

Preparing for The Graduation Writing Test

A Guide for Students

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Frequently Asked Questions

Why do I have to take the GWT?

The California State University has a system-wide Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR). This means that every CSU campus has some kind of upper-division writing test or course. The Graduation Writing Test, or GWT, is Cal Poly Pomona's method of satisfying this requirement. The GWT is very similar to the equivalent writing exams at other CSU campuses such as Northridge, Long Beach, and Cal State L.A. You cannot graduate from a CSU campus without meeting this requirement.

Vice Chancellor David Spence says that the GWAR "certifies that students are prepared to address writing demands in the workplace or in graduate school, and ensures that all students in all majors have the opportunity to learn to write well."

You must take the GWAR exam or course (Cal Poly Pomona does not have a course) at the campus where you are enrolled. However, if you pass the requirement at one CSU campus and then transfer to another one, you do not need to pass the requirement again.

What is the GWT?

The GWT is a single essay written in 75 minutes under controlled conditions. The topics are designed for a general student population and do not require any specific knowledge. You will not know what the topic is before you sit down to write the exam. You are required to write a thesis-driven college essay, supported by personal experience and any other knowledge or reasoning you can bring to the topic.

Is the GWT a difficult test?

The majority of students pass the GWT on the first attempt. If English is not your first language, if writing has never been easy for you, or if it has been a long time since you have written an essay, you may find the GWT difficult to pass. Writing practice essays, increasing the amount of reading you do in English, and working with tutors in the Writing Center can help you improve your writing skills and pass the GWT.

How is the GWT scored?

The GWT essays are graded by a group of faculty from across the University. The chief reader starts out the grading session by going over the topic and the six-point scoring guide. Then the graders score and discuss two sets of essays chosen as "rangefinders" or "anchors." These essays represent the six score points on the scoring guide. These are followed by more sample papers. After each paper has been read, the chief reader asks how many people gave the paper a six, a five, a four, etc., and records the show of hands. When almost all the hands in the room go up at the same time, the graders are ready to grade.

Each paper is read by two readers and the scores are totaled. A passing score is "7." If there is more than one number between the scores, for example if one reader gave the paper a "3" and the other a "5," the paper is re-read by a third reader.

Is it possible to waive the GWT requirement?

At Cal Poly Pomona, students who have failed the Graduation Writing Test at least three times are offered the chance to apply for a waiver of the requirement. If the waiver is granted by the waiver committee, you are allowed to graduate, but your transcripts will say **“Writing Competency Not Certified–Special Waiver Granted.”** It is not possible to remove this notation, and you will not be allowed to take the GWT again.

To be eligible to apply for a waiver a student must be able to provide documentation of extra effort completed within the last three quarters, including the quarter in which the petition is submitted. Students can demonstrate this extra effort through the completion of at least 6 handwritten essays, each of which has been revised at least once, at the University Writing Center (Building 1, Room 220). Students who are no longer on campus should call the Writing Center (909-869-5343).

The Writing Center strongly emphasizes, however, that in most cases the waiver is not the best choice for the student. When a potential employer sees the notice **“Writing Competency Not Certified–Special Waiver Granted”** on your transcripts, you may not get the job. It is much better if you actually pass the exam. We have worked with many students who have failed the GWT four, five, six or more times. Many of them are very close to passing. What we try to do is help you improve your writing skills so that you can pass the exam, but do it in such a way that you qualify for the waiver if you need it as a last resort.

If you are interested in beginning the process to qualify for a GWT waiver, please see the section on page 25, “GWT Waivers and the Writing Center.”

Quick Tips for Timed Writing Exams

In the Weeks before the Test

- 1) Write practice essays on practice topics available in the Writing Center. Give yourself 75 minutes, and write on the topic just like you were taking the exam. Make an appointment with a tutor to go over your practice essay.
- 2) Read the editorial pages of the newspaper at least once a week. As you read each editorial, look for the thesis, and look at how that thesis is developed and supported.

On the Day of the Test

(Adapted from Learning Resource Center materials prepared by Laura Topalian)

- 3) To help prevent anxiety, try to arrive a little early for our test.. Try staying alone--in your car or in a private space on campus--if this will help you to remain calm. Do keep in mind that if you are late, you will not be admitted to the test.
- 4) Bring your student ID and at least two pencils and two pens with you. The pencils are for bubbling in an information questionnaire before the test. Ink is officially required for the test. Do not bring white-out for the test. (Just cross out neatly with a single line.)
- 5) Keep track of time while you take the test: 10-15 minutes to brainstorm and cluster ideas; 45 to 50 minutes to write; and 5-10 minutes to proofread.
- 6) Pay attention to the **controlling verbs** in your assignment. These verbs are the commands that give you directions and help you organize your essay. Some controlling verbs are: ANALYZE, COMPARE, CONTRAST, DEFINE, DESCRIBE, DISCUSS, EVALUATE, EXPLAIN, ILLUSTRATE, PROVE, and STATE.
- 7) State your thesis and summarize your supporting points in your introduction. Make sure your thesis is something that someone could agree or disagree with.
- 8) State the topic of each supporting paragraph early in the paragraph.
- 9) Do not introduce new supporting points in your conclusion.
- 10) Avoid using sarcasm. Attacking the topic or making fun of it is a risky strategy. In general, try to sound sincere and convincing.
- 11) In your supporting paragraphs, use details to make the discussion of your points convincing and interesting. For example, you could include **a person's name, the time** (which month, which season, which year, which quarter) when an incident occurred, **a place name**, and other kinds of specific details. Here are a couple of shorthand devices for helping you generate ideas and supporting details quickly.

FRIED: the acronym FRIED was coined by Dr. Karen Russikoff, a Cal Poly Pomona English professor. If you keep the word FRIED in your mind, it can give you cues that are easy to remember on ways in which to develop your supporting points with specific detail. FRIED stands for:

FACTS REASONS INCIDENTS EXAMPLES DETAILS

The Five W's: Newspaper reporters have to remember the five W's: *Who, What, When, Where* and *Why*. If you are telling a story to support one of your points, the five W's will help you remember to include all of the details.

12) Use transition words to connect your ideas together. However, do not force yourself to use a transition if it detracts from the logic of your sentences. Transitions include words or phrases such as *also, in addition, on the other hand, besides, and furthermore*.

13) The GWT essay is a personal essay. Most GWT topics expect you to write about your opinions in the first person (my opinion, I believe, when I was about eight years old, etc.).

14) If you tend to make grammatical errors, be especially careful to proofread for the following kinds of errors: incorrect **verb tense or verb forms**, lack of **agreement** (singular/plural) between a subject and verb, omission of **articles** (the, a, an) or using unnecessary articles, omitting **plural** endings (-s) or adding a plural ending to a singular or uncountable noun, omitting **periods** (run-on or fused sentence), or using a comma where a period is needed (comma splice). Try to avoid making spelling errors.

15) Ink is preferred even if you need to cross out words, sentences or paragraphs. The graders would rather read an essay written in ink even if there are cross outs. They are not expecting perfection because they know that the GWT is a rough draft. Just cross out with a neat line, because white-out wastes time and interrupts your writing process. Under no circumstances copy a draft over. Write only *one* version of your essay and make your revisions on it.

