ACCUPLACER® CollegeBoard

WritePlacer®

Guide with Sample Essays

2018

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Introduction to WritePlacer

WritePlacer® assesses the writing skills of new college students. Test scores help colleges determine whether a student is ready for college-level coursework or would benefit from developmental instruction before taking credit-bearing courses.

Students taking WritePlacer are presented with a prompt and asked to write an essay of 300 to 600 words. A prompt consists of a short passage. Following the passage is an assignment that requires the student to focus on the issue addressed in the passage.

WritePlacer prompts are carefully designed to allow the student to respond quickly and in a variety of ways. They are free of technical or specific literary references and don't require specialized knowledge. The prompts are designed to stimulate critical thinking and are relevant to any number of fields and interests. Students will be asked to draw on a broad range of experiences, learning, and ideas to support their point of view on the issue in question. Scores on WritePlacer range from 1 to 8. An essay that is too short to be evaluated, written on a topic other than the one presented, or written in a language other than English will be given a score of zero.

Information for Students

WritePlacer gives you an opportunity to show how effectively you can develop and express your ideas in writing. You will first read a short passage and an assignment question that are focused on an important issue. You will then write an essay in which you develop your point of view on the issue. You should support your position with appropriate reasoning and examples. The position you take will not influence your score.

Your essay will be given a holistic score that represents how clearly and effectively you expressed your position. The following six characteristics of writing will be considered:

- **Purpose and Focus**—The extent to which you present information in a unified and coherent manner, clearly addressing the issue.
- **Organization and Structure**—The extent to which you order and connect ideas.
- **Development and Support**—The extent to which you develop and support ideas.
- **Sentence Variety and Style**—The extent to which you craft sentences and paragraphs demonstrating control of vocabulary, voice, and structure.
- **Mechanical Conventions**—The extent to which you express ideas using Standard Written English.
- **Critical Thinking**—The extent to which you communicate a point of view and demonstrate reasoned relationships among ideas.

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00919-092

Sample Prompt

Passage

Some people claim that each individual is solely responsible for what happens to him or her. But the claim that we ought to take absolute responsibility for the kinds of people we are and the kinds of lives we lead suggests that we have complete control over our lives. We do not. The circumstances of our lives can make it more or less impossible to make certain kinds of choices.

Adapted from Gordon D. Marino, "I Think You Should Be Responsible; I'm Not So Sure."

Assignment

Are we free to make our own decisions or are we limited in the choices we can make?

Plan and write a multiparagraph essay (300–600 words) in which you develop your point of view on the above question. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Sample Essays

There are descriptions on the following pages of each of the eight WritePlacer score points followed by two sample essays that were assigned the indicated score. Annotations are provided for each essay explaining why the essay was given the score it received. Studying these sample essays and the accompanying annotations will point out the elements considered during the scoring process.

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Score of 1

Description of Score of 1

An essay in this category demonstrates ***no mastery*** of on-demand essay writing. Severely flawed by ***many or most*** of the following weaknesses, a typical essay:

- lacks a viable point of view on the issue
- demonstrates no awareness of audience
- fails to present a main idea
- demonstrates flawed reasoning
- demonstrates no complexity of thought
- is disorganized and/or disjointed
- displays fundamental errors in word choice, usage, and sentence structure
- contains pervasive spelling, grammar, punctuation, and mechanical errors

Below are sample essays that received a score of 1. The annotations explain why the essay received the indicated score.

Sample Essay #1 – Score of 1

no i do not think we are free to make our own decisions, because if we were free we wouldnt be able to go to jail if we were to commit a crime. we are limited in the choices we make and we have to be smart about the choices we make also. attacks have been apperaing on the news, they chose to make those decisions but had to pay the consequenses. People make good and bad decisions its up to them wether or not its good or bad. with all that said i do think that we are limited with the choices we make.

Annotations

Although this response occasionally mentions "*choices*" and "*consequenses*," it presents no viable point of view on the prompt's central question of whether our choices are our responsibility. Instead, the writing contains flawed reasoning *(if we were free we wouldn't be able to go to jail)* and disjointed statements that reveal a lack of organization *(. . . we have to be smart about the choices we make also. attacks have been apperaing on the news, they chose to make those decisions but had to pay the consequenses)*. The response displays numerous errors in word choice, usage, and sentence structure including fused sentences *(People make good and bad decisions its up to them whether or not its good or bad)*. Mechanical errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar are also pervasive. This response demonstrates no mastery of on-demand essay writing and receives a holistic score of 1.

Purpose and Focus, Score Point 1

This response lacks clear purpose and focus.

Organization and Structure, Score Point 1

This response presents a series of disjointed statements that are poorly organized.

Development and Support, Score Point 1

This essay needs additional ideas and support.

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Sentence Variety and Style, Score Point 1

This essay exhibits limited ability to vary sentence length and use appropriate vocabulary.

Mechanical Conventions, Score Point 1

This response doesn't demonstrate control of mechanical conventions.

Critical Thinking, Score Point 1

The essay lacks complexity of thought and displays flawed reasoning.

Sample Essay #2 – Score of 1

if you ask me i think its a little bit of both! you are your own person and you are free to make any decision you want, it just depends on how you veiw life, and want to live your life! yes we are limited with choices these days espesially if its a illigal choice you are willing to make! you can wake up tomorrow an make a decision that you want to do somethimg illigal, with law inforcement will limit the illigal choice your willing to make, but at the end of the day its still your decision, and only you can controll you!

Annotations

Demonstrating flawed reasoning, this response lacks a main idea and fails to present a viable point of view. The essay is disorganized and disjointed, with an attempt to argue both sides of the issue that shows no complexity of thought *(if you ask me i think its a little bit of both! you are your own person and you are free to make any decision you want. . . . at the end of the day its still your decision, and only you can controll you!)*. The response contains fundamental errors in word choice *(an* [and]*)*, usage *(its* [it's], *your* [you're]) and sentence structure (comma splices and unnecessary commas). Mechanical errors in spelling *(veiw, espesially, illigal)*, punctuation (inappropriate exclamation marks), and grammar are pervasive. This response displays no mastery of on-demand essay writing and receives a holistic score of 1.

Purpose and Focus, Score Point 1

This response lacks clear purpose and focus.

Organization and Structure, Score Point 1

This response demonstrates poor organization of ideas.

Development and Support, Score Point 1

This essay needs additional ideas and support.

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Sentence Variety and Style, Score Point 1

This essay exhibits limited ability to vary sentence length and apply appropriate vocabulary.

Mechanical Conventions, Score Point 1

This response shows poor control of mechanical conventions such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Critical Thinking, Score Point 1

The essay lacks complexity of thought and displays flawed reasoning.

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Score of 2

Description of Score of 2

An essay in this category demonstrates ***very little mastery*** of on-demand essay writing. Flawed by ***many or most*** of the following weaknesses, a typical essay:

- presents a vague or limited point of view on the issue
- demonstrates little awareness of audience
- presents an unclear main idea
- demonstrates weak critical thinking with little complexity of thought or with flawed reasoning
- organizes ideas ineffectively, demonstrating a problematic progression of ideas
- displays numerous errors in word choice, usage, and sentence structure
- contains significant spelling, grammar, punctuation, and mechanical errors

Below are sample essays that received a score of 2. The annotations explain why the essay received the indicated score.

