

### **Suggestions for Tutoring ACT Writing:**

1. Discuss the section question format and grading
2. Discuss how to answer it
3. Read through a sample question and sample writing answer
4. Discuss the parts of the answer
5. Discuss strategies and tips for improvement
6. Have student answer a writing question
7. Identify areas that can be improved
8. Point out areas that can be improved
9. Map out/outline a writing answer together to a new section
10. Discuss steps and strategies as you go

Assign homework to be completed if student has time. Homework example: Student should outline and complete one writing section.

### **ACT WRITING SECTION REVIEW SUGGESTIONS:**

#### **About the ACT Writing Test**

The ACT writing test is a 40-minute essay test that measures your writing skills. The test consists of one writing prompt that will describe a complex issue and present three different perspectives on that issue. It is a paper-and-pencil test. You will write your essay in pencil (no mechanical pencils or ink pens) on the lined pages of an answer folder.

You are asked to read the prompt and write an essay in which you develop your own perspective on the issue. Your essay should analyze the relationship between your perspective and one or more other perspectives. You may adopt a perspective from the prompt, partially or fully, or you may generate your own. Your score will not be affected by the point of view you take on the issue.

- clearly state your own perspective on the issue and analyze the relationship between your perspective and at least one other perspective
- develop and support your ideas with reasoning and examples
- organize your ideas clearly and logically
- communicate your ideas effectively in Standard written English

How is the ACT Essay scored? The ACT essay is scored on a scale of 1 to 12. Your essay will be read and scored by two different graders on a scale of 1 to 6 in four different domains, for a total score out of 12 in each of these four domains. These four scores will then be averaged for a total score out of 12.

#### **WRITING TEMPLATE:**

**1st paragraph** = 4 sentences

1. Hook (a question or statement that grabs the reader's attention)
2. Restate the first point of view.
3. Restate the opposition.

4. State your thesis AND include the type of examples you will use.

**2nd paragraph** = at least 5 sentences

1. Introduction with a transition
- 2 – 4. Details about your example
5. A sentence that states how your example SPECIFICALLY supports your thesis

**3rd paragraph** = at least 5 sentences

1. Introduction to your example with a transition
- 2 – 4. Details about your example
5. A sentence that states how your example SPECIFICALLY supports your thesis

**4th paragraph** = at least 5 sentences

1. Introduction with a transition & an acknowledgement of the opposition
- 2 – 4. Details about your example
5. A sentence that states how your example SPECIFICALLY supports your thesis

**OPTIONAL paragraph** (helpful for scoring a 10 or above)

1. Introduction with a transition & an acknowledgement of the opposition
- 2 – 4. Details about your example
5. A sentence that states how your example SPECIFICALLY supports your thesis

**Conclusion paragraph** = 2 sentences

1. Use a concluding transition word, mention the examples you used and state that they clearly support your thesis
2. A Zinger (just like a hook, except it is used at the last sentence of the entire essay)

## Sample Prompt

Educators debate extending high school to five years because of increasing demands on students from employers and colleges to participate in extracurricular activities and community service in addition to having high grades. Some educators support extending high school to five years because they think students need more time to achieve all that is expected of them. Other educators do not support extending high school to five years because they think students would lose interest in school and attendance would drop in the fifth year. In your opinion, should high school be extended to five years?

In your essay, take a position on this question. You may write about either one of the two points of view given, or you may present a different point of view on this question. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

## Sample Essay Using Template

**1st paragraph** = 3 sentences

1. Hook (a question or statement that grabs the reader's attention) Is high school really the best time of one's life?
2. Restate the first point of view. Some people think that high school should be five years instead of four years long.

3. Restate the opposition. Others contend that extending the length of high school will not be beneficial for students.
4. State your thesis AND include the type of examples you will use. Schools should not change the four-year schedule because an additional year will cost too much money, students will lose motivation, and a fifth year would be stressful.

**2nd paragraph** = at least 5 sentences

1. Introduction with a transition. Even if high school is the pinnacle of one's life, it cannot simply be extended without consequences.
- 2 – 4. Details about your example. In schools across the country, students are already suffering from budget cuts, and an extra year would simply compound the problem. The most expensive part of any school district's budget is teacher salaries, and it would take more teachers to staff the additional classes that a fifth year would require. No matter how much a fifth year might help, to take away from the existing budget would lead to fewer supplies to go around, larger class sizes, and further under-compensated educators.
5. A sentence that states how your example SPECIFICALLY supports your thesis. In short, no matter how enjoyable a fifth year may be to teenagers, schools simply cannot afford it.