16) Leave margins on both sides and write on every line. Most GWT essays are about two pages long.

17) If you don't have time to write a concluding paragraph, make sure that there is at least some sense of ending. Don't just stop in mid-sentence. Even writing "Sorry, ran out of time," is better than no conclusion at all.

Analyzing a Writing Topic

Most essay exam topics have two or three different parts. Usually the topic will start out with a section that provides some context for the question. This section might contain some historical facts, some opinions from different types of people, or some ideas about why the issue is important. This is usually followed by the actual question or some instructions that tell you exactly what you are supposed to do. It is important to pay close attention to the description of the writing task. The question or task instructions might be followed by some examples of different ways of responding to the topic.

Here is a typical topic:

At another CSU campus last year, American scholar Joseph Epstein lectured on the question, “What is the point of a college education?” Many contemporary educators talk about the need to prepare students for the economic realities and career possibilities of the twenty-first century. However, Epstein argued that students should go to college to achieve intellectual growth, and to discover universal values through a study of the past.

What do **you** think the purpose of college should be? **Write an essay in which you explain your views, and discuss whether you think Cal Poly Pomona (or another institution you are familiar with) fulfills that ideal.** Support your views with specific illustrations from your knowledge or experience.

This topic starts out with some ideas from a scholar named Joseph Epstein. It doesn't matter if you know who this person is or not. This part is setting up the issue of the purpose of college and giving you some different opinions. The part about “economic realities and career possibilities of the twenty-first century” simply means that some people think that the purpose of college is to prepare you for a career. Other people, like Joseph Epstein, think college should lead to “intellectual growth” and a knowledge of “universal values.” This means that some people think you should study literature and history to develop your mind and become more knowledgeable about culture and values.

If you find the setup part of the topic confusing, just go on to the main question, and the writing instructions. When you plan your essay, make sure that you answer the question and follow the instructions. In this case it asks you do three things: 1) Tell what you think the purpose of college is, 2) Explain why you think this is the right answer, or, in other words, give your reasons for believing this to be true, and 3) Discuss whether or not a particular college or university you are familiar with fulfills this purpose. Finally, the topic suggests that you should support your ideas with specific examples from your own experiences.

You will often find the following words in writing topics:

Common Topic Words

Analyze	Break the issue or problem into separate parts and discuss, examine or interpret each part and the relationships between them. Sometimes this involves looking carefully at causes and effects.
Causes and Effects	These terms ask you to think about why things happen and how one event is linked to another. If you are asked to solve a problem, the first step is to think about the cause of the problem.
Compare and Contrast	Describe the similarities and differences between two objects, situations, or ideas. Sometimes this involves a before and after comparison.
Define	Tell what a particular word or term means in your essay. Usually, this is not a dictionary definition, but rather clarifies how you are using the term.
Describe	Give a detailed account, naming characteristics, parts or qualities.
Discuss	This is a general term that covers explanations, reasoning, pro and con arguments, examples, analysis, etc.
Evaluate	This term literally means to determine the “value” of something, to discover how good or bad something is. It usually means that you should argue that something is good or bad, and then discuss your reasoning.
Explain	Help your reader understand the reasoning behind your position by showing the logical development in step by step fashion. You might also be asked to show how something works, or how to do something.
Illustrate	In a writing prompt, this usually does not mean to draw pictures. Instead, it means to give examples.
Prove	This usually means that you should support your opinion with facts and arguments.
State	Tell the reader your opinion strongly and concisely.

Generating Ideas

Do you have “Writer’s Block”? Does a blank page scare you? Do you hate writing so much that you always put it off to the last minute? Do you spend hours trying to think of something to say? Some writers *always* have trouble getting started, and some are blocked only on certain tasks or in certain situations. It helps to explore some of the reasons you might be blocked from writing, and to try out some strategies for dealing with writer’s block.

Writing Anxiety—If writing makes you very nervous or anxious, or if you have a lifelong dislike for writing, it may be helpful to explore the reasons for this attitude. Many individuals have had an experience in the past that has convinced them that they are incapable of writing. Often this involves a very strict, grammar-oriented teacher who covered your papers with red marks and said “You can’t write.” Usually, such teachers don’t offer any good strategies for improvement. Don’t let a few bad experiences ruin your writing ability. A new attitude and some new strategies can make a big difference. Think about bad experiences you have had with writing and discuss them with a teacher, a tutor, or another student.

Getting it Right—Do you worry about correct grammar and spelling as you write each sentence? Writers are often blocked by focusing on form and correctness too early. A writer who writes and rewrites the first sentence numerous times attempting to get the *grammar* right before going on to the second sentence is probably overly concerned about correctness in a first draft. It is usually best to get the ideas down on paper, then go back and proofread for correctness. This is especially true when you are working under time pressure.

Fear of the New—A good writer may be blocked on a particular assignment because he or she has never written anything in that format or for that audience before. In this case looking at samples or models of successful efforts might be helpful. We have some successful GWT essays at the end of this booklet.

Some students report that even though they write fairly well when they have time to think and plan, when they sit down to write a timed essay exam, their minds go blank and they can’t think of anything to say. The solution to this problem is to write practice essays under timed conditions using quick strategies to develop content.

Brainstorming—This technique is actually a temporary suspension of your power of judgement. Many writers reject their best ideas before they even write them down. Write down everything you can think of that relates to the topic, without rejecting any idea. Open your mind and let the ideas and associations flow. Then go back over the list and select the ideas that have a potential for development. You may want to discuss the list of ideas with a tutor, or with another student. Sometimes we need feedback from others to know whether our ideas are interesting or not.

Here’s an example:

- Purpose of college.
- I went to school because I didn't know what else to do.
- I didn't like loading trucks, and I didn't like being an insurance clerk.
- Make money? But English majors don't make money.
- Are people impressed if you can read Shakespeare?
- It's nice to meet all these different people.
- Some professors know a lot and can give you a different perspective.
- I like to read books, but I don't know what to read.
- Maybe I'll be an English teacher.