Sample Essay #1 – Score of 2

I think we are imited in the choices we as people can make because we cant just go out into the world and start doing things we are not supposed to do. There will always be a line we will never be able to cross. because life is all about making the right choices and following the government rules because we are not free, if we were to be free the government wouldnt control us just like they do know. they cant leave us free because there are people that are out of mind because

It depends on how each person acts and decides to make the right choices. There are some people that are not capable of being 100% free and they make the wrong choices. even if each person is responsible of their actions. That is why there are rules that we need to follow throughout our lifes thats what wil defind our future. being that I think we should be limited in the choices we can make we should not be free we need to fight for what we think is good for us.

Annotations

Score Point 2

Demonstrating weak critical thinking, this essay attempts to develop a vague point of view *(I think we are imited in the choices we as people can make because we cant just go out into the world and start doing things we are not supposed to do)*. A lack of clarity inhibits the reader's ability to discern connections between statements. This leads to a problematic progression of ideas as evidenced in the transition between the first and second paragraphs *(if we were to be free the government wouldnt control us just like they do know. they cant leave us free because there are people that are out of mind because It depends on how each person acts and decides to make the right choices)*. Similarly, the final sentence of the essay indicates disorganization by presenting two vague ideas with no apparent linkage *(we should be limited in the choices we can make . . . we need to fight for what we think is good for us)*; Numerous errors in word choice, usage, and sentence structure obscure meaning *(That is why there are rules that we need to follow throughout our lifes thats what wil defind our future. being that I think we should be limited in the choices we can make we should not be free we need to fight for what we think is good for us)*. This response demonstrates very little mastery of on-demand essay writing and receives a holistic score of 2.

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Purpose and Focus, Score Point 1

This response lacks clear purpose and focus.

Organization and Structure, Score Point 1

While there is an attempt at an organizational structure with paragraphing, unclear ideas create problems with progression.

Development and Support, Score Point 1

This essay needs additional ideas and support, as many of the ideas are unclear.

Sentence Variety and Style, Score Point 1

This essay exhibits limited ability to vary sentence length and apply appropriate vocabulary.

Mechanical Conventions, Score Point 1

This response shows poor control of mechanical conventions such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Critical Thinking, Score Point 1

The essay shows insufficient reasoning and lacks complexity of thought.

Sample Essay #2 – Score of 2

I personally think that we would have a limited in the choices we can make. The reason i think this would have be because in life you can not always get what you want, you are always limited to things around you. Sure you can make some of your decisions but not all; if we were aloud to make all of the decisions we do there would be alot of slip up and accidents. Some stuff that we do are our responsibility, well actually most stuff we do wrong are, you should give yourself limited choice to make a decision. Then just coming up with one thing; then something goes wrong and then you really start thinking mabye i should of limited myself and thought everything through the going for the one thing i decided on. This is why i do personally think there should be a limit on making your own decisions.

Annotations

Although the response attempts to address Marino's claim concerning "the circumstances of our lives" *(you are always limited to things around you)*, it presents a limited point of view and unclear main idea *(we would have a limited in the choices we can make)*. The essay lacks specific examples to clarify the position, instead offering insufficient support that demonstrates little complexity of thought *(alot of slip up and accidents)*. The writer continues to develop a vague point of view later in the response, recommending a method for making decisions *(you should give yourself limited choice)* rather than examining whether people should take absolute responsibility for their decisions. Ineffective organization prevents a progression of ideas *(Then just coming up with one thing; then something goes wrong and then you really start thinking mabye i should of limited myself)*. The essay contains significant errors in usage *(aloud* [allowed], *should of)* and sentence structure, as well as problems with spelling, grammar, and punctuation. This response demonstrates very little mastery of on-demand essay writing and receives a holistic score of 2.

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Purpose and Focus, Score Point 1

This response lacks clear purpose and focus.

Organization and Structure, Score Point 1

This response demonstrates ineffective organization of ideas.

Development and Support, Score Point 1

An absence of specificity weakens support and contributes to a lack of clarity.

Sentence Variety and Style, Score Point 1

This essay exhibits limited ability to vary sentence length and vocabulary.

Mechanical Conventions, Score Point 1

This response shows poor control of mechanical conventions such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Critical Thinking, Score Point 1

The essay shows insufficient reasoning and lacks complexity of thought.

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Score of 3

Description of Score of 3

An essay in this category demonstrates ***little mastery*** of on-demand essay writing. Flawed by ***one or more*** of the following weaknesses, a typical essay:

- presents a vague or limited point of view on the issue
- demonstrates little awareness of audience
- attempts to develop the main idea though that attempt is inadequate
- demonstrates weak critical thinking with little complexity of thought or with flawed reasoning
- provides inappropriate or insufficient examples, reasons, or other evidence to support its position
- is poorly organized and/or focused or demonstrates serious problems with coherence or progression of ideas
- displays limited word choice and little sentence variety
- contains many errors in mechanical conventions of usage, sentence structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation

Below are sample essays that received a score of 3. The annotations explain why the essay received the indicated score.

Sample Essay #1 – Score of 3

Honestly, I think we should be able to make our own decisions because, it is our life. We can do whatever we want with it. If we go through rough obstacles, we have to manage to work them out. Some of us might even be successful with our decision or not. You chose your own decision. You should not have to be limited on your choices that you make. Some people might not like the fact that, they can not go over a certain amount of decisions they can make. One example is, you are going to a store to buy some groceries. You see a delicious candy bar. You are not sure if you should take it. It is your own decision. In todays world, we are not limited on our own decisions. We can make millions of decisions in life. Maybe you should just over think it and, make the good decisions at least. We are responsible enough to make our own decisions. We should need to have someone near us telling you,' You have gone over your limit of decisions'. If you are mature enough to do the right things, you are old enough to make your own decisions, but the good ones. Yes, some people will choose the wrong the decision, but it was their own choice. I am against us people today having to be limited in the choices you make. I agree that it is better to just be responsible and make and choose your own decision. You are an adult. Now some people will be totally against that. But, I am very thankful that now the time I'm living in, we make and choose our own decisions. We do not need anybody to be telling us what we can or can not do. In conclusion, today we do not have to be limited over the choices we make. We can make and choose our own decisions. We are free to make and choose our own decisions

Annotations

This response presents a limited point of view, narrowing the focus from responsibility for decisions to whether we should be able to make our own decisions. Although the writer attempts to address the notion that circumstances beyond our control govern our decisions and impact responsibility, this idea provides little complexity of thought *(we have to manage to work them out. . . . It is your own decision)*. A subsequent attempt to address responsibility is similarly inadequate, as the essay merely asserts that "*it is better to just be responsible*"

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but does not provide sufficient evidence to support this claim. The writer repeats the same general argument throughout the essay, diminishing coherence and demonstrating serious problems with the progression of ideas *(You chose your own decision. … It is your own decision. … you are old enough to make your own decisions, but the good ones)*. The response contains limited word choice (*decisions* is used in most sentences) and little sentence variety, along with many errors in the mechanical conventions of usage, sentence structure and grammar. This response demonstrates little mastery of on-demand essay writing and receives a holistic score of 3.

