



TEST
ASSESSING
SECONDARY
COMPLETION™

DATA RECOGNITION
DRC
CORPORATION

Scoring Guidance for the Argumentative Essay

TASC Test Assessing Secondary Completion™

What are Exemplars?

Exemplars are descriptions of typical student skills and behaviors that a teacher looks for when evaluating performance. They provide criteria or guidelines for evaluating student performance by determining ratings based on a scoring rubric. Standards rubrics define what meets today's educational assessment criteria, allowing teachers (and students) to distinguish between different levels of performance.

How do I score examinee practice essays?

Handscoring the TASC Test essay response utilizes three component elements: the rubric, the anchors, and additional samples for training or clarification. These components are generally defined below and provided in detail in subsequent pages of this section of the manual.

Rubric:

The foundation of handscoring is the rubric. The rubric provides the descriptive requirements for each score point that can be awarded to an examinee's work and is the primary tool used in making scoring decisions. In scoring Writing prompts, the rubric will guide the scorer in how to look at the essay as a whole in order to determine a single score. The TASC Test Essay Scoring Rubric has a score range from 0-4. When taking the TASC Test the essay score is doubled to become part of the official Writing Subtest score.

Anchors:

For each score point in the rubric, the anchor paper is a response that best typifies the rubric. It is not a borderline paper but rather one that falls within the rubric-designated score point fairly clearly. The anchor sets the standard for that score point and is occasionally referred back to by the scorer in order to maintain consistency in scoring.

Additional Examples:

Additional examples are sometimes provided to help a scorer understand the range of a score point. They are used to demonstrate the differences between two or more papers of the same score point and to help scorers better determine where the lines fall between two different score points.

The Rubrics Used for the TASC Test Writing Prompt Are As Follows:

Score Point: 0

The response is completely irrelevant or incorrect, or there is no response.

Score Point: 1

The response provides evidence of an attempt to write an essay that offers an opinion or argument.

- Weakly states or alludes to an opinion or claim
- Has minimal support for opinion or claim
- May be too brief to demonstrate an organizational structure
- Makes no attempt to acknowledge or counter opposing claims
- Uses words that are inappropriate, overly simple, or unclear
- Provides a minimal or no concluding statement or section
- Has errors in usage and conventions that interfere with meaning

Score Point: 2

The response is an incomplete or oversimplified essay that develops and supports an opinion or argument.

- Attempts to establish an opinion or claim
- Develops, sometimes unevenly, reasons and/or evidence to support opinion or claim
- Attempts to use an organizational structure
- Makes little, if any, attempt to acknowledge or counter opposing claims
- Uses simple language, which sometimes lacks clarity
- Provides a weak concluding statement or section
- May have errors in usage and conventions that interfere with meaning

Score Point: 3

The response is a complete essay that develops and supports an opinion or argument.

- Clearly introduces an opinion or claim
- Uses reasoning and evidence to support opinion or claim
- Uses an organizational structure to present reasons and relevant evidence
- Attempts to acknowledge and/or counter opposing claims, as appropriate
- Uses clear word choice
- Uses words and/or phrases to connect ideas
- Uses an appropriate tone
- Provides a concluding statement or section that follows from the ideas presented
- Has few, if any, errors in usage and conventions that interfere with meaning

Score Point: 4

The response is a well-developed essay that develops and supports an opinion or argument.

- Effectively introduces an opinion or claim
- Uses logical, credible, and relevant reasoning and evidence to support opinion or claim
- Uses an organizational strategy to present reasons and relevant evidence
- Acknowledges and counters opposing claims, as appropriate
- Uses precise and purposeful word choice
- Uses words, phrases, and/or clauses that effectively connect and show relationships among ideas
- Uses and maintains an appropriate tone
- Provides a strong concluding statement or section that logically follows from the ideas presented
- Has no errors in usage and conventions that interfere with meaning

TASC Test Writing Prompt Exemplars

Score Point 4

We like to think of ourselves as a prosperous and caring society, but some of our seniors may be our neediest citizens. They have usually worked and paid income and property taxes for years, which helped to finance free public libraries. Our seniors would experience a hardship if they had to pay even a small fee out of their fixed income to later use the libraries that their tax dollars funded. While the library system is not “free,” it is a system that they have paid into, often for decades. There is inherent good in a system that allows collaboration among many in order to achieve a greater good, and the public library system does a tremendous amount of good for a relatively small taxpayer investment.