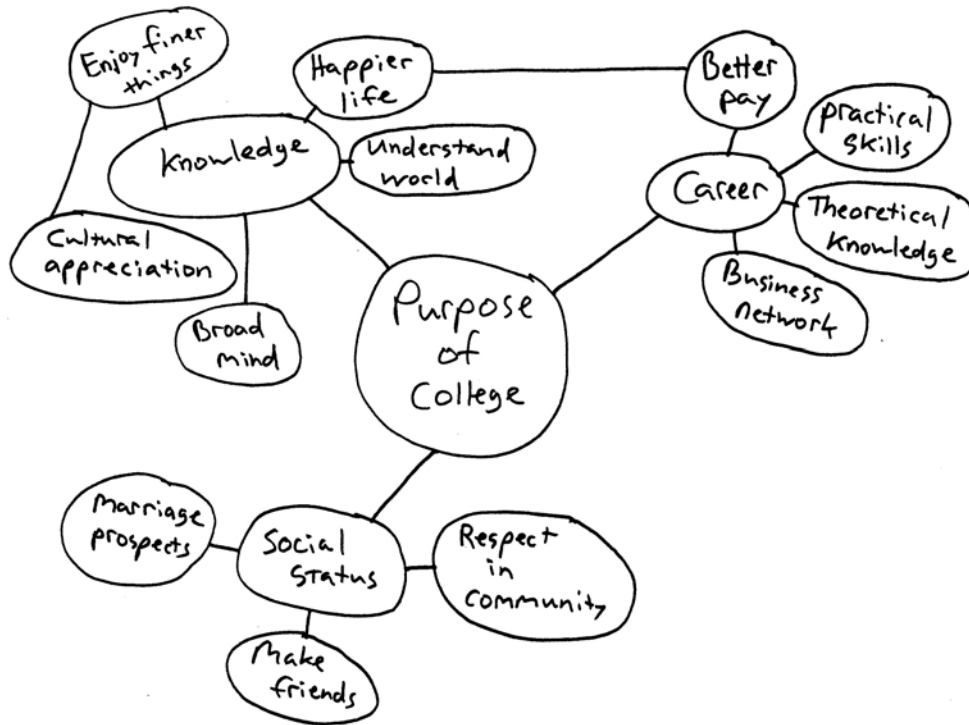
Out of this brainstorming the writer might decide that the purpose of college for him is to prepare for a teaching career by gaining knowledge from professors, learning which books are important to read, and interacting with fellow students. The writer might also write a paragraph or two about what it is like to work as a truck loader or an insurance clerk, and how these experiences might inspire one to go to college.

Listmaking —Some writers use formal outlines with Roman numerals and capital letters to generate and organize ideas, but there is usually no reason to be so rigorous, and informal lists and scratch outlines can be very useful. For issues with two sides, you may want to create a “pro” and “con” list, or a “before” and “after” list, with a line down the center. Sometimes it is useful with a research project to make a list of everything you know about a topic, and then a list of everything you need to find out. Lists are not fancy, but some of the best writing starts out looking like a laundry list. For timed writing like on the GWT, lists have the advantage of being quick to create.

Clustering —This technique has the advantage of organizing the material as it is generated, and it is very good for visually-oriented thinkers. Take a blank sheet of paper and put a term that represents the main topic in the center, with a circle around it. Then think of a subtopic or a related term and put that on the page near the main topic, circle it, and draw a line to connect the two items. At this point you can work on further division of this subtopic, or on generating new terms to connect to the main topic. Continue this process until you have covered the page with a web of terms and lines showing relationships and inter-relationships. You may want to share your cluster with a tutor or another student, who may have some other ideas for terms and connections. When you start writing, you will probably end up using each branch of the cluster as a paragraph division.

Here's a sample cluster:

A Sample Pre-writing Cluster



Whatever you have to write, don't waste time sitting and staring at a blank page. Try different strategies until you find one that works for you. Brainstorming, clustering, outlining— even just making a list—none of these strategies work for everyone, but everyone can find a strategy that works.

Writing a Strong Thesis

What is a thesis?

The term thesis comes from the Greek word for putting or position. A thesis simply gives your position on whatever issue you're discussing.

What does a thesis do?

In the pre-writing stage, a strong thesis can help you focus and develop your own perspective on the issue. As you write, the thesis can serve to keep you "on topic." When you've finished an essay, the thesis acts as a "cue" to guide your reader's interpretation of the paper.

Does all writing require a thesis?

No. You need to have a purpose in any piece of writing, but sometimes this purpose will not require you to take a strong position on your topic. A simple description, for example, might not require that you take a position regarding whatever you're describing.

But most of the writing you will do in college – everything from argumentative papers to research projects – requires that you take a definite position on an issue. You will therefore want to be able to express your position in a clear thesis sentence. Certainly the GWT requires a thesis.

The Sheridan Baker Thesis Machine *

Step 1: TOPIC

State the topic under consideration.

- a. cats
- b. freshman composition
- c. grades

Step 2: ISSUE

State the specific issue in the form of a debating proposition.

- a. Resolved: Cats should be subject to leash laws.
- b. Resolved: Freshman composition should be abolished.
- c. Resolved: Grades are unnecessary in college.

Step 3: POSITION + RATIONALE

(because-clause)

[=ROUGH THESIS]

Using a because-clause, convert the resolution into a sentence that states your position on the issue and provides a main rationale for that position.

- a. Cats should be subject to leash laws because they are inveterate wanderers.
- b. Freshman composition should *not* be abolished because many freshmen are unpracticed writers.
- c. Grades are unnecessary in college because students learn more rapidly without them.

Step 4: POLISH & QUALIFY (although-clause)
[=THESIS]

Refine the rough thesis: add any qualifications (although-clauses are good for this) and consider dropping overt use of because.

- a. The crowded nature of city life demands that the cat's instinctive wanderlust be restrained.
- b. Although gifted high school graduates should be exempt from freshman composition, most entering students need help in attaining college writing skills.
- c. Although there may be a legitimate need to evaluate the work of college students, the traditional grading system hinders learning and stifles creativity.

Step 5: REVERSE AND TEST

Test your faith in the thesis and expose potential counter-arguments by reversing your position.

- a. The cat's independent and adaptable nature makes it the only pet capable of living an unrestricted existence within the city.
- b. Although introductory composition may have remedial value for some students, most high school graduates possess writing skills sufficient for success in college courses.
- c. Traditional grading procedures may offend educational purists, but public school systems require pragmatic approaches to evaluation.

* This procedure is based on that originally presented in Sheridan Baker's *Practical Stylist*. This handout came from: *Writing Process Resources*. The Writing Program, Univ. of Southern California. 28 Sept. 2000
<http://www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/writing/instr_homepage/writing_resources.html#FOCUS>.

Organizing Your Essay

Going Beyond the Five-Paragraph Essay

Many high school students have learned a type of organization called the “five-paragraph essay.” The pattern works like this:

Introduction: Thesis and three reasons.
Body Paragraph One: Discuss reason number one.
Body Paragraph Two: Discuss reason number two.
Body Paragraph Three: Discuss reason number three.
Conclusion: Summarize.

Although the five-paragraph essay format does provide a basic organizational structure, there are many potential problems. To list a few:

Most newspaper editorials, magazine essays, scholarly articles, and other examples of writing of this general type don’t have five paragraphs. (The closest thing to a five-paragraph essay in the real world is probably the unsigned editorials in the opinion section of the local newspaper, but even these do not always have five paragraphs.) The reader usually needs some sort of context for the thesis, some idea of why he or she should be interested in reading about this now. In general this format doesn’t do much to engage the reader. Such essays are usually too short to require a summary at the end. The summary repeats ideas that the reader has just read about and hasn’t had time to forget. The format encourages too much repetition—often the same three phrases are repeated in the introduction, the body paragraphs, and the conclusion. The reader gets bored. If you follow this format too strictly, you are letting the form generate the content. In other words, you are putting far more emphasis on how you organize the content than on what you want to say, the purpose you have in mind, and what your readers need.

Contrary to what many students believe, there is no rule that says that a college essay, or any other kind of essay, must have five paragraphs and five paragraphs only. Paragraph divisions perform two functions: 1) they help the reader *understand* the text by organizing it into groups of ideas that work together, and 2) they help the eye return to the proper place in the text after looking away for a brief moment. A text without enough breaks is difficult to read because you keep losing your place.

Thus, paragraph divisions should simply help the reader read and understand the text. How many paragraphs you have depends on the nature of your ideas and how much you have to say. What follows is a different way of thinking about the college essay.

