

# GRE-GMAT Analytical Writing Samples

Zangeneh Training Center

www.ztc.ir

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or stored in any form without the prior written consent of the publisher.

The Analytical Writing Assessment requires candidates to respond to two essay questions within 60 minutes:

- 1) Analysis of an Issue, which asks candidates to discuss the complexities of an issue and take a position on the subject (30 minutes)
  
- 2) Analysis of an Argument, which asks candidates to evaluate an argument or critique a line of reasoning (30 minutes)

The AWA is completed first on the testing day, before the Verbal or Quantitative sections of the exam. Candidates have the benefit of writing while they still feel fresh and energetic.

MBA programs increasingly value applicants who have excellent communication skills. In a typical managerial career, leaders are frequently required to quickly summarize their thoughts in writing. The AWA is designed to evaluate the ability to reason quickly and to respond coherently. Because of the unique pressures on testing day, most admissions officers understand that the AWA is a first draft written under stressful conditions. Yet top level schools DO evaluate the writing samples during the admissions process, comparing a candidate's writing skills to others with similar credentials.

Do your best to show that you have:

- a) excellent reasoning skills
- b) good writing skills
- c) the ability to quickly organize your thoughts
- d) the ability to produce a coherent essay in the required timeframe

## Grading Scale

Each of your essays will be graded by a reader and assigned a score between 0 and 6. The score is assigned based on the general impact of the writing on the reader. The following criteria define each score:

*Outstanding* (6): a cohesive, well-articulated discussion of the issue/argument with demonstrated mastery of the elements of effective writing. Contains insightful reasoning and/or persuasive examples. Varies sentence structure and vocabulary appropriate to the subject. Superior use of grammar and mechanics.

*Adequate* (4): presents a competent discussion of the issue/argument. Expresses ideas clearly with adequate organization. May lack sentence variety and show some flaws in grammar and/or mechanics.

*Poor (1 -2):* Weak or deficient in basic writing skills. Provides little evidence of the ability to understand or analyze the argument/issue. Unfocused and disorganized. Severe and persistent errors in language and sentence structure.

### The Directions:

Here are the directions for the Analysis of an Issue topic:

Directions: Analyze and present your point of view on the issue described below. There is no "right" point of view. In developing your point of view, you should consider the issue from a number of different viewpoints. Read the statement below and the directions that follow it.

The Analysis of an Argument topic gives these directions:

Directions: Provide a critique of the argument below. Focus on one or all of the following, depending upon your considered opinion of the argument: questionable assumptions underlying the reasoning, alternative explanations or evidence that would weaken the reasoning, additional information that would support or weaken the argument. Read the statement below and the directions that follow it.

For each essay, candidates have 30 minutes to make a written case. Regardless of the topic chosen, no specific knowledge of any academic area is required. Your proctor will provide a pen and a piece of scrap paper to plan or outline your response before you actually write it. Your essay must be confined to the space provided, which is one sheet of standard lined paper. We recommend that you limit your response to two or three concise paragraphs. Because you only have a short time and a limited space to write, plan your argument carefully before beginning to write. Be legible and neat.

## **Analysis of an Issue**

The Analysis of an Issue requires candidates to analyze a subject, take an informed position and explain that position in writing. The topic will include two basic parts: the stimulus and the question stem. The stimulus is the first paragraph, which contains the information for you to analyze. The question stem tells what tasks to perform. Here's an actual example:

Many assert that children home schooled by their parents will be both more productive and happier than peers who attend school in traditional classrooms. But others assert that the close supervision and social dynamics of a classroom are necessary to ensure productivity and to develop superior interpersonal skills.

Which argument do you find more compelling, the case for home schooling or the opposing viewpoint? Explain your viewpoint using relevant examples drawn from your own experience, observations or reading.

In this case, the stimulus includes two sentences that discuss two points of view on home schooling. The question stem asks which viewpoint you find more compelling. Your task is to explain your position using reasons or examples.

## **Writing Tips for Issues**

1) Quickly interpret the issue. Weigh the pros and cons and make a decision.

2) Use scrap paper to outline your essay. While there isn't time to write a formal first draft, make a rudimentary outline, listing the points you want to make in each paragraph. Ideally, you should know what you want to say and how you want to say it before you start writing the actual essay.