It is true that the services offered by public libraries are not technically “free.” As noted in the article “Can We Afford ‘Free’ Libraries?” there are costs associated with facilities, personnel, and technology, among others, that taxpayers must pay for. However, libraries are invaluable to a society that places a high premium on giving everyone equal access to life-enhancing educational materials and opportunities. If we honestly assess our country’s state of affairs, we would have to admit that not everyone can afford to purchase books and music recordings. Not everyone can afford to purchase a computer system for the home. There are many people, particularly senior citizens, who have even had to stop their subscriptions to their local newspapers and go to a library to read the daily news. Additionally, there are many people who cannot afford to pay fees for the use of facilities where they can meet with friends who share common interests.

Few places remain in our communities where people can enter without an admission price, sit comfortably in a heated or air-conditioned environment, and have the quiet enjoyment of reading a newspaper or magazine. People may often first associate children with libraries. However, libraries offer services for teens looking to apply for their first job and for students preparing their college entrance essays. Many local libraries offer tax preparation services at no cost for seniors and low-income families, and they offer their facilities to be used for exercise classes for seniors or meeting places for community organizations.

Libraries are indeed a “worthwhile investment” as argued in the article “The Worthwhile Investment in Free Public Libraries.” Libraries can be “anchors in the community” by providing resources, preserving history, facilitating services, and bringing people together. Even in today’s changing world, tax dollars for libraries are well spent.

Annotation: This 4-point response is a well-developed essay that strategically builds to the conclusion that libraries are a “worthwhile investment” for communities in that they serve many people in a variety of ways. The essay uses text-based evidence to support the claim: libraries preserve history; they offer services, such as tax preparation assistance or meeting places; they offer a quiet place to read and learn. The essay also addresses counter-claims (from the second article) that the services are not “free” by noting the invaluable services that libraries provide. The ideas are well connected throughout the essay, and the connections are further enhanced by the variety of sentence structure employed by the writer. The precise word choice (“prosperous and caring society,” “inherent good,” “life-enhancing,” “facilitating services”) contributes to the essay’s formal, reasoned tone. There are no errors in usage or conventions that interfere with meaning.

Score Point 3

Although libraries once were important to communities, they have lost that importance and therefore should no longer be free to the public. Fees should be established for the services that the libraries provide. Tax payers should not bear the burden of operating libraries that they no longer use.

The article titled “Can We Afford ‘Free’ Libraries?” states that “the library is losing some of its relevance.” This is true. People now have computers they can use to Google anything they want. They no longer have to go to a library to look through old books and newspapers to find the information they need. They can also use computers to purchase books for themselves and their children from Amazon. They can build their own libraries without having to drive or walk to the community library to look for books that may end up not even being there. The article also says that tax payer’s money should go to other more important services, like EMT and fire departments. Saving people’s lives is far more important than giving them a place to hang out. As the article points out, taxes should be used for these services because they “could save valuable jobs and services.”

It's true that a library also employs people and provides services. Like the first article says, libraries do give people a place to meet, they help educate people, and they preserve history. But why must all taxpayers pay for these, especially if they don't use the services? Therefore, libraries should charge membership fees to belong. If people don't want to pay the fees, they can go to schools.

In conclusion, I feel that libraries should no longer be subsidized by tax payer's money. Libraries are a thing of the past. "The nonprofit public library is well over 100 years old." People who want a library should pay for it, and people who don't use libraries should use their money to support other community services.