Purpose and Focus, Score Point 2

This response does not fully communicate purpose, and focus is inconsistent.

Organization and Structure, Score Point 2

This response demonstrates limited organization of ideas.

Development and Support, Score Point 1

This response has insufficient support for its ideas.

Sentence Variety and Style, Score Point 2

This essay shows inconsistent control of sentence variety, word choice, and flow of thought.

Mechanical Conventions, Score Point 2

This response shows limited control of mechanical conventions.

Critical Thinking, Score Point 1

The essay shows insufficient reasoning and lacks complexity of thought.

Sample Essay #2 – Score of 3

We are limited in the choices that we can make by a number of things. First we are restricted by our government, who sets rules that we have to abide by. Next is our schools, because they set a certain standard on our classes and we have to meet their requirements and also we are limited in our actions when we are at work. Our government has laws that we have to go by or we will be fined or punished for not abiding by them. Hitler came up with all sorts of rules and conditions and if they weren't followed he would have the citizen executed. In our school we don't have very much freedom in choicing which courses we want to take because we have so many mandatory ones that has to be taken in order to get enough credits to graduate such as 3 years of Math 4 years English and 3 years of Reading and Writing. And last but not least when you get a job nearly every employer has a certain code that you have to go by in order to work for them. Some companies have started banning you from bringing your bible to work to read on your break or talking religion to your coworkers. So all in all I think we are limited in the choices we can make by our government, schools and our employers.

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Annotations

Demonstrating weak critical thinking, this essay develops a limited point of view, agreeing with Marino's assertion that various entities (e.g., government, school, employers) limit our choices but fails to address the issue of whether we are responsible for actions we take. The writer attempts to provide evidence that choices are limited, but disjointed and list-like examples lead to a problematic progression of ideas *(Hitler came up with all sorts of rules and conditions . . . in our school we don't have very much freedom in choicing which course we want to take)*. Errors in grammar *(mandatory ones that has to be taken)*, usage *(choicing)*, and punctuation (both missing and incorrectly placed commas) occur throughout the essay. This response exhibits developing mastery of on-demand essay writing and receives a holistic score of 3.

Purpose and Focus, Score Point 2

This response doesn't fully communicate purpose, and focus is inconsistent.

Organization and Structure, Score Point 2

This response displays poor organization of ideas.

Development and Support, Score Point 1

This response has insufficient support for its ideas.

Sentence Variety and Style, Score Point 2

This essay shows inconsistent control of sentence variety, word choice, and flow of thought.

Mechanical Conventions, Score Point 2

This response shows limited control of mechanical conventions.

Critical Thinking, Score Point 1

The essay shows insufficient reasoning and lacks complexity of thought.

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Score of 4

Description of Score of 4

An essay in this category demonstrates ***developing mastery*** of on-demand essay writing. A typical essay:

- develops a viable point of view on the issue
- may stray from audience and purpose
- demonstrates some critical thinking but may do so inconsistently or use inadequate examples, reasons, or other evidence to support its position
- may lack control of organization or focus, demonstrating some lapses in coherence or progression of ideas
- contains some errors in sentence structure and use of grammatical conventions such as word choice, usage, spelling, and punctuation

Below are sample essays that received a score of 4. The annotations explain why the essay received the indicated score.

Sample Essay #1 – Score of 4

America manipulates people to believe they are free to make their own choices;however, people are obligated and manipulated to make choices they do not agree with, such as, in a job, college, and everday life. Decisons come along with consquences, good or bad, its up to the person to choose which path to take. First example, at a work area, an employee is designated duties to fullfill his or her position, but its up to them if they want to complete the job or they get laid off which is a form of limited choices. This country runs off money, people work based on how much income they are given. You pay them more they do more. As a student in college, in order to graduate with a degree of their choice, the student has to complete a number of credits and meet all expectations. Student is left with either one or two choices, complete all assignments or fail out of school and have a minimun wage job. Majority of the people refuse to settle for minimum jobs such as waitressing, retail, and jobs based off commission. So they pay however much they need to complete school. In everyday life, people walk on eggshells throughout their day. If the people were free to make their own choices why are there law enforcers to regulate rules? The judicial justice to punish criminals? This country gives their people limited choices, but pursades them feel as if they have no limitations on their choices;however, people are afraid of the law so they tend to limit themselves as well. The higher power-the law intimidate people who have less money or less power. Majority of those who do not have limited choices, have a higher power and in order to have higher power money is needed. Moral of the story, America manipulates their people in the direction in favor for them.

Annotations

The writer presents a viable point of view on the issue, arguing that we are manipulated by outside forces into making the choices we make. The response demonstrates some critical thinking but does so inconsistently. For example, the writer introduces a thought-provoking idea that America fosters an illusion of free choice, but inadequate examples prevent a fuller exploration of this topic. The essay outlines decisions and consequences *(. . . complete all assignments or fail out of school)* but neglects to address the deeper question of whether we should take responsibility for our choices or whether we make choices because of forces beyond our control. Lapses in coherence occur as the writer strings together unrelated ideas *(In everyday life, people walk on eggshells throughout their day. If the people were free to make their own choices why are there law enforcers to regulate rules?)*.

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The response contains errors in punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure *(First example, at a work area, an employee is designated duties to fulfill his or her position, but its up to them if they want to complete the job or they get laid off which is a form of limited choices).* This response exhibits developing mastery of on-demand essay writing and receives a holistic score of 4.

Purpose and Focus, Score Point 2

This response doesn't fully communicate purpose, and focus is inconsistent.

Organization and Structure, Score Point 2

This response displays a lack of control over the organization of ideas.

Development and Support, Score Point 2

This response has limited support for its ideas.

Sentence Variety and Style, Score Point 2

This essay shows inconsistent control of sentence variety, word choice, and flow of thought.

Mechanical Conventions, Score Point 2

This response shows limited control of mechanical conventions.

Critical Thinking, Score Point 2

The essay shows limited clarity and complexity of thought.

Sample Essay #2 – Score of 4

Each and every person is able to freely make their own decisions. This is a process that man has been able to do from the very beginning. With out the chance of being able to make free decisions then as an individual or as a whole, many complications can start to arise.

In my life there has been many choices that have been made. many that were never easy. Apart from day to day decisions to ones that could impact you, your friends, your family, or just those around you regardless of who they may be. The decision that one is able to make, can have so many outcomes. One day an individual could help make a work center run more efficently, because they made a decision that would help both themself and the others around them. On the other hand that same individual could have just as easily made a completly different choice, with a result could end up a lot worse for that one person or someone else.

Each and every day, there are men and women that freely choose to put them selves in harms way. No one has threatened them that they must go do this or else. I see on a daily Basis people that go and put on a uniform because they chose to do it. Yes, each person has their own reason for doing what they do, however each one that does this still does this freely.