3) Don't waste valuable time trying to decide which side to take. In every case, the alternatives will be evenly matched, with no "right" or "wrong" choice. You will be evaluated strictly by how well you support your choice with reasoning and evidence.

4) Get to the point immediately. Your first sentence should offer a solid endorsement of one choice over the other. Don't waste any time or space rehashing the scenario and the alternatives (assume your audience already knows this).

5) Use a simple format. We recommend a two-paragraph approach:

- a) the first paragraph begins by stating your choice and then discusses why that option is the superior.
- b) the second paragraph explains why the alternative is not as good, and ends with a concluding sentence reaffirming your decision.

Make sure that each paragraph sticks to one main theme. The more organized your essay, the more persuasive it will be.

6) Acknowledge the weakness of the side you chose, along with the strengths of the un-chosen option. Discussing both sides of the issue shows that you see the full picture. Recognizing and dealing with possible objections makes your argument stronger. Always provide evidence for your claims, and avoid making unsupported assertions.

7) Don't restate the situation, alternatives, and criteria in your introduction. State your choice and the reasons behind it. Offer an interpretation in light of the stated criteria. It's up to you to indicate why certain facts are positive or negative factors.

8) Write in a calm, rational, objective tone. Don't take an extreme position.

9) Make your writing flawless, with correct spelling, grammar and writing mechanics. Write legibly. Choose simple, everyday vocabulary and syntax with which you're comfortable.

10) Budget your time wisely. We recommend spending five minutes reading the issue, making a decision and planning the essay. Use scrap paper to jot down a quick outline of the points you intend to make. Then spend about 20 minutes writing the essay. This leaves about five minutes at the end to proofread for spelling and grammar.

11) Make sure you finish your essay, as it demonstrates your organization and time-management skills.

*Sample Essay: Analysis of an Issue*

The President has advocated the threat of death sentences to induce confessions from suspects with associations to known terrorist groups. But congressional opponents assert that this policy will only frighten these accomplices, thus making their terrorist leaders even more aggressive.

Which argument do you find more compelling, the case for the imposition of death sentences or the opposing viewpoint? Explain your position using relevant reasons or examples taken from your own experience, observations, or reading.

**I support the President's imposition of death sentences against suspects with known associations to terrorist groups. Violent hate groups seldom reform without a powerful incentive. Despite their hideous crimes, the Taliban members who bombed the World Trade Center in 1993 have not been executed. They are serving life sentences in US prisons and continue to spew anti-American rhetoric at our government's expense. Many suspect that the devastating attacks of September 11, 2001 were conceived and organized by these convicted prisoners. Likewise, Iranian terrorists serving life sentences continue to stimulate anti-American hatred throughout the Middle East.**

**Opponents of the President's policy claim that convicted terrorists are sources of valuable information that they can share only if they remain alive. Yet history suggests that these terrorists would rather die than turn against their leaders. The Malaysian terrorists who bombed the American Embassy in Kabul in 1996 swallowed poison rather than negotiate with FBI investigators. Since their 1989 capture, thirty imprisoned Iranian terrorists have refused to exchange information in return for a reduced sentence. Clearly, terrorists are prepared to die for their political causes and their survival offers no clear advantage to the US. Keeping terrorists alive simply gives them additional chances to hurt us.**

This essay is short, cohesive and masterfully written. The author uses compelling examples to support her case, minimizing her own opinion. The organization, sentence structure and grammar are excellent. (Score = 6)

## **Analysis of an Argument**

The stimulus and question stem of an Analysis of an Argument topic will resemble this:

The problem of poorly trained, overworked nurses that has plagued our state hospitals should become less serious in the near future. The state has initiated comprehensive guidelines that oblige nurses to complete a number of required credits at the graduate level before being licensed.

Explain how logically persuasive you find this argument. In discussing your viewpoint, analyze the argument's line of reasoning and its use of evidence. Also explain what, if anything, would make the argument more valid and convincing to help you to better evaluate its conclusion.