Annotation: This 3-point response addresses the demands of the prompt and is a complete essay with a clear introduction, development, and conclusion. The essay uses evidence and reasoning from the texts (lack of relevance, other services that need taxpayers' money) to support the claim that libraries should no longer be free to the public and funded by taxpayers' money. The claim is clearly established in the first paragraph and supported with text-based evidence in the second paragraph. The third paragraph attempts to acknowledge and refute the counter-claim that libraries offer employment and services for a community, but there is some ambiguity in this part of the argument. Overall, the ideas are connected (references to jobs at end of second paragraph and beginning of third, use of transitional words such as "also" and "therefore"), and the word choice is simple, but clear. There is some attempt at using more academic language ("bear the burden," "subsidized"). The few errors in usage (apostrophe use in phrase "taxpayers money," run-on sentence in third paragraph, some unclear pronoun references) do not interfere with the essay's overall meaning but do indicate a lack of knowledge and/or application of basic rules.

Score Point 2

Yes, libraries should still be free to everyone. Some people cannot afford internet or computers and can't learn information they need to know unless they have a library where they can do that. Other people need help with their taxes. Some people need a place to meet their friends where it's quite and you can work.

Everyone has to pay a lot of taxes. Too much, I think. So we should get something from all those taxes that we pay.

Libraries help to make people smarter, like the article says. They help people self-educate and stop "brain drain."

Libraries also are a place where history can be saved. Like, important things about your community can be found out by going to the library.

They are a hub of community activity because they are a place where people can meet and learn things, like how to get ready for a test or how to babysit. If we didn't have libraries,

people will not have a place to learn those things for free. They would have to pay for them and not everyone has the money to pay for those services.

People's taxes are needed for other services, too, like EMT and fire services, that are true. But that doesn't mean taxes can't still keep libraries open and free to the public. So I say, keep libraries free to keep people smart.

Annotation: This 2-point response is an over-simplified essay that weakly states the claim in the first sentence ("Yes, libraries should still be free to everyone") and then supports the claim with ideas from the text and the writer's own experiences and ideas. The essay has an introduction (statement of claim), uneven development, and a simple conclusion. The writer has attempted to use text-based support in paragraphs 1-3 in which ideas are taken rather directly from the text that supports free libraries. There are inconsistencies in how the text evidence is integrated, quoted, or acknowledged. The paragraphs are simple and lack full development. The writer's word choice is informal and sometimes vague ("Like, important things"). Errors throughout the essay (frequent misspelling of "libraries" and other words, lack of apostrophe in "thats" and "its," sentence structure errors, capitalization errors) indicate a lack of knowledge about usage and conventions, even though a reader may still be able to determine the intended meaning.

Score Point 1

Even though libraries are good to have, we really don't need them anymore! Now we have commuters and can get what we need on our phones. Libraries use to be a place to go to borrow books or read the news or sometimes to go to a meeting. Like AA meetings. Those were good reasons to have a library. But now libraries don't mater. We can do all those things on our phones. Well, maybe we can't have meetings on our phones. But you can set a meeting date on your phone and then go to a meeting at a school or church or something.

Taxes should not be used for libraries. There are better ways to use tax money.
That is my opinion about libraries.

Annotation: This 1-point response is a weak attempt at writing an argumentative essay to state and support a claim. The claim is vaguely and informally stated in the first sentence: "Even tho libraries are good to have, we really don't need them anymore!" The writer supports this claim by repeatedly stating that "commuters" [sic] and phones can do what libraries used to do and makes no clear attempt at addressing a counter-claim. Overall, the organization is weak as the writer moves from one idea to the next without making clear connections, and the language is very simple, informal, and vague ("get what we need," "libraries don't mater," "all those things"). Within this brief response there are frequent usage and convention errors ("Even tho," "use," "Like AA meetings," "mater," shifts in person) which may interfere with meaning and the coherence of the response. The concluding statement is minimal and contributes nothing to the response.

Score Point 0

There is an ongoing debate in the public domain as to whether free public libraries are still practical in today's world. I agree.

OR

I never went to a liberry so I don't know.

Annotation: These 0-point responses do not address the demands of the prompt. In the first example, the test taker has simply copied the first sentence of the prompt and stated a completely vague and unsupported opinion. In the second example, the test taker acknowledges the topic ("liberry") but does not attempt to develop any argument regarding the topic.



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