An Essay is like a Journey

Introduction: Your introduction is like a signpost or a map at the beginning of a trail. It tells readers where you are going to take them, what ideas you will explore, and what they will see

along the way. It should create a feeling of anticipation and interest. It should provide a broad context for your ideas, a strong thesis or focusing idea, and a brief summary of the points the essay will develop. Ask yourself:

What is my main idea or thesis?
Who are my readers? What do they know and believe?
Why is my idea important here and now?
How do I want my readers to respond?

Body: The body of the essay moves the reader along toward the destination or goal. It might have one paragraph, but usually it has several. Each paragraph is related to one of the points you want to show the readers along the way. Some points may take more than one paragraph to develop completely. There should be connections and transitions between the points you show the reader. Ask yourself:

What points do I want to make to help my readers understand my idea?
What examples can I use to help the reader understand each point?
What evidence do I have that each point is true?
How can I keep the reader interested in following my ideas?
What is this paragraph about?
What does this paragraph do for the reader?

Conclusion: The conclusion is the end of the journey. It looks back on the points you have shown the reader, and reinforces, but does not necessarily repeat, the main idea. It also should create a feeling of ending, a farewell to the reader. Ask yourself:

How has the reader's mind been changed by following my points and examples?
If we continued this journey, where would we go next?
If the reader ignores the points you have made, what might happen?

Becoming More Familiar with the Essay Form

Reading the opinion section of the local newspaper is a good way to become familiar with the essay format used in the GWT. The unsigned editorials represent the opinion of the newspaper's editorial board. The signed (with a byline) editorials are written by guest columnists, usually professional writers and influential people. The letters to the editor are written by ordinary citizens who have a strong opinion about an issue, or an article in a previous edition of the newspaper.

For many GWT topics, you could not go far wrong imagining yourself writing a letter to the editor of the newspaper.

Revision and Proofreading

Composition researchers often divide the writing process into four stages:

- Pre-writing or Planning
- Composing
- Revising
- Proofreading.

In practice, the writing process is more complicated than this four-stage model would indicate. Real writers tend to move back and forth between different stages. For example, a writer might plan a little, start composing, run out of things to say, and go back to the planning stage. The most important lesson to be learned from this model, however, is that you can't plan, compose, revise, and proofread at the same time. These are different parts of the writing process, and if you try to do them all at once, you won't do any of them very well.

In a timed writing situation such as the GWT, you have to manage your time carefully. Your pre-writing time should be spent analyzing the topic, doing some quick brainstorming or making a scratch outline, and coming up with a strong thesis. In this situation you only have time for one draft, so planning and composing are very important parts of the process. However, you can still do revising and proofreading, if you manage your time carefully.

Some writing teachers call the first draft a "writer-based" draft. This is the draft you use to get your ideas down on paper. If you do enough planning beforehand, you can write this draft quickly. Then the second draft is the "reader-based" draft. In this stage you read your work with your reader in mind and you revise to help the reader understand your ideas better. Even in a timed situation where you are not going to write a second draft, you can still go back and add details, clarify phrases, and explain more.

Proofreading is the final stage, and it is very important in timed writing. When you focus on your ideas and write very quickly, you will make mistakes and omit words and grammatical forms. When you are focused on ideas, you are not focused on form, and you will make more of the mistakes that you tend to make anyway. Once your ideas are on the paper, it is time to go back and find the missing words, the missing verb endings, and make sure that words are spelled correctly and that punctuation is in the proper places.

The revision and proofreading checklists that follow are not something that you can use while you are taking the GWT, but if you apply them to your practice essays they will help you improve your ability to revise and proofread quickly.

Essay Revision Checklist

Problem or Concern	Revision Questions	Comments or Suggestions
Focus	Is there a strong thesis or main idea? Does the writer consistently address the question or topic with a clear sense of audience and purpose? Are there any parts of the paper that seem to be irrelevant or unconnected to the topic? If so, what should the writer do?	
Organization	Does the opening paragraph engage the reader and clearly indicate what the paper is about? Are there effective paragraph divisions and a good conclusion?	
Development	Are all points supported with examples, facts, or logical arguments? Is anything mentioned that causes a reader to ask questions that the text doesn't answer? Are there contradictory arguments or points?	
Citation	Does the writer effectively and purposefully quote and paraphrase materials from other texts without extensive and unnecessary summarizing? Are sources accurately documented when necessary? Does the documentation conform to the appropriate system, i.e. MLA or APA or some other?	
Sentence Structure	Are sentences fluent, varied and effective? Are there run-on sentences or ineffective fragments? Are sentences constructed so that it is easy for a reader to tell who is doing what to whom?	
Word Choice	Are word choices correct and appropriate for academic writing? Is there any informal or oral language? Do any words have inappropriate connotations? Is there ineffective repetition of the same words?	
Grammar/ Mechanics	Do errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage distract from the meaning or cause confusion? What are the major problems? (See "Proofreading Checklist.")	

Proofreading Checklist

Problem	Questions	Comments or Suggestions
Verb/Subject Agreement	Do all main verbs agree with the subject in person and number?	
Verb Forms	Are any parts of verb phrases missing or incorrect? Are verb endings correct?	
Verb Tense	Is the tense appropriate to the topic and style? Does the writing shift back and forth from present to past inappropriately? (Watch out for phrases like “I remember.”)	
Noun Plurals	Do regular plurals end in “s”? Are irregular plurals correct? Are there problems with count and non-count nouns?	
Articles	Are articles (“a,” “an,” and “the”) used correctly? (Note: Articles are optional with plural nouns, but all singular common nouns require an article. Proper nouns generally don’t have an article, with exceptions like “the United States” and “the Soviet Union,” which are more like descriptions than names.)	
Prepositions	Are prepositions used the way a native-speaker would naturally use them? (Note: It is difficult to learn prepositions through definitions or rules. They have to be acquired through seeing or hearing them in use.)	
Spelling	Are all words spelled correctly? (Use spellcheck if you are writing with a computer, but be careful of words that sound the same but have different meanings.)	
Punctuation	Are periods and commas used correctly? Are quotations punctuated correctly? (Consult a handbook if you have questions.)	
Pronoun Reference	Does every pronoun have a clear referent? (Note: Pronouns without referents, or with multiple possible referents, create a vague, confusing style.)	
Other Problems	Are there other important problems not on the list?	

Reading to Improve Your Grammar

There is some debate about whether or not teaching grammar improves writing skill. It is true that many of the students who struggle to pass the GWT make too many grammatical errors. It is also true, however, that many of the students who make these errors have already had a lot of grammar instruction. Grammatical terms are useful for talking about sentence problems and style, but language acquisition theory makes it clear that to become more fluent in a new language, you need to have lots of input in that language. In other words, if you want to improve your English, you need to hear and read a lot of English.

Linguist Stephen Krashen makes a strong distinction between language *acquisition* and language *learning*. Language *acquisition* is a natural *unconscious* process, and second language acquisition is very similar to first language acquisition. After all, babies acquiring their first language don't study grammar books or dictionaries. Their language ability is acquired naturally from the home environment. Language *learning*, on the other hand, is the development of *conscious* knowledge about a language—rules, forms, etc. Acquisition is a very powerful process, both in children and adults. On the other hand, according to Krashen's research, conscious learning has a very weak influence on language use.

