

PRAXIS

Strategy for Writing Passing Essays

THE PRODUCT

Do you know how to structure, organize, develop, and write a mechanically clean essay? This is not a test of style or creativity; it is one of knowledge and skill.

1. Topic Paragraph: orient reader to topic and present essay's main idea (thesis).
2. Topic Sentences: begin each paragraph with a point that clearly supports the thesis.
3. Details: provide examples and support for the argument.
4. Conclusion: summarize the essay's main points.
5. Active voice: avoid passive construction.
6. Mechanical correctness: demonstrate standard usage in grammar, punctuation, spelling.

STRATEGY

Test-takers have only 30 minutes in which to successfully write their essay. Therefore, time management and planning are essential. Writers who don't plan run the risk of producing an incomplete essay.

1. **Read and understand the topic.** (1 minute)
 - a. What is the topic about?
 - b. Decide if you are for or against the topic.
 - c. What do you know about the topic that you could write about?

Sample Prompt:

Some people say that machines cause difficulty for people. Others say that machines help people. Choose one of these positions. Give a specific example of a machine that causes difficulty or one that helps people. Write an essay that explains how the machine you chose causes difficulty for people or helps people.

The topic is about machines. I have to decide to write about machines that cause difficulty for people OR about machines that help people. Which ever I choose, I have to give a specific example.

2. **Decide on a focus and write a thesis statement.** (2 Minutes)
 - a. What is it about your topic that is significant?
 - b. Use some of the key terms from the prompt in your thesis.
 - c. Write your thesis in one clear sentence.

I can think of a lot of positive machines: computers, escalators and elevators, cars, the heart-lung machine. I'm a Science Education major and I know a lot about the heart-lung machine: it circulates blood in place of the heart during an operation when the heart is unable to pump. That's what I'll write about.

Sample Thesis:

Heart-lung machines are machines that help people by taking the place of the heart during surgery.

3. **Write a brief outline that includes the following essay elements.**
(6 minutes)
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Thesis statement
 - c. Topic sentence and details for each supporting paragraph- Focus on how, what, why.
 - d. Conclusion

Sample Outline:

- a. A heart lung machine saves lives.
 - b. People would die if the machines weren't available.
 - c. The machine circulates and filters blood during operations.
Special membranes filter the blood, removing impurities.
The heart can literally stop while the heart-lung machine is in use.
Doctors have to restart the heart
 - d. Summarize my main points in conclusion.
4. **Write the essay.** (17 minutes)
 - a. Use your outline as your guide
 - b. Present each point with specific examples and then move on to the next point.
 - c. Keep an eye on the time. If you begin to run out of time, it is better to write a short paragraph than to write no paragraph.
 - d. Plan to write a minimum of 4 paragraphs total – approximately 350 words.
 - e. At the very least each paragraph should have a topic sentence, 2 sentences of development, and a summary sentence.
 5. **Proofread and edit.** (4 minutes)
 - a. Did you stick to your thesis?
 - b. Check sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
 - c. Remember that the test readers take the time restriction into account when scoring. They do expect to see corrections.

PRAXIS SCORING SHEET

6	5	4	3	2	1
Extremely well written	Well written	Fairly well written	Some writing ability but contains obvious errors	Limited writing ability	Minimal writing ability
A	B+	B	C	D	E
Thoroughly addresses the prompt question	Strongly addresses the prompt question	Adequately addresses the prompt question	Does not clearly address the prompt question	Does not answer the prompt question	Incoherent, off prompt
Provides detailed supporting arguments, illustrations, examples	Provides clear supporting arguments, illustrations, examples	Provides some supporting arguments, illustrations, examples	Provides limited supporting arguments, illustrations, examples	Provides no supporting arguments, illustrations, examples	
Well organized paragraphs and sentences	Fairly well organized paragraphs and sentences	Acceptably organized paragraphs and sentences	Poorly organized paragraphs and sentences	Lack of organization	
Variety of sentence structure and vocabulary	Variety of sentence structure and vocabulary	Reliable sentence structure and vocabulary	Problems with sentence structure and wording, including inappropriate word choice	Problems with sentence structure and wording, including inappropriate word choice	Serious problems with sentence structure and wording, including inappropriate word choice
May contain minor errors	Some mechanical or diction errors	Some mechanical or diction errors, but free of an identifiable pattern of error	Identifiable pattern or group of error	Serious errors or flaw in content, diction, usage and mechanics	Serious and continuing errors