You may be limited on your choices at a current time, but that could be because of everything going on around you. If we lived in a world ruled with limitations

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set daily and you couldn't go out side of what has been set, then i do think that problems would start occuring. The oppurtunity of Free Choice is an amazing gift that people either take advantage of and help adavance them selves with or throw away with a single bad choice. Either way we are still free to make our own choices and i think that will stay that way for a little while longer.

Annotations

This response presents a viable point of view and displays some critical thinking; however, certain examples lack sufficient elaboration to establish a clear connection to the issue of responsibility (*One day an individual could help make a work center run more efficiently, because they made a decision . . . . On the other hand that same individual could have just as easily made a completly different choice, with a result could end up a lot worse)*. Other examples, such as the discussion of dangerous careers in the third paragraph, are inappropriate, straying from the purpose of the prompt (taking responsibility for choices). The writer eventually tackles the idea of outside forces inhibiting choice in the final paragraph, but the complexity of the prompt's question is not addressed coherently across the body of the essay. In addition, some ideas are introduced but not developed *(If we lived in a world ruled with limitations set . . . problems would start occuring)*. This leads to problems in the progression of ideas, as the writer moves on to a different topic *(. . . Free Choice is an amazing gift)*. Some errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation occur. This response exhibits developing mastery of on-demand essay writing and receives a holistic score of 4.

Purpose and Focus, Score Point 2

This response doesn't fully communicate purpose, and focus is inconsistent.

Organization and Structure, Score Point 2

In spite of lapses in progression, the response follows a limited organizational plan.

Development and Support, Score Point 2

This response has limited support for its ideas.

Sentence Variety and Style, Score Point 2

This essay shows inconsistent control of sentence variety, word choice, and flow of thought.

Mechanical Conventions, Score Point 2

This response shows limited control of mechanical conventions.

Critical Thinking, Score Point 2

While demonstrating some critical thinking, this essay shows limited clarity and complexity of thought.

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Score of 5

Description of Score of 5

An essay in this category demonstrates ***adequate mastery*** of on-demand essay writing, although it will have lapses in quality. A typical essay:

- develops a viable point of view on the issue
- may stray from the audience and purpose but is able to refocus
- demonstrates competent critical thinking, using adequate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position
- is generally organized and focused but could lack coherence and logical progression of ideas
- exhibits adequate but inconsistent control of language
- demonstrates some variety in sentence structure
- contains some minor errors in sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and punctuation

Below are sample essays that received a score of 5. The annotations explain why the essay received the indicated score.

Sample Essay #1 – Score of 5

Dicisions are endless, it is up to you to make anything happen. You can come from a poor family, and end up a billionaire due to the wise dicisions you made growing up. It can take one mindless dicision to end your hopes of becoming something bigger. You can go from having nothing to having it all based on all your successes in life. For example, my family does not have a lot of money, therefore, my family is living paycheck-to-paycheck. To make sure I do not live the life of worrying, like my mother, I will pursue my dream of becoming a doctor. I will make that decision to change my life for the better. If you are caught up in a sticky situation, it is because you lead yourself by the choices you made in. You are judged by others soley based on your daily decisions, therefore, you are respondsible for your future

You are capable as an adult to make the best decisions, and understand that all things you do in life may come with a consequence. It absolutely can be difficult to understand what the best choice is for you, and if you end up failing, there is always a second chance. Life is all about trial and error. You can test the waters and see all the different outcomes, and choose the best decision that fits you. You may not always choose the right decision, but it can teach you how to address any situation in the future. Every decision you make in life has an effect not only on yourself, but others around you. You are to think before you react, because you can cause trouble between you and your peers. This can be a reason why your decisions make up who you are and how others view your characters.

You are not limited to the decisions you make, because you have full control of your character and how successful you want your future to be. The kind of life you lead is completely in your hands. No one can stop you from accomplishing your goals. Although, there might be bumbs along the way, you are fully capable of going over them. As an adult you are free to make unlimited decisions that make you respondsible for choices, and with great decision making, it will showcase your success.

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Annotations

The writer vaguely acknowledges the prompt's assertion that circumstances such as *"a poor family"* can define the choices we make and develops a viable point of view, ultimately rejecting the idea that circumstances inhibit our choices *(you have full control of your character and how successful you want your future to be)*. Competent critical thinking adds nuance to the position. This is particularly evident in the second paragraph, which begins by acknowledging the difficulty in determining the best choice but goes on to suggest that even poor choices can equip one to better deal with future difficulties. The writer then expands the topic by recognizing that one's actions affect not only oneself but *"others around you"* as well, offering an implicit rejoinder to Marino's claim that our choices alone cannot determine "*who you are and how others view your characters*." The response is generally organized and exhibits a progression of ideas through the use of extended examples *(my family does not have a lot of money, therefore, my family is living paycheck-to-paycheck. To make sure I do not live the life of worrying, like my mother, I will pursue my dream of becoming a doctor. I will make that decision to change my life for the better)*. Adequate control of language is demonstrated throughout the essay, with some varied sentence structures *(It absolutely can be difficult to understand what the best choice is for you, and if you end up failing, there is always a second chance. Life is all about trial and error)*. This response exhibits adequate mastery of on-demand essay writing and receives a holistic score of 5.

Purpose and Focus, Score Point 2

This response doesn't fully communicate purpose.

Organization and Structure, Score Point 2

This response demonstrates limited organization of ideas.

Development and Support, Score Point 2

This response has limited support for its ideas, as many of the ideas lack specific detailed support.

Sentence Variety and Style, Score Point 2

This essay shows inconsistent control of sentence variety, word choice, and flow of thought.

Mechanical Conventions, Score Point 2

Minor errors occur in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Critical Thinking, Score Point 2

While demonstrating some critical thinking, this essay shows limited clarity and complexity of thought.

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Sample Essay #2 – Score of 5

The ability of decision making is one of a few traits thats differenciates us from animals. As opposed to most other living specimens on this planet who mostly act upon instinct and would appear to have little to no control over the course of their lives, i strongly belive our abilty to think critically has a major impact on we deicde to live our lives. But for the question at hand "are we free to make our decisons or are our choices limited", I would have to say yes to both.

Like stated previously, I belive a humans possesion of critical thinking and kowing right from wrong and so on gives a great ammount of control over out lives. Without which we would be no different than most animals. Every day we wake up we make a decision that could impact the rest our day or maybe even the rest of out lives. for example, what time you should wake up because if you're late again you will lose your job. Even the decions in what we eat day to day or how much excerise we feel like getting will impact our health. All of these are situations we have control over. If I choose to smoke and end up with cancer well thats my fault and no one elses. Ultimately when it comes down to it the paths we deicde to take in life are choices that are made by us and us alone.

Despite being a sentient species, having free will and being able to ultimately control our fates, sometimes the decions we make can be limited to what resources you have available to yourself. Perhaps you are a child and your parents are the only resource you have to accomplish most of anything you like to go for. In that case your parents might be making a lot of decions for you as any good parent would. Mental dissabilities unfortunately can also be a factor when it comes to a persons thought process as they attempt critical decision making.

