes freedom, the ability to make our own choices, and the feeling that what we have and have accomplished was earned entirely by us, without having to share the credit with others. However, what many people don't realize when they declare their desire for independence is that freedom is also synonymous with responsibility. While the benefits of independence are bountiful, they require taking responsibility for the consequences of that freedom. So what is beneficial also comes with challenges. Ultimately, though, people who are willing to accept the responsibility that comes with independence are the people we need to make a positive difference in the world.

The benefits of independence are extremely appealing, both in an immature way and in a meaningful way. To the immature mind, independence means freedom: you make your own choices, and nobody can tell you what to do. You get to live your life in the way you see fit, making choices according to your own judgment and personal desires. Independence as a state is in sharp contrast to the dependent stage of a person's life (childhood), in which, while you receive comfort, shelter, and sustenance from loving parents, it seems that your whole life is decided for you. Your time is spent at school, doing work, doing chores, etc., with intervals of free time that are never enough to satisfy the innate desire for personal independence. Independence is always the dream and goal of childhood, and to a child it appears to be the green pasture of a bright future. Independence to an adult who may already live on her own and make some basic choices for herself may be a bit more abstract. It means that everything in your life is yours. Your accomplishments, property, and achievements are all made by and can be attributed to you. A child gets complimented for his attributes, but credit also goes to the parents, teachers, and other mentors. When the child grows up and becomes independent, he can have a pride in his life and in all that he has that he never could have before. To the mature adult, being

independent might come in the form of running your own company instead of working for a boss, or choosing to live out values that are separate from your parents and extended family. And to someone who is mature and wants to live a life that feels meaningful, that is one of the best things you could possibly ask for.

As good as independence can be, it also can end up as a burden to both children and adults. There is a saying “with great power comes great responsibility” but there should also be a famous saying, “with independence comes great responsibility.” A child always looks at the adults in his life and enviously examines how free they seem: staying up late, making all their own choices. An adult looks to older adults or ones with more freedom and thinks about taking vacations whenever she wants to or making decisions at work without checking with anyone. But once you take on more freedom, you have a sudden chip on your shoulder that you never had before. True, you get all the credit for anything you do, without sharing it with anyone-but that goes for the blame, too. Independence opens up a whole door of things that now rest on your shoulders-your financials, your bills, your food, and most importantly, your actions. As children, we take our lack of responsibility for granted-once we become independent, you alone are defined by what you do-and it becomes crucial that you act responsibly.

But despite the difficulties of independence, the world needs people who are free to make the kind of bold decisions that drive progress and make the world a better place. It also needs these same people to think about the consequences of their choices. When it comes right down to it, as independent as we may feel, our actions will always affect someone else. Even when a teen gains the freedom to drive a car on his own, he has to take responsibility to drive safely so that others on the road stay safe. Hopefully practicing taking responsibility for driving and taking pride in that independence in a mature, responsible way will prepare him for the day he has teens of his own or leads a team of people in a risky adventure. Maybe this adventure will lead to the discovery of a plant that will cure cancer. Who knows? It takes people who understand the relationship between independence and responsibility to keep the world moving in a positive direction.

Score Explanation

Analysis (6)

The response critically engages with the task by not only analyzing the value and challenges of independence but also by fully addressing the historical and cultural implications of independence and the responsibility it requires (*But despite the difficulties of independence, the world needs people who are free to make the kind of bold decisions that drive progress and make the world a better place. It also needs these same people to think about the consequences of their choices*). Specific details about teen and adult life move skillfully to general ideas about the nature of independence.

Development (6)

Ideas in the response are thoroughly explained (*Independence to an adult who may already live on her own and make some basic choices for herself may be a bit more abstract. It means that everything in your life is yours. Your accomplishments, property, and achievements are all made by and can be attributed to you*). Claims and support, including detailed examples, are well integrated (*When it comes right down to it, as independent as we may feel, our actions will always affect someone else. Even when a teen gains the freedom to drive a car on his own, he has to take responsibility to drive safely so that others on the road stay safe*).

Organization (6)

A skillful organization strategy is evident in this response, as the writer is able to weave together the experiences both children and adults have with independence, pointing out their similarities and differences simultaneously while keeping the thread of independence versus responsibility intact. The response logically progresses to the wider world in the last paragraph, which makes the previous analysis more effective.

Language Use (6)

The response demonstrates the ability to effectively communicate ideas with clarity. Word choice is consistently precise (*Independence as a state is in sharp contrast to the dependent stage of a person's life*). A few errors consistent with first-draft writing are present but do not impede understanding. Sentence structures are varied and clear (*Hopefully practicing taking responsibility for driving and taking pride in that independence in a mature, responsible way will prepare him for the day he has teens of his own or leads a team of people in a risky adventure. Maybe this adventure will lead to the discovery of a plant that will cure cancer. Who knows?*).