The most important part of the Krashen's theory is called the "Input Hypothesis." It states that language acquisition takes place when comprehensible input is available. We acquire by understanding language that contains structure a bit beyond our current level of competence. Known grammatical structures and vocabulary help us acquire unknown structures and words. We acquire by "going for meaning" first, and as a result, we acquire structure.

The process of language acquisition begins when we are born (or perhaps even before) and continues throughout our lives. We acquire words, grammatical forms, and syntactic structures from our social environment and later, from reading. Research has shown that writing skills, and the acquisition of written language, depend to a large extent on the amount and type of reading that an individual does. Sometimes when an individual becomes so involved with work and family that there is no time left for reading, language development, especially vocabulary acquisition, stops. If an individual in this situation finds it necessary to improve language skills, some sort of reading program is essential.

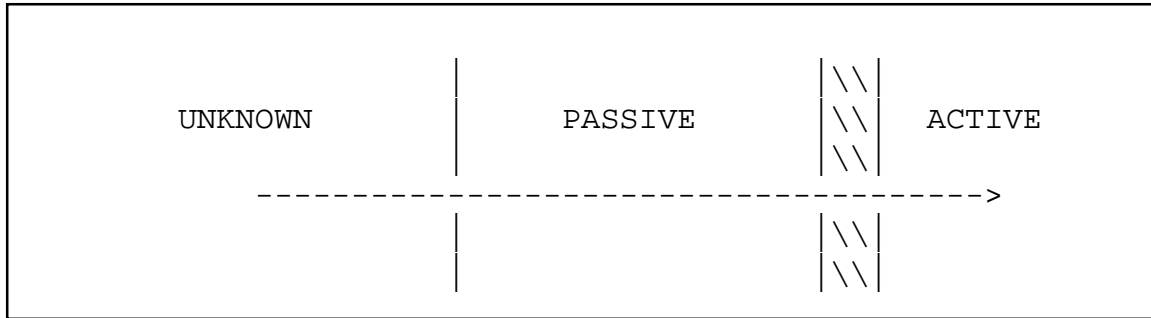
Even if you are a native speaker or a bilingual speaker fluent in both English and another language, increasing the amount of reading you do in English can help you increase your vocabulary and the complexity of your sentences.

Types of Reading

There are a number of types of reading and reading strategies. Reading for *total comprehension* is usually appropriate only for classroom study or in crucial business and technical situations. *Scanning* for specific information, and *skimming* for general ideas are important skills that also contribute to language development.

Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary development is probably the most obvious benefit of reading. Every individual has both a passive and an active vocabulary:



Your active vocabulary consists of words you know and use. Your passive vocabulary includes those words you understand in context but do not use.

Every word starts out as unknown. Through numerous encounters, a word enters the passive vocabulary. Through further encounters, some words enter the active vocabulary. The borderline area indicated by slashes above represents words that are in transition. These are words that may come to mind when you are writing or speaking, but about which you are unsure. In such cases you may want to consult a dictionary.

Dictionary Use

Dictionaries are an important resource, but many people overuse them. In general, looking up words in a dictionary disrupts your natural reading process. When reading, you should look up a word only when you can't make sense of the article without it.

Getting Results

There is no instant method for language acquisition. However, if you follow the self-selected reading program described below consistently over a period of time, your English vocabulary *will* increase, and your grammatical ability *will* improve.

The Reading Program:

Normally students who participate in this program read three articles per week and write three short summaries and one personal response. You can read anything that interests you in newspapers, or popular magazines. *The Los Angeles Times*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *U.S. News and World Report* are good choices, but you can also read computer magazines, fashion magazines, or other types. It is good to vary the types of articles you read. The summaries should have the following format:

1. Author: Who wrote the article?
2. Title: What is the title or headline?
3. Source: What book, magazine or newspaper did it come from?
4. Date: What is the date of the book, magazine or newspaper?
5. Page: What page numbers does the article start and end on?
5. Topic: What is this article about? (This can be one sentence.)

The summaries do not have to be long. The above information usually fills about half a page. The bibliographic information (author, title, source, date and page) is useful if you want to refer to the article in an essay, or if someone else wants to read it.

The personal response:

In addition to the three summaries, you write *one* personal response per week. In the summaries, you record only what the author of the article says, not your own opinion. The personal response is your opportunity to express what *you* think about one of the articles. You can disagree with the author, offer an opinion on policies or events, or speculate about future developments. If you have sufficient interest, this response may later be expanded into an essay.

Specialized error tracking:

At times, you may be asked to photocopy one of the articles and underline or circle specific grammatical or structural forms that have been problems in your own writing. This sort of activity, which focuses on language code rather than content, should be done *after* reading, summarizing and responding to the article.

Language Acquisition Takes Time

The above activities need to be continued for a period of time to establish a pattern of reading and language acquisition. After a few months, the summaries and other activities can be dispensed with, but the reading should continue. Remember, without input, language ability does not grow.

The GWT Scoring Guide

Note: 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.

Score	Explanation
6	A superior response will address itself to all aspects of the question. Though it may have occasional faults, it will be well organized, detailed, and generally well written.
4-5	These scores will be useful for a well-handled paper that is weak in some aspects of the superior response; e.g. it may slight one of the parts of the question; it may not be as clearly organized as the superior response; it may have some minor grammatical inconsistencies. Otherwise, the paper should be competently written.
3	This score will be useful for the following kinds of papers: — those that are only descriptive or narrative — those in which the language is overly clichéd — those that are overly repetitious — those that are general and superficial This score will also be useful for papers that are developed with some specificity and detail but are marred by more than a few grammatical inconsistencies.
2	This score is to be used for papers that exhibit serious weaknesses in structure, syntax, diction and/or development.
1	This score is to be used for papers that show very little understanding of the question or suggest incompetence in structure, syntax, and diction.

Note: Because the goal of many readers of this booklet is to move from the “3” score to the “4,” we are also providing a more specific definition of a “4.” This is not part of the official scoring guide, but it is typical of similar scoring guides.

The “4” essay demonstrates **adequate** college-level writing ability. It may be undistinguished in content, development, or style, but language weaknesses do not significantly limit the writer’s ability to develop and communicate ideas. An essay in this category

- may respond somewhat routinely or simplistically to the topic, but it satisfies all the terms of the assignment at least minimally or implicitly.
- has a recognizable main idea and an apparent organization.
- uses some specific details or examples to develop and clarify ideas.
- demonstrates basic competence in diction, phrasing, and sentence structure, although there may be some imprecision, clumsiness, and/or repetitiveness.
- may have some errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage, but these will not be frequent or serious enough to confuse or significantly distract the reader.

GWT Waivers and the Writing Center

At Cal Poly Pomona, students who have failed the Graduation Writing Test at least three times are offered the chance to apply for a waiver of the requirement. If the waiver is granted by the waiver committee, the student is allowed to graduate without meeting the requirement, but the transcripts will say **“Writing Competency Not Certified–Special Waiver Granted.”** (This notation may have a negative effect on career opportunities.) It is not possible to remove this notation, and the student will not be allowed to take the GWT again. The petition to apply for the waiver is available from the Test Center (Bldg. 98P 2-004).

