

The SAT Essay

The last part of test day

The Prompt

As you read the passage below, consider how [the author] uses...

- Evidence, such as facts or examples, to support claims
- Reasoning to develop ideas and to connect claims and evidence
- Stylistic or persuasive elements (rhetorical strategies), such as word choice or appeals to emotion, to add power to the ideas expressed

Write an essay in which you explain how [the author] builds an argument to persuade [his/her] audience that [author's claim]. In your essay, analyze how [the author] uses one or more of the features listed above (or features of your own choice) to strengthen the logic and persuasiveness of [his/her] argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant features of the passage. Your essay should not explain whether you agree with [the author's] claims, but rather explain how the author builds an argument to persuade [his/her] audience.

What You'll Do

In 50 minutes...

- Read a passage
- Explain how the author builds an argument to persuade an audience
 - DO NOT just summarize the passage and/or state whether you agree or disagree with the author
- Support your explanation with evidence (i.e. quotes & examples) from the passage

What the Essay Assesses

- Reading:
 - Your understanding of passage
 - Your use of textual evidence (quotes & examples)
- Analysis:
 - Your examination of the author's use of evidence, reasoning, and persuasive techniques (rhetorical strategies)
 - Your ability to support and develop claims with evidence
- Writing:
 - Your organization, style, and tone
 - How focused your essay is overall
 - Your sentence structure and command of conventions
- Which college writing classes are appropriate for you

How the Essay Is Scored

- Two scorers
- Each category (reading, analysis, and writing) receives a score
 - Highest score per category = 4
 - Lowest score per category = 1
- Scores from both scorers are added together
 - Highest score per category = 8
 - Lowest score per category = 2

What Matters Overall

- Development
- Organization
- Strong word choice
- Sentence variety
- Responds to the prompt
 - Explains the “how”

Intro - Basic Setup

- Do the following:
 - State the author's first and last name
 - Include the title of the passage
 - State the author's claim
 - Given in the prompt
 - State your thesis
 - Answer the prompt
 - Explain the "how"
 - [The author] builds his/her argument using...
 - Three methods

Student Intro Examples

As technological advancements occur, more and more schools are working on incorporating technology into the classroom. Eliana Dockterman, the author of “The Digital Parent Trap,” creates an argument in order to present her point on the benefits of technology in early age. Dockterman builds her argument using counterarguments, convincing points, and strong data and facts.

Eliana Dockterman’s persuasive essay, “The digital parent trap,” discusses both the negative and positives to educational technology. Dockterman believed technology will be a huge innovation to education. She is able to influence and persuade her audience by describing how technology can set new limits, increase engagement, and empower students to learn. She does this by providing credible information such as quotes, statistics and real life situations

Body Paragraphs - Basic Setup

- Do the following:
 - Focus on one idea/method from your thesis
 - Include a topic sentence to introduce what the paragraph will discuss
 - Refer to the author by his/her last name
 - Include quotes/paraphrasing to prove your points
 - Answer these two questions:
 - Why did the author include this particular quote/word/anecdote?
 - How does it help convince the audience & make the article more persuasive?
 - Include a concluding statement to wrap up your paragraph
 - Tie back to the author's claim

Body Paragraphs - Topic Sentences

What they should do:

- Identify the section of the text you are discussing
 - Beginning? Middle? End? Intro? Conclusion?
- Identify the technique being examined
 - Ex. Personal anecdote (story)
- Identify why the technique was used
 - How does the technique help convince readers? Does it make them feel something? Picture something? Remember something?

Student Topic Sentence Examples

Throughout the article, Dockterman incorporates numbers and stats to help strengthen her position on the argument.

Before introducing the conclusion of her passage, Dockterman targets her audiences' personal values by quoting Shawn Jackson: she does this in order to prevoke emotion from parents in order to persuade them in her argument.

Body Paragraphs - Integrating Quotes/Evidence

- Use both quotes & paraphrasing
 - Don't just rely on the author's wording
- Quotes should be short
 - Three lines of text max
- Properly introduce quotes
 - No floating quotes!
 - See Introducing Quotes worksheet
- *Always* tie back to thesis statement
 - How the author is using something to convince readers of something

Student Body Paragraph Example

Dockterman incorporates the audience's values to demonstrate the importance early exposure to technology can have. She exclaims to the audience in the eleventh paragraph that parents who do not give their children access to educational games put their children at risk of falling behind. She choose this because it appeals to audience's parental instinct to have their child be successful. This instinct drives them to give their child access to this technology, specifically for education. By appealing to the audience's parental instinct, Dockterman attempts to convince her audience the importance of early exposure to technology.

Student Body Paragraph Example

Throughout the article, Dockterman incorporates numbers and stats to help strengthen her position on the argument. In paragraph 8, Dockterman integrates a finding made by SRI which states, “Kids who played games like Samarost (solving puzzles) did 12% better on logic tests than those who did not.” Dockterman included this to illustrate how much early exposure to technology can increase students knowledge. This method impacts the audience because it helps them understand the specific ways technology can affect students. It also impacts the article because it makes her look like she knows what she is talking about and makes the article more convincing.

Conclusion - Basic Setup

- Do the following:
 - Include the author's first and last name
 - State the author's claim in a new way
 - State your thesis in a new way
 - Answer the prompt
 - Explain the "how"
 - [The author] builds his/her argument using...
 - Three methods