We as humans posess abilities far greater than many other creatures we share the Earth with. Some like to think it is up to fate to decide how our lives turn out and even that is a decision in itsself. As an intelligent species have total control over our own lives and what we decide to do with it regardless of what influences us or what may be available to help us along the way.

Annotations

This response presents a viable point of view that demonstrates competent critical thinking *(I belive a humans possesion of critical thinking and kowing right from wrong and so on gives a great ammount of control over out lives)*. Adequate reasoning and evidence support the qualified position that we are free to make decisions, though some limitations exist. The writer provides brief, but appropriate examples of daily decisions people make (e.g., sleep, diet, and exercise) to illustrate the cause and effect relationship between one's choices and their consequences. Generally organized and focused, the essay contains a logical progression of ideas that culminates in a final sentence that clearly expresses the writer's position *(As an intelligent species have total control over our own lives and what we decide to do with it regardless of what influences us or what may be available to help us along the way)*. The essay exhibits adequate but inconsistent control of language: the essay contains some errors in spelling, grammar, and mechanical conventions. This response exhibits adequate mastery of on-demand essay writing and receives a holistic score of 5.

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Purpose and Focus, Score Point 2

This response doesn't fully communicate purpose.

Organization and Structure, Score Point 2

Transitions help to link ideas, but overall the response demonstrates limited organization of ideas.

Development and Support, Score Point 2

This response has limited support for its ideas.

Sentence Variety and Style, Score Point 3

This essay shows control of sentence variety and structure.

Mechanical Conventions, Score Point 2

Minor errors occur in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Critical Thinking, Score Point 2

While demonstrating some critical thinking, this essay shows limited clarity and complexity of thought.

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Score of 6

Description of Score of 6

An essay in this category demonstrates ***reasonably consistent mastery*** of on-demand essay writing, although it may have occasional lapses in quality. A typical essay:

- effectively develops a point of view on the issue
- addresses an appropriate audience and demonstrates a clear purpose for writing
- demonstrates strong critical thinking, generally using appropriate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position
- is well organized and focused, demonstrating coherence and a logical progression of ideas
- exhibits consistent control in the use of language
- demonstrates adequate variety in sentence structure
- is generally free of errors in sentence structure, grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation

Below are sample essays that received a score of 6. The annotations explain why the essay received the indicated score.

Sample Essay #1 – Score of 6

Being presented with options and choosing which path to take is a fundemental part of the human experience. There are multiple possbilities, and no clear cut answer to this question. Sometimes, a situation can't be helped, and there's nothing that can be done about it, whether or not an attempt is made. Other times, a situation can't be helped, but with effort the outcome can be altered. And other times, a situation is the result of a person's actions, with them bringing it upon themselves.

Part of being human is that of course you can't simply do anything, everyone has their own limitations, whether or not they (directly or indirectly) set the limitations for themselves. Minority groups in America such as LGBT+ people, people of color, and Muslims, for example, are limited in what jobs they can secure due to discrimination. People who live in poverty often cannot escape and are trapped in a downward spiral. Teenagers with no stable income or reliable means of transportation can't truly be free either. However, every single person has the potential to break out of their confined cage and create more choices and opportunities for their lives. Something I believe greatly in is that there is never, under any circumstances, a 0% chance, no matter how highly the odds are stacked against.

One wonderful example of this difficult, amazing feat is Alexander Hamilton. He was an illegitimate child who lost both of his parents by teenagehood, living in poverty and having nothing. He grasped at every straw he could, not only managing to escape his brutal life in the Carribeans, but making himself into one of the most important figures in American history. Even once he got to the mainland, he could have lost it and give into despair, but he continued to climb and persevere. He is the epitome of a person getting their own freedom to make their decisons. However, even so, as George Washington's right hand man, as a husband and father, and as the Secretary of the Treasury, his decisons were still limited, and he didn't have total freedom, (though at that period it was mostly due to social pressures and not wanting to lose his position or reputation rather than not having the means).

In short, there is no easy answer to this. Technically, anybody can do anything, if they have the means, are able to let go of the obligations that come with being a human being, and are able to escape (or are willing to deal with) the consequences of their actions. However, it's very rare to have these abilities, and with global

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poverty rising, the means are becoming so much more of a forgotten treasure. At times it's our or somebody else's fault, and other times it's just an unfortunate fate. Having the luxury of making your own life is a luxury in and of itself. Either way, a path can always be carved, no matter how limited one may be

Annotations

This response presents a viable point of view and demonstrates a clear purpose for writing *(Sometimes, a situation can't be helped, and there's nothing that can be done about it. . . . Other times, a situation can't be helped, but with effort the outcome can be altered. And other times, a situation is the result of a person's actions, with them bringing it upon themselves)*. The essay demonstrates strong critical thinking, first in the discussion of minority groups that face discrimination and in the acknowledgment that others *(people who live in poverty* and *[t]eenagers with no stable income)* have circumstantial limitations that can limit their freedom. Critical thinking is also evident in the writer's ultimate point: that *there is no easy answer to this* and that *anybody can do anything, if they have the means…*and are *(willing to deal with) the consequences of their actions.* While the Hamilton example provided in the second half of the essay doesn't quite match the prompt's subtle implications that outside forces that can't be overcome are related to our means, the writer does acknowledge a caveat to Hamilton's example, another indication of critical thinking *(though at that period it was mostly due to social pressures and not wanting to lose his position or reputation rather than not having the means)*. The writing is well organized and focused, demonstrating coherence (for example, the sustained focus across each paragraph on the idea of unconquerable limitations vs. being able to alter outcomes with effort) and a logical progression of ideas. The essay displays consistent control in the use of language with adequate variety in sentence structure *(Having the luxury of making your own life is a luxury in and of itself. Either way, a path can always be carved, no matter how limited one may be)*. This response exhibits a reasonably consistent mastery of on-demand essay writing and receives a holistic score of 6.

Purpose and Focus, Score Point 3

This response shows a clear and consistent purpose.

Organization and Structure, Score Point 3

This response exhibits strong organization of ideas.

Development and Support, Score Point 2

This response has limited support for its ideas. By the writer's own admission, the most developed example doesn't quite match Marino's implication that the ability to make certain choices can be constrained by one's means.

Sentence Variety and Style, Score Point 3

This essay shows skillful control of sentence structure and style.

Mechanical Conventions, Score Point 3

This response shows strong control over the mechanical conventions of grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Critical Thinking, Score Point 2

This essay shows limited clarity and complexity of thought.

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Sample Essay #2 – Score of 6

It's easy to say that we are free to make our own decisions, but are we? In my opinion, yes we all have free will to make certain choices and others, not so much. There are certain factors that can play a role in life, such as lifestyles choices that were passed on from generation to generation without even knowing the wrong doing of it. Since it was passed down, it must be normal, right? Not always! There are two very complicated choices to make, to do great, or not so great, ultimately the choice is yours. This factor can depend on your background, such as self-esteem, family, friends, beliefs, and a host of others. Not saying that anyone is perfect, because we all make mistakes, but if you want better, you will do better.