Although you can apply for the waiver after three attempts of the exam, you need to begin preparing to qualify for the waiver several weeks before your last attempt. To be eligible to apply for a waiver a student must be able to provide documentation of extra effort completed within the last three quarters, including the quarter in which the petition is submitted. Students can demonstrate this extra effort through the completion of at least 6 handwritten essays, each of which has been revised at least once, at the University Writing Center (Building 1, Room 220). Students who are no longer on campus should call the Writing Center (909-869-5343).

The Writing Center will provide practice GWT topics and written feedback from tutors. We will also provide a list of the dates and times of the tutoring appointments you have completed, and a letter signed by the Director verifying that the work has been done. We recommend that you begin writing practice essays and going over them with tutors in the quarter before you plan to take the exam for the third time.

The University Writing Center will help students qualify for the GWT waiver, but our emphasis is on helping students pass the exam. The waiver process doesn't ask students to revise their essays, but we have found that the best way to improve writing skills is for the student to write a second draft with the suggestions and corrections of the tutor in mind. The first draft must be handwritten, but the second, revised draft can be typed on a computer. Keep all of the essays, drafts, handouts and topics in a folder, and bring all of it to each GWT-related Writing Center appointment.

The GWT-CPR Program

The UWC has designed an on-line GWT preparation program using a combination of Blackboard and “Calibrated Peer Review” (CPR) a program developed at UCLA. Using CPR, a student is able to

1. Submit an essay on a practice GWT topic,
2. Score sample essays on the same topic until the scoring is satisfactory,
3. Score and respond to essays submitted by other students,
4. Honestly score his or her own essay, taking into account all of the samples and other essays,
5. Receive scores and responses on this essay from other students,
6. Revise the essay to reflect all of the experience gained through the calibration, scoring and responses.

In this program the student will go through the process above two times and then take the regularly scheduled GWT. If the student does not pass the GWT at this point, he or she will go

through this process three more times, producing three more practice essays. By completing this work the student will earn the right to a special administration of the GWT with extra time (120 minutes instead of 75). If the student does not pass on this special administration, he or she is eligible to apply for a GWT waiver.

Submitting the Petition for the Waiver

1. Write the six practice essays, go over them with a Writing Center tutor, and revise them. It is best to do one or two essays a week. Don't wait until the last week before the exam!
2. Take the GWT. Do the best you can, and then wait for the results.
3. If you don't pass, go to the Testing Office and pick up a GWT appeal form. Fill out the form.
4. In addition to the form, you must write a cover letter explaining why the committee should grant you the waiver. Write this statement in standard business letter format. In the letter you should:

Explain who you are, including your background, your major, and your career goals.
Describe all the steps you have taken to improve your English and your writing skills.
Describe your GWT experiences and explain why you think the test has been so difficult for you. Try to convince the committee that you have made a serious effort to improve.
Explain why you have decided to apply for a waiver at this time, and politely ask the committee to grant you the waiver.

This letter should be typed and proofread carefully. You may want to meet with a tutor to proofread the letter.

5. Call the Writing Center to make an appointment to see the Writing Center Director. Bring your cover letter and all of your essays to this meeting. The Director will run a report of your Writing Center visits and write a letter to the committee verifying the work you have done.
6. Take the completed packet to the Testing Office before the submission deadline for that particular quarter. The GWT appeals committee meets once a quarter. You will receive a letter from the Office of Academic Programs informing you of the committee's decision in your case. If the waiver is not granted, you can do some more practice essays, rewrite your cover letter, retake the test, and, if you don't pass, resubmit the packet.

Sample Essays

Practice Essay - “Recycling Our Resources” SCORE 7

Topic: Write on something in which you believe. Present and discuss your reasons for your belief. (Note: The italicized words inside brackets are suggested revisions or corrections. The thesis statement is in bold.)

Today in our advanced, developed society, everything goes [*at a*] faster path [*pace*]. Not only do we do things faster but we also waste our natural resources faster. Natural resources are the basic elements that hold the *earth* together. **I believe that preserving natural resources is the most important thing that can save our planet, and recycling is the only way to prevent us [from] overus[ing] the natural resources because everyone can do it.**

Recycl[ing] is easy. We just collect all [*the*] things which are recyclable for the waste pickup company. Even a child can do it. When paper is recycled, a little leaf on a branch of a tree can be sav[ed] from the paper making company. Trees are the most important things that we have to [*should*] preserve because they convert oxygen from carbon dioxide, which is produce[d] by human[s], cars, and factories. Without oxygen in the air, we will not survive because we need it to replace carbon dioxide in our body. Oxygen is also one of the most important component[s] for some factories to generate high-heat to produce the products for us to use. If we did not preserve our trees in the forests, we would destroy our earth.

Secondly, plastics can also be recycled. It is also important because they are persistent. If we do not recycle them, they will stay where we leave them forever. Plastics produce toxic and malicious air if we inhale it. We should recycle the plastic material such as shopping bags, broken children’s toys, and other things we use everyday. If we recycle plastic material, we can use it over and over and [*will*] not [*need to*] produce it from oil resource[s].

As a result, recycling is the only way to prevent us [*from*] overus[ing] natural resource[s]. Paper and plastic material[s] are only two examples. There are a lot of things that we can consider recycling since our technology is well developed. In addition, recycling is easy as a child can do it. Therefore, it is important to educate people to do recycling. Recycling is everyone’s responsibility and obligation to save the earth.

GWT Essay - “Genetically Modified Foods” SCORE 7

Topic: Has the rate of recent technological and scientific progress been too fast? (Note: The italicized words inside brackets are suggested revisions or corrections. The thesis statement is in bold.)

New science and technology may provide a lot of benefits, but they also may [*may also*] cause some problems. Genetically modified organisms (GMO) has [*have*] some advantages, like reduce [*reducing*] the production costs and lower [*lowering*] the pesticide usages [*usage*]. However the scientists do not know all the side effects and the consumers may eat GMO food without knowing. **I think this new technology has gone too far and needs to slow down.**

The most threatening thing of [*about*] genetically modified technology is that the scientists do not know all the side effects. For example, will the technology create some

superweeds? Will the gene of a fast-grown corn strain transfer [to] the weeds around it? Will scientists be able to control these superweeds? In addition, can scientists prevent the superbugs which have pesticide tolerance due to overusage or overexplore [overexploring] the soybeans which carry a pesticide gene? If no scientists can guarantee that there will be no side effects of GMO, shouldn't we wait a bit longer until they find out?

Another terrible thing [about this fast scientific development] is that consumers may purchase and consume the genetically modified products without knowing [it]. For instance, the cereals which many consumers enjoy daily may have [a] certain amount of genetically modified cornstarch. Another example is that restaurants do not show whether the ingredients they use are from GMO food. I, as a consumer, may digest genetically modified tomato when I enjoy my tomato soup without knowing [it].

Although many scientists believe there are lots of [many] advantages of [to] genetically modified organisms, I think this new technology has gone too far and should be slow [slowed] down. Unless enough research can show all the potential side effects and find the ways to control them.

GWT Essay - "Surfing the Net" SCORE 8

Topic: Discuss an activity which you enjoy and which you believe is worthwhile. (The italicized words inside brackets are our suggested revisions or corrections. The thesis statement is in bold.)