The stimulus in an Arguments topic is similar to arguments in the critical reasoning questions. The writer

tries to convince you of something (his conclusion) by citing evidence. Look for assumptions, or specific ways the writer leaps from evidence to conclusion. The question stem will usually ask how compelling the argument is, along with your thoughts on how to improve it. Sometimes, the question takes the opposite approach, asking why the argument is NOT persuasive and what additional information would further weaken it. Either way, your task is to:

- a) analyze the argument
- b) evaluate its use of evidence
- c) explain how a different approach or more information would make the argument better (or worse)

## Writing Tips for Arguments

- 1) Take the argument apart, identifying the conclusion and evidence. Restate it in your own words.
- 2) Evaluate the argument's persuasiveness. Does it use evidence effectively to reach a conclusion? Are there gaps or flaws in the logic? Unwarranted assumptions?
- 3) Determine what additional evidence or information would increase the validity of the argument.
- 4) Use scrap paper to outline your essay. While there isn't time to write a formal first draft, make a rudimentary outline, listing the points you want to make in each paragraph. Ideally, you should know what you want to say and how you want to say it before you start writing the actual essay.
- 5) Get to the point immediately. Your first sentence should offer your assessment of the argument and its reasoning.
- 6) Thoroughly discuss the additional evidence required for the argument to be more persuasive. Show that you see the full picture. Always provide evidence for your claims, and avoid making unsupported assertions.
- 7) Write in a calm, rational, objective tone.
- 8) Make your writing flawless, with correct spelling, grammar and writing mechanics. Write legibly. Choose simple, everyday vocabulary and syntax with which you're comfortable.
- 9) Budget your time wisely. We recommend spending five minutes reading the argument, developing your strategy and planning the essay. Use scrap paper to jot down a quick outline of the points you intend to make. Then spend about 20 minutes writing the essay. This leaves about five minutes at the end to proofread for spelling and grammar.

10) Make sure you finish your essay, as it demonstrates your organization and time-management skills.

*Sample Essay: Analysis of an Argument*

Conjugal visits should not be discontinued in prisons housing dangerous felons, including death row inmates. Those convicted of serious crimes should serve their prison sentences, but should not be denied their right to basic human contact. Most violent criminals are comforted by touch and need to reinforce their positive bonds with their spouses and families. To deny them this basic human right is to deprive prisoners of a harmless outlet for releasing aggression and thus make them more dangerous.

Explain how logically persuasive you find this argument. In discussing your viewpoint, analyze the argument's line of reasoning and its use of evidence. Also explain what, if anything, would make the argument more valid and convincing or help you to better evaluate its conclusion.

**The author concludes that imprisoned violent felons should be allowed conjugal visits with their spouses to satisfy their needs for basic human contact. His argument is that most violent criminals are comforted by touch and will be less aggressive if their sexual needs are satisfied. The author further suggests that these benefits should extend to death row inmates, who have no hope of eventual release or rehabilitation.**

**I detect two unwarranted assumptions in the author's reasoning. First, he assumes that convicted criminals retain their rights to intimate contact with their spouses while incarcerated. Clearly, this civil liberty is forfeited upon conviction and is an inherent part of an inmate's punishment. The author also assumes that providing an inmate with a harmless outlet for the release of aggression will make him less violent. Sadly, many felons who enjoy conjugal visits in prison commit violent crimes after their release. With a recidivism rate of almost 60%, our prisons are filled with repeat offenders.**

**The author could strengthen his argument by providing evidence that citizens who enjoy satisfactory intimate relationships are less likely to commit violent crimes. Alternatively, he could provide statistical evidence that inmates who enjoy conjugal visits in prison are more successfully rehabilitated than those who do not.**

This essay is well-written and thought-out. The first paragraphs outline the argument effectively, noting the inconsistency between the conclusion and the evidence. The third paragraph offers compelling suggestions for improving the argument. The organization, sentence structure and grammar are excellent. (Score = 6)

### **General Writing Guidelines for Both Essays**

- 1) Be succinct. Eliminate excess phrases and sentences that don't serve a purpose or add new information.
- 2) Watch your sentence flow. Vary your sentence structure, but avoid long, meandering sentences.
- 3) Avoid jargon and pompous language.
- 4) Use clear, specific language, rather than vague generalizations and abstractions.
- 5) Use strong sentence openings and effective transitions between paragraphs. Make your essay coherent and easy to follow.