Self-esteem is the first one. Key word is self, but it doesn't start with self. As a child I was taught to be confident in myself, but I grew up with others that weren't taught the same. Some were brought up in a not so great enviornment, where they may have been abused in one way or another and it happened so much it became their normal. This could throw your decision making judgement off. I'm not saying you can't come from a terrible background and be a better person, because it's all about you and what you want out of life. Sure it may be a little tough compared to someone else, but know one said it would be easy! In my experience, family plays a major role in what you can and will become. Family can build you up, but can also tear you down. Above everything, self is the foundation and I believe that if you have a very supportive background and a positive outlook life, your choices you decide to make will have very positive outcomes.

Even with a great family foundation, it could still be challenging to make your own decisions, because friends could cause peer pressure. Peer pressure can cause one to feel like they have to do whatever it is to be cool or to even be noticed. For some, this isn't a decision they would normally make, but to fit in is the key. What they think is normal, seems to be everything they want and need at that moment. Even though they know it's wrong, they may feel the need to have the validation from others. Others aren't so bothered with it. Some may lack the attention at home and feel the need to gain it elsewhere. Whatever the reasoning, peer pressure is real and could affect the choices you make.

Ultimately, you hold your future in your hands. No matter how rough the ride may be, you can make it! Every now and then we just may need a little reminder of how great we are, and what we are capable of becoming. As always, remember every action has a reaction, whether good or bad, so be mindful of your decision making!

Annotations

Demonstrating strong critical thinking, this response effectively develops a point of view *(It's easy to say that we are free to make our own decisions, but are we? In my opinion, yes we all have free will to make certain choices and others, not so much)* and supports that position with appropriate reasons and examples. The writer recognizes the complexity of the issues and provides evidence that demonstrates this understanding, contrasting his or her own privileged upbringing with that of peers who *"were brought up in a not so great enviornment,"* in order to illustrate how adverse circumstances can limit one's choices and "*throw your decision making judgement off.*" Strong transitions contribute to a logical progression of ideas *(Above everything, self is the foundation and I believe that if you have a very supportive background and a positive outlook life, your choices you decide to make will have very positive outcomes. Even with a great family foundation, it could still be challenging to make your own decisions)*. Control of language is consistent, and sentences are reasonably varied. The writing is generally free of errors in sentence

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structure, grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation. This response exhibits a reasonably consistent mastery of on-demand essay writing and receives a holistic score of 6.

Purpose and Focus, Score Point 3

This focused essay exhibits a clear purpose.

Organization and Structure, Score Point 3

This response demonstrates strong organization of ideas.

Development and Support, Score Point 2

This response has limited support, as good examples are provided but not developed with sufficient depth.

Sentence Variety and Style, Score Point 3

This essay shows skillful control of sentence structure and style.

Mechanical Conventions, Score Point 3

This response shows strong control over the mechanical conventions of grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Critical Thinking, Score Point 2

This essay shows limited clarity and complexity of thought.

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Score of 7

Description of Score of 7

An essay in this category demonstrates ***consistent mastery*** of on-demand essay writing, although it may have occasional minor errors. A typical essay:

- effectively and insightfully develops a point of view on the issue
- addresses an appropriate audience and demonstrates a clear purpose for writing in the thesis statement
- demonstrates outstanding critical thinking, using appropriate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position
- is well organized and focused, demonstrating clear coherence and smooth progression of ideas
- exhibits appropriate language, using a varied and accurate vocabulary
- demonstrates varied sentence structure
- is practically free of errors in sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and punctuation

Below are sample essays that received a score of 7. The annotations explain why the essay received the indicated score.

Sample Essay #1 – Score of 7

The decisions we make on a daily basis shape the type of person we are along with the type of person others see us as, when a child is young they are guided and do not have much of a say in decison making however as and individual gets older they are expected to start making their own decisions. Decision making can be complex for some individuals while on the other hand for some deciding what they want is something that comes naturally. Every one makes different decisions and thus lead different lives based on the choices they take however we are not always free in the choices we make their is a variety of different components which shape our ability to make decisions.

The choices an individual makes on a daily basis have a lot to do with cultural or religious beliefs, different cultures have different teachings and different outlooks on what is acceptable and what is forbidden. Parents raise their children according to the way they think and the type of person they would like their child to become. Many parents have certain expectations from their children regarding the decisions they make based on cultural beliefs that the parents or other family members expect their child to follow and abide by. The society one lives in also has a huge impact on the decisons you make, individuals are expected to act in certain ways in certain societies and not doing so may cause conflicts. Thus, cultural and societal teachings and expectations impact a large amount of our ability to make choices and often leave us with limited to no choice at all.

The circumstances we are in is another factor which often limits the decisions we make and we do not always have a choice in the circumstances we are put into. An example of this is when a child is born into a very poor family which hardly has enough food to put on the table they automatically are limited to making many decisions in their life such as if they would like to have a proper eductation. They may not be able to pursue their dreams of having an education due to the circumstances of their family which may not be able to afford giving their child an education at all. Someone with completely different circumstances on the other hand would have a completely different set of choices in their lives which would allow them to make completely different decisions.

Laws and regulations have an immense amount of control on the decisions one can make, most of the time there are consequences when the law is broken or bent. In Canada we have many rules and regulations which every individual is suppose to

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follow and not question since it is meant for the well being of everyone. An example of how strong a hold laws can have on a persons decision making can be seen when an individual is interested in starting their own business in Canada. There are many strict rules and a number of expectations one must complete in order to begin their own business. These regulations and restrictions often have a great impact on the decisions one makes and can affect ones ability to be able to start a business at all if they are not able to live upto these expectations. Since there are usually harsh consequences when a rule or law is broken, people are scared to think or do anything other than what is set for them by the government. All in all laws and regulations limit the choices we have on a daily basis.

To conclude, decision making is shaped by a number of different aspects such as cultural and societal beliefs, individual circumstances and laws and regulations. We may not see it or feel it however we do not always have a choice and often our decisons have already been made for us. An individual may be confronted with many problems if they do not take anything into consideration when they make decisons, thus wanting to avoid this and the fear of consequences we do not always have a choice or say in every decision we make throughout life.

Annotations

This response takes the thoughtful position that we are not always free in the choices we make because of the *"variety of different components"* that shape our decisions. The writing demonstrates outstanding critical thinking throughout, from the initial idea that control over decisions evolves as we age to the astute observation that *"societal teachings and expectations"* can dictate our choices and behaviors. In the third paragraph, the writer continues to grapple with the complexity of the prompt, offering insight into the ways outside influences (economic circumstances in particular) can shape our decision making. Appropriate examples, such as a discussion of how regulations in Canada limit the daily choices of business owners, provide extended support that deepens the reader's understanding of the topic. The organized and focused essay features a clear progression of ideas. Language use is appropriate throughout, exhibiting varied vocabulary *(forbidden, abide, immense)* and a variety of sentence structures. Demonstrating a consistent mastery of on-demand essay writing, this response receives a holistic score of 7.

Purpose and Focus, Score Point 3

This response displays a clear purpose and consistent focus.

Organization and Structure, Score Point 3

This response demonstrates strong organization of ideas.

Development and Support, Score Point 3

This essay is logically developed and well supported.