In the third year of my college [my third year of college], I took a computer multimedia class. In the [this] class, the instructor, Dr. Soe, set up a Web page design session. She encouraged everyone to explore the Web, and I did. After the class, I became a regular Web surfer. While surfing the Net, I discovered that there are [is] a lot of information on the Web. It provides the surfers with great first-hand knowledge of the current Web technology. It quickly reflects the current news and events that are going on worldwide. It also provides the users with great entertainments [entertainment] in the Cyberspace. **Therefore it [surfing the Net] becomes [has become] a great source of entertainment in my life.**

The Web provides the latest information about the technology used on [in] Web design. By using the searching engines such as Yahoo and Alta Vista, I can easily find tons of sites related to any key words of Web technology such as Java and CGI. I can also discover the latest computer products that the manufacturers are [will be] pushing out in the future such as Microsoft Windows 97 which will be available to common users in July. Besides, I can leisurely surf through thousands of pages by following the links on the sites. By doing so I can see all kinds of pages with different designs which help me in designing my own page. Therefore, surfing the Web is not only entertaining but also connects me with the current computer technology which I highly valued [value].

Secondly, I can find all the news posted on the Web. The last COMDEX in Las Vegas, the weather of every city nationwide, and the new Lakers player--Robert Horey--are all on the great Cyberspace. Web becomes a great news source when I do not have the time to spend in front of the TV after school. I can quickly scan through those [items] that do not look too appealing to me and focus on those great events that [about which] I am most concern [concerned]. This is the advantage of receiving news from the Web that Connie Chang can never do. The Internet is certainly a great source of news for people who are addicted to computers and I happened [happen] to be one of them.

The Net also provides me [*with*] lots of entertaining moments. I can go on the Web and find all kinds of jokes related to certain topics and laugh all night long. I can play interactive games such as pinballs thanks to the technology developed by Macromedia's Shockwave. I can connect myself with my next door neighbor and play the most popular war strategic game Red Alert. I can chat with anyone about Michael Chang's game lost to Moya in the Australia Open. If I am really bored which seldom happen [*happens*], I can even make friends with someone in Japan or the United kingdom. The sources of entertainment never run out on me while surfing.

Surfing the Net has become an everyday thing I do after school. I certainly spent some money in upgrading my system, but the reward is an endless cyberspace of knowledge, news and entertainment. I learned lots of knowledge as [*such as*] Webpage design which will eventually help me with looking for a related job. I understand what is happening in every corner of the world. I certainly entertained [*entertain*] myself with the latest multimedia technology. Therefore, I really think the Net is something worthwhile to explore.

GWT Essay - "Racism on the Police Force" SCORE 8

Topic: Describe our multicultural society in the local area. In your discussion, present your opinion of our diverse society. Also explain how this ethnic diversity has affected you. (Note: The italicized words inside brackets are suggested revisions or corrections. The thesis statement is in bold.)

Being Californian[s], we are constantly hav[ing] to deal with various ethnic group[s] of people. Whether we [are] socializing or working, we tend to be intolerant to [of] people that [are] different than [from] us. However, racism always manage[s] to work itself to [into] the mainstream of our lives. I wonder if all of the cultural diversity exposure and education we have will ever erase most of it [the racism]. Nevertheless, I think we should all work harder to stop this ugly cycle and build a better future.

Despite strong and rigorous education, racism in California [is] still rampant. In the work place, in the shopping mall, amusement park or many other public places the hate never stopped. However, since there were many compan[ies] sued by their victims, today it [racism] tends to be more subtle. Prior to attending Cal Poly, I worked as an officer at [the] Police Department. (*Note: Even though the Learning Resource Center is not publishing the name of the city, Rahmat did mention the actual city in his GWT essay.*) As a seven-year veteran, I was in charge of training the new officers in the field. Our section at that time consisted of forty white officer[s], four African American[s], three Hispanics, one Asian and three Jewish. There were many derogatory remarks made by some of the white officers. One day my trainee who happened to be Jewish, confront[ed] one of the officer[s] regarding his remarks against Vietnamese people. He apologized and told him that it would never happen again. The month after the incident, I was called by the Internal Affair[sl] Department to discuss [the] bad conduct that this Jewish officer supposed[ly] made.

Apparently, when my trainee confronted the officer who [was] resentful against Vietnamese people, the department decided to build the case against him and determined to fire him. I [could] see that the department [would] go to any length to see that my trainee [would] never work for the city again. For example, when I refused to collaborate with their scheme, I was to have to face a monumental problem, and now I had to defend myself.

Having some experience, I went to the Equal Opportunity officer with my

problem. Now the problem became more apparent. A big investigation was launched and all the card[s] [were] forced to be put on the table. For the next six month[s], everyone of us were [was] asked by the E.E.O.C. to come in and give a sworn testimony. Interestingly enough, upon the completion of the investigation, many of us were transferred to different section[s]. Myself, I was suffering from depression as a result. However, the most shocking development was when the result[s] of the investigation were given. The E.E.O.C. determined about the allegation regarding racist remarks that there was no proof of discrimination.

I never return[ed] .to the department after the incident. The city since provided diversity classes throughout all city departments. Nevertheless nothing ever change[ed] since the incident. Currently, the City of [is] being sued by its police employee for discrimination, and somehow the lawsuit never made it to the media.

This example is just one of the many unpleasant experience[s] I [have] encountered. Yet that experience was by far the most destructive one. I lost one year salary, my marriage fell apart and most of all gave me a bitter taste of reality. The only good thing that came out of that experience is that now I have the courage to go back to school and finish my engineering degree.

GWT Essay - “Visual Marketing” SCORE 8

*Topic: Discuss a talent or special skill that you have. Explain how you acquired this skill and the kinds of knowledge required to acquire the skill. (Note: The italicized words inside brackets are suggested revisions or corrections. The thesis statement is in **bold**.)*

As I was growing up, my sister and I used to go to Rodeo Drive window shopping. Admiring the work of a visual merchandiser made us want to own everything displayed. **There is an art involved in visual merchandising that must be learned and everyone should know [it] because we are always trying to sell something, and this involves enhancing an object, you could say the art of selling something.**

First of all one must identify what you’re [he or she is] trying to sell. After doing this type of work for eighteen years, I can honestly say that anyone can learn this skill and [which] can be a valuable asset since we are always selling something, even ourselves, in an interview for a job.

Secondly, we must enhance the object by the use of color. The most important thing to remember is the contrasting of colors. The color wheel can help [with] understanding the usage of color combinations. For example, if an item is dark, use white background to make it stand out. Lighting is very important. Poor lighting can make what you’re trying to sell disappear. The amount of space you have available and the introduction of props create a theme without taking away from the item you’re trying to sell by not overpowering the space and creating interest.

Finally, acknowledge[ment] of psychology comes to [into] play. We must know if the viewer or potential buyer is perceiving what you’re [we’re] trying to sell. It could be a product, even an idea or the institution. Visual merchandising is often described as the silent persuader, as [like] a silent salesperson that brings the buyer to come in and eventually make a purchase or buy. Going to Rodeo Drive with my sister Haydee twenty years ago, admiring the work of visual merchandisers made me interested in developing this skill. I went to school to

learn the use of color, using the color wheel, advertising, marketing, and [the] psychology of selling.

Everyone should learn visual merchandising. We are surrounded by companies selling products or advertising institutions or ourselves on campaigns, job interviews, even to our friends. Therefore, we learn about color to enhance us, and we also try to sell ourselves by our actions and what we say to others for acceptance.

If you are interested in how the visual merchandising skill works, you are half way there. Your interest will make you learn to understand. A little research can take you a long way. You must know marketing, psychology, advertising, selling and art . You can develop this skill if you follow [these] instructions since we live in a society surrounded by visual merchandising.

Practice Essay - “Baby Needs Surgery” SCORE 8

Topic: Describe an extremely difficult situation which you experienced at some time during your life. Explain in what ways the experience was extremely difficult to endure.

I have experienced extremely difficult situations in school and in my career. **But the most extreme situation my wife and I ever experienced was with our daughter’s illness when she was a baby.**

Our baby daughter Nancy was always smiling and cooperating with our wishes even when she was only a one-year old baby. But one thing which bother[ed] us was that her leg didn’t seem to work right. It seem[ed] that her leg muscles were not strong enough to support her body when she tried to walk. Not only my wife felt that but also our babysitter had the same feeling. When we took Baby Nancy to see a doctor, he told us her leg seemed normal and suggested that we give her more vitamins. We follow[ed] his orders and thought Nancy would be walking normally soon. However, our baby’s leg problem was becoming extremely serious. When she was a year and [a] half, she still could not walk. Sometimes she tried and she easily fell down after several steps. My wife and I started to think serious[ly] about this and took her to see a specialist. His diagnosis was that she needed surgery because her leg bones were not connected to her hip bone, which meant when she tried to walk, her body was not supported by an integrated bone system and that made her fall down all the time.

You can imagine my wife’s and my extreme worry about [our] baby having to have major leg surgery. For about six months she had to wear a cast on her little body. She had to have not one but two major surgeries. The situation became more extreme because during this time, my wife became pregnant and we got our second baby. Thus, my wife had to take care of a newborn baby and a baby wearing a cast on her leg. It was really an extreme situation for both us and little Nancy. Thank God, Nancy’s leg is normal now. My wife and I thank God for helping us survive in this extreme situation. Nancy is nine years old and is in competition swimming. Last month, she attended a swim tournament and won six ribbons in the swim meet. After [having gone through] the extreme situation with Nancy’s surgeries, we believe there is always a way to go through hard situations no matter how extreme they are.

Practice Essay - “The Problem of the Internet” SCORE: 10

*Topic: Discuss a problem in our society. In your explanation of why the situation is a problem, provide one or more suggestions to help solve the problem. (Note: The italicized words inside brackets are suggested revisions or corrections. The thesis statement is in **bold**.)*

About fifteen years ago, the first personal computer from IBM hit the market. Although the original computer was quite expensive (about \$5,000), many people felt attracted to this new invention. In fact, there was enough market for the manufacturers to quickly improve the technology and reduce costs. Eventually, many people around the world acquired PCs for home-office and study purposes. In addition, a new development came out less than ten years ago. The now famous Internet was initially very limited, but it took very few years for the communication means to grow geometrically, becoming the most accessible and fastest source of information on *earth*. **In my opinion, dissemination of information through the Internet may have gone too far because children are freely exposed to outrageous web sites. In addition, information that risks the safety of the world, such as instructions for constructing nuclear weapons, is being published on the web. These are troubling situations caused by the role of the Internet.**

One of the most problematic publications in the Internet is related to pornography. Whoever knows how to search for information has the ability to log on any of the adult web sites. Searcher programs, which most of the Internet companies offer, have the ability to find sites using keywords that allow people to access wherever passwords are not required. Consequently, finding pornography in the Internet can be a two-minute procedure that even an eight-year-old child can do. There are some limitations, however, such as parental protection procedures, which companies offer to their users such as age verification screens and payable sites, but these limitations are really ineffective. For example, the parental protection offers can be cancelled by any child within two minutes. In addition, free access sites, which are pretty common, often require very silly access procedures. That is, one needs to say he/she is eighteen years old or older, and the free access is warranted. Children can lie about their age, so there is no reason to think this procedure is foolproof. Parents may resort to stopping their use of the Internet as their only recourse if they are going to protect their minors from accessing this destructive information. At the present time, it seems that unless stricter regulations are set up, the Internet will continue to cause families who have no other defense for protecting their children from obscenity to suffer.

An additional problem created by the Internet involves national and international security. That is, since it is possible to find information about nuclear weapons construction on the net, any Mafia group can access that and engage in problematic negotiations. I believe one result might be that some people might construct atomic bombs just for profit reasons. Others might be willing to buy those bombs for various other reasons. Consequently, the weapons market might be quickly increased, making nuclear weapons cheaper in the future.

I believe that in the end, international organizations will be necessary to control weapons proliferation. Therefore, as in the case of children’s easy access to pornography on the Internet, the weapons problem can be diminished now by regulating the Internet. If not dealt with soon, lives could be endangered because of the loyalty Americans have to the freedom of speech rights. This is not to say that information about nuclear weapons cannot be found elsewhere. However, the Internet makes the search easier for those willing to manufacture bombs. Therefore, to try to prevent the danger of future nuclear bomb threats, regulation procedures might be one solution.

Practice Essay - “Pets Should Be Spayed or Neutered” Score 11

Topic: Discuss something in which you believe. Then provide reasons for your belief.

Each year, tens of thousands of unwanted pets are euthanized in animal shelters and humane societies in the Los Angeles area alone. Statistics show that just one unsprayed female dog and her female offspring can be responsible for over four thousand puppies over a seven-year period. **I believe all pet owners should have their pets spayed or neutered.** Reducing the pet population is not the only reason to alter our pets. There are many benefits to spaying or neutering, such as health, behavioral, and financial benefits.

There are many health benefits to altering our pets. Neutered male dogs have some reduction in the incidence of prostate cancer. Male cats that are altered experience fewer urinary problems. Female dogs that have been spayed not only experience fewer false pregnancies, but the incidence of cancer in the mammary tissues is greatly reduced. In fact, it is virtually eliminated in those females spayed before six months of age. Female cats also benefit from being spayed. If not mated, a female cat can stay in heat indefinitely. This can lead to problems with the ovaries over time.

In my opinion, there are also many behavioral benefits in spaying and neutering our pets. Spraying, the male cat’s way of marking territory, can be reduced or eliminated by neutering. Pets that are hyperactive or aggressive can be helped by being spayed or neutered. A major benefit, especially in male dogs, is the reduction of vandalism. This desire to roam is usually in search of a female in heat, which the male can detect up to a mile away. This wanderlust can lead not only to unwanted pregnancy but also to injuries from fights and run-ins with cars.

The cost of spaying and neutering our pets can seem high to some pet owners. However, just one trip to the veterinarian for an infected fight wound or a broken leg can be far higher. Even the minor costs of cleaning or replacing carpeting, draperies or furniture “marked” by an unaltered male cat can add up.

Having our pets spayed or neutered has many benefits for both pets and their owners. Certainly, taking these precautions is an important part of responsible pet ownership.