Sentence Variety and Style, Score Point 3

This essay demonstrates skillful control of sentence structure and style.

Mechanical Conventions, Score Point 3

This response exhibits strong control of the mechanical conventions of writing.

Critical Thinking, Score Point 3

This essay shows clear and reasoned analysis of the issue.

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Sample Essay #2 – Score of 7

Everyone must start somewhere. Despite living in one of the most upwardly mobile countries in history, Americans do not have equality of origen. For example, some are born into wealth and presperity with the whole world seemingly laid before them. They are easily able to chart a course for their life and, having the resources at hand, they can pursue that course and rise to even greater wealth and prosperity. Others are born into poverty. Their choices are more narrow and are mainly focussed on surviving day to day. This second group however, does not have to remain in the circumstances of their beginnings forever. By recognizing their situation & making the best of the choices they can make, and tenaciously prusuing goals and oppertunities as they come up, they can expand their options and TAKE responsibility for their future.

The beginning of overcoming a poor beginning is recognizing your position. In my own case, being the son of an abusive father, I was raised in poverty by my single mother. There was always a sense of hopelessness around. Not knowing it, this feeling defined my childhood and teenage years – As far as I knew, my life was heading nowhere. At 15, however, I recognized that I had a choice to make in the outcome of my life. I began to ask for help from some of my teachers and I began to look for chances pursue my interests by taking classes in computers and technology. It wasn't much but by steadily making decisions that expanded my options, little by little, I began to escape the fog of hopelessness.

At 16 I realized that I would need to make a clean break from my past if I was to have any chance at a brighter future. I was in my second year of high school and my mother was going through her third devorce with an alcoholic and abusive husband. He got arrested and sent to jail for drunk driving, and she decided that she could have a better life if she uprooted my sister and I by moving to Florida with her sister. I knew this would be the path to ruin for me. I decided to take a chance on myself and tell my mother that I was not going with her. I spoke with my guidance counselor and asked for her help in telling my mother what I was going to do. Mrs. Lewis set the appointment, called an Aunt of mine who lived in the area, and set it up so I could stay with her family until I finished high school. On the day of the meeting she encouraged me to speak my heart about my decision and stood by me when I laid things out for my mom. In the end, my mother agreed to allow me to stay with my aunt while she moved away.

The two and a half years of high school that followed were very trying. However, by standing up for myself, and choosing to break from my past, I chose a pursue a path that ultimately lead to my having a happy marriage with a wife I love and 3 amazing children. I also have a career in a field I can be successful in a long as I want.

In summary, by recognizing my position, making the best of the decisions I had, and with tenacity taking risks on myself, I broke away from a hopeless future. I started with nothing, but today my horizons are broad and my future is bright.

Annotations

This response establishes an insightful point of view that, through a combination of perseverance and awareness, people can take responsibility for their future despite circumstances that encumber them. Support consists of a thorough personal account of how the writer overcame an impoverished and abusive environment. Incorporating appropriate examples and specific details, this anecdotal evidence strengthens the position and lends credibility to the writer's claims. The essay is well organized and focused, exhibiting a smooth progression of ideas across the

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three body paragraphs, as the writer moves through the chronology of the personal example. Language use is appropriate, with accurate and varied vocabulary *(chart a course, prosperity, fog of hopelessness, tenacity)*. Varied sentence structures enhance the fluency of the writing. Demonstrating a consistent mastery of on-demand essay writing, this response receives a holistic score of 7.

Purpose and Focus, Score Point 3

This response displays a clear purpose and strong focus.

Organization and Structure, Score Point 3

This response demonstrates strong organization of ideas.

Development and Support, Score Point 3

This essay is logically developed and well supported.

Sentence Variety and Style, Score Point 3

This essay demonstrates skillful control of sentence structure and style.

Mechanical Conventions, Score Point 3

Control of mechanical conventions is strong.

Critical Thinking, Score Point 3

This essay shows clear and reasoned analysis of the issue.

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Score of 8

Description of Score of 8

An essay in this category demonstrates ***clear and consistent mastery*** of on-demand essay writing, with a few minor errors. A typical essay:

- effectively and insightfully develops a point of view on the issue
- addresses an appropriate audience and demonstrates a clear purpose for writing in the thesis statement
- demonstrates outstanding critical thinking, using effective examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position
- is well organized and clearly focused, demonstrating clear coherence and smooth progression of ideas
- exhibits skillful use of language, using a varied, accurate, and apt vocabulary
- demonstrates varied and effective sentence structure
- is free of major errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation

Below are sample essays that received a score of 8. The annotations explain why the essay received the indicated score.

Sample Essay #1 – Score of 8

There are over 4 billion people on planet earth, while thousands of people are born everyday. Where the child is born, and where they are raised, is completely spontaneous and out of there control. Gordon D. Marino strongly believes that no one has firm control of what happens to him or her, or with what transpires throughout their life. His take has a significant amount of validity, which cant be justified. However, people have the ablity and possibility to prevent the negatives throughout life with proper structure.

As it pertains to Gordon D. Marino's passage, there is no right or wrong answer. Granted, people are brought into unfortunate and inconvenient situations, but that doesn't negate the fact that they can't overcome the fallacies and transgressions they endure. An abundance of people come from broken homes, negligent parents who are in poverty, unsophisticated school systems, third world countries, and so fourth. I undoubtedly understand that people strongly feel like there is no way out, or a solution to the unfortunate circumstances they have encountered. However, there is always a way out. The famous cliche "anything is possible" needs to be embraced a lot more. People going through struggles need to summize the fact that not one person is better than the other. Other people just so happen to have been fortunately raised in a better environment. There is a way to overcome this.

A prime example of someone who had to overcome his negative surroundings would be my father. He was raised by negligent, alcoholic parents who would never amount to anything. They simply did not care. He was getting into trouble as a youth, being thrown in a juvenile detention center at a young age, living in a bad area, and spending his time with the wrong people. He didnt have any money, was a high school drop-out, and was in a detention center at 17. He was so upset with the way his life had been going, he decided he was all in, and was going to strive for success, and wasn't going to stop until he did so. He picked up a book and never put it down, disassociated himself from the negative tension he was constantly around, and gradually progressed. Once he was out of juvenile detention, he aquired a GED, went to a community college taking online classes while working three jobs. Granted, your social life might come to a pause, but the juice is totally worth the squeeze. His most common phrase when talking to me and my siblings were, "work hard now, have fun later". Ultimately, he went from

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being a juvenile delinquent from a broken home, to a proffesor of sociology at the University of Georgetown. He constantly enlightens his students about his past transgressions, and how anyone can overcome anything if they put in the effort.

I strongly feel that Gordon D. Marino's message has a much broader context. He could be alluding to a plethora of instances that are unpreventable. One might get a flat tire, be in a hostile situation involving a terror attack, a home being wiped out by a natural disaster. The examples I just listed are undeniably unpreventable. He could also be alluding to my message about being brought into a broken home, but there is always a way out, and a path to success. If you are in poverty, work 3 jobs. If you want to be a physician, go to school and never put the books down. It is all about sacrificing and applying yourself to the best of your abilities.

All in all, with Gordon's message, there is no right or wrong answer. We do not have control on mother nature, and the outside forces that exist outside of us. We do not have control of where we were born, who raised us, what class we were brought into, what country we were born in, but we do have control of our bodies, and what we want to do with it. The people who claim each individual is responsible of what happens to him or her, has significant validity as well. People dont have to commit crimes, people dont have to be in poverty. It all comes down to whether or not you can overcome the unfortunate circumstances, and apply yourself to be the best possible person.

Annotations

Demonstrating outstanding critical thinking by effectively and insightfully developing its point of view, this response acknowledges the validity of Marino's claims while suggesting that an alternative is possible. Throughout the essay, the writer crafts a subtle but consistent argument that *"there is no right or wrong answer."* In other words, life presents some unavoidable obstacles, but at the same time, it is possible to *"prevent the negatives throughout life with proper structure."* The essay demonstrates strong critical thinking in the initial body paragraph by conceding that unfortunate circumstances can engender a feeling of helplessness. The writer then employs a skillful transition between paragraphs *(Other people just so happen to have been fortunately raised in a better environment. There is a way to overcome this)* to pivot to a new idea *(A prime example of someone who had to overcome his negative surroundings would be my father)*. Using an effective example of the writer's own father, the essay attempts to rebut the absolutism of Marino's position with ample and appropriate evidence of how an individual can overcome adversity. The essay concludes by reiterating that there is much beyond our control (e.g., geography, social environment, class), but the writer adds the thoughtful point that we still have control over our bodies and how we apply ourselves. Use of language is skillful throughout the response, with varied, accurate, and apt vocabulary *(broken homes, negligent parents, unsophisticated school systems)* and sentences which are varied and effective. Exhibiting clear and consistent mastery of on-demand essay writing, this response earns a holistic score of 8.

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Purpose and Focus, Score Point 3

This response shows a clear purpose and strong focus.

Organization and Structure, Score Point 3

This response exhibits strong organization of ideas.

Development and Support, Score Point 3

This essay is logically developed and well supported.

Sentence Variety and Style, Score Point 3

This essay demonstrates skillful control of sentence structure and style.

Mechanical Conventions, Score Point 3

Control of mechanical conventions is strong.

Critical Thinking, Score Point 3

This essay shows clear and reasoned analysis of the issue.

Sample Essay #2 – Score of 8

In her 2008 Harvard commencement speech, author J.K. Rowling invited recent graduates to take responsibility for their own lives. Rowling argued that each individual must ardently grab the steering wheel of her own lfie as soon as she is able. Relying on parents, professors, or peers to give one's life direction, purpose, or structure is simply not an option.

I agree with Rowling's assertion that we are all in charge of our own lives. The complication arises, however, when we acknowledge that the materials we have been given to lead those lives vary greatly from person to person. In keeping with the car analogy, I may be driving a Toyota Corolla with 90,000 miles on it, while another person may be careening through the world from the scooped seat of a brand-new BMW. In other words, yes, we make our own choices, and we are responsible for how we lead our lives, but each one of us makes those choices and selects our paths within a framework which we cannot control.

Never is this clearer than in discussions of privilege. Axioms such as, "The rich get richer and the poor get poorer," highlight the idea that our circumstances force us to start from different places. Oprah Winfrey, for instance, is so fascinating to the American public because of her "rags to riches" story: a young woman, born into poverty, who suffered years of horrific abuse from relatives, who still managed to rise to stardom, acquire wealth, and weild power with generosity and compassion. Still other public figures receive significant scrutiny for their lack of need to self-start. President George W. Bush was frequently derided for his cushy upbringing, which led him to studies at Yale and a presidency which, to some, seemed to result more from his family wealth and political connections than from genuine preparedness for office.

Famous television personalities and politicans provide ample fodder for the frustration many of us feel when faced with Rowling's demand that we take the wheels of our own lives, and yet the complex relationship between personal responsibility and predetermined circumstance plays itself out in ordinary lives,

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as well. Having recently chosen to return to school for another degree, I feel emboldened and proud of this decision I am making. However, I also recognize that the support of my parents in high school–driving me to theater practice, paying for my voice lessons, buying me as many books as I could read–and their continued bolstering of me in college has laid the groundwork for my academic success and confidence. I could not have succeeded in high school, college, and gradute school, and then considered more education, without their emotional and financial support.

In the end, we each write our own stories; we are in charge of the choices we make. One eminent psychologist said it best when he claimed, "We do not have control, but we do have choices." We do not control so many things: the decade we are born, the parents we go home with, the teachers who educate us. Yet we do have choices. We choose the clothes we wear, regardless of each decade's fashion frenzies; we choose how we relate to our parents; we choose whether or not to study for the myriad tests and quizzes that pepper our twenty-first century educations. The outcome of this venture called life will always, at least partially, elude us, but as human beings, we have been given the gift of daily, personal choice. To me, that makes all the difference.

Annotations

This response effectively and insightfully develops its point of view that "*we are responsible for how we lead our lives, but each one of us makes those choices and selects our paths within a framework which we cannot control.*" Critical thinking and effective examples appear throughout the essay, but these qualities are on full display in the second body paragraph. The writer skillfully juxtaposes the inherited advantages of George W. Bush with the fortitude of Oprah Winfrey in order to examine the interplay of privilege and personal determination. The essay develops this idea even further in the next section, acknowledging that ordinary lives also bear witness to the "*complex relationship between personal responsibility and predetermined circumstance.*" Focused on its argument, the writing exhibits deliberate organization and clear coherence, as Rowling's ideas are used as a thread throughout the essay to respond to the prompt's complexity. The response is cohesive from start to finish, and its strong conclusion provides a sense of completeness. An effective quotation provides an appropriate response to the prompt's ultimate question *("We do not have control, but we do have choices.")*. The writer follows this with well-chosen examples of outside influences beyond our control (fashion, parents, teachers) and contrasts them with corresponding choices *(We choose the clothes we wear . . . how we relate to our parents . . . whether or not to study)*, demonstrating effective reasoning and reinforcing the overall position. The use of language is skillful, with a variety of effective sentence structures *(However, I also recognize that the support of my parents in high school–driving me to theater practice, paying for my voice lessons, buying me as many books as I could read–and their continued bolstering of me in college has laid the groundwork for my academic success and confidence. . . . In the end, we each write our own stories; we are in charge of the choices we make)*. The writing features precise vocabulary that is accurate and apt *(ample fodder, bolstering, fashion frenzies)*. Exhibiting clear and consistent mastery of on-demand essay writing, this response earns a holistic score of 8.

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Purpose and Focus, Score Point 3

This response shows a clear purpose and strong focus.

Organization and Structure, Score Point 3

The writer displays a strong ability to organize ideas.

Development and Support, Score Point 3

This essay is logically developed and well supported.

Sentence Variety and Style, Score Point 3

This essay demonstrates skillful control of sentence structure and style.

Mechanical Conventions, Score Point 3

Control of mechanical conventions is strong.

Critical Thinking, Score Point 3

This essay shows clear and reasoned analysis of the issue.

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