**3rd paragraph** = at least 5 sentences

1. Introduction to your example with a transition. If money isn't a compelling enough reason to deter districts from adding a fifth year, consider the universal plague of senior-itis.
- 2 – 4. Details about your example. Students as young as 14 complain that they are sick of high school and can't wait for it to be over. College sounds fun and exciting, and high school is the hurdle standing in the way. High schoolers want to live in dorms, eat in a dining hall, and sleep in to noon. To deny them of that opportunity for an entire year would decrease the likelihood of them following through with that dream.
5. A sentence that states how your example SPECIFICALLY supports your thesis. Really, the only cure for senior-itis is graduation, so prolonging that outcome will only dampen students' spirits.

**4th paragraph** = at least 5 sentences

1. Introduction with a transition & an acknowledgement of the opposition. It is tempting to require a fifth year of high school to help teenagers develop life skills that are beneficial in the job market, but colleges provide that help without the added stress of attending a school that is determined based on geography alone.
- 2 – 4. Details about your example. High school students across America feel marginalized within their schools because they cannot find friends who have the same interests. In small towns, everyone knows everyone else, and it is difficult to "re-invent" oneself. College allows for personal and creative freedom that leads to self-assurance and general satisfaction.
5. A sentence that states how your example SPECIFICALLY supports your thesis. College is a much better time to learn about being an adult because it is much easier to envision oneself as an adult when the pressures of growing up aren't constant stresses.

**OPTIONAL paragraph** (helpful for scoring a 10 or above)

1. Introduction with a transition. The process of advancing through high school as a springboard into advanced studies may not be perfect, but extending the journey could be disastrous.

2 – 4. Details about your example. Any issue that a high school currently faces will not get any better by adding a fifth year. Everything from violence to drop-out rates to lack of interest in extracurricular programs will be exacerbated by the implementation of a fifth year of high school. Even if enough support could be generated to institute such a measure, it would likely be reversed after seeing the ramifications.

5. A sentence that states how your example SPECIFICALLY supports your thesis. High schoolers have enough problems already, so making them stay in a place that suffers from a multitude of issues will not be in their best interest.

**Conclusion paragraph** = 2 sentences

1. Use a concluding transition word, mention the examples you used and state that they clearly support your thesis. In all, a fifth year of high school would cripple the already wounded system in terms of money, motivation, and stress.

2. A Zinger (just like a hook, except it is used at the last sentence of the entire essay). If America is truly concerned with helping its youth, people will make every effort to improve the four years of high school that we already have.

## Essay

Is high school really the best time of one's life? Some people think that high school should be five years instead of four years long. Others contend that extending the length of high school will not be beneficial for students. Schools should not change the four-year schedule because an additional year will cost too much money, students will lose motivation, and a fifth year would be stressful.

Even if high school is the pinnacle of one's life, it cannot simply be extended without consequences. In schools across the country, students are already suffering from budget cuts, and an extra year would simply compound the problem. The most expensive part of any school district's budget is teacher salaries, and it would take more teachers to staff the additional classes that a fifth year would require. No matter how much a fifth year might help, to take away from the existing budget would lead to fewer supplies to go around, larger class sizes, and further under-compensated educators. In short, no matter how enjoyable a fifth year may be to teenagers, schools simply cannot afford it.

If money isn't a compelling enough reason to deter districts from adding a fifth year, consider the universal plague of senior-itis. Students as young as 14 complain that they are sick of high

school and can't wait for it to be over. College sounds fun and exciting, and high school is the hurdle standing in the way. High schoolers want to live in dorms, eat in a dining hall, and sleep in to noon. To deny them of that opportunity for an entire year would decrease the likelihood of them following through with that dream. Really, the only cure for senior-itis is graduation, so prolonging that outcome will only dampen students' spirits.

It is tempting to require a fifth year of high school to help teenagers develop life skills that are beneficial in the job market, but colleges provide that help without the added stress of attending a school that is determined based on geography alone. High school students across America feel marginalized within their schools because they cannot find friends who have the same interests. In small towns, everyone knows everyone else, and it is difficult to "re-invent" oneself. College allows for personal and creative freedom that leads to self-assurance and general satisfaction. College is a much better time to learn about being an adult because it is much easier to envision oneself as an adult when the pressures of growing up aren't constant stresses.

The process of advancing through high school as a springboard into advanced studies may not be perfect, but extending the journey could be disastrous. Any issue that a high school currently faces will not get any better by adding a fifth year. Everything from violence to drop-out rates to lack of interest in extracurricular programs will be exacerbated by the implementation of a fifth year of high school. Even if enough support could be generated to institute such a measure, it would likely be reversed after seeing the ramifications. High schoolers have enough problems already, so making them stay in a place that suffers from a multitude of issues will not be in their best interest.

In all, a fifth year of high school would cripple the already wounded system in terms of money, motivation, and stress. If America is truly concerned with helping its youth, people will make every effort to improve the four years of high school that we already have.

### **ACT Writing Prompts for Practice:**

<https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-preparation/writing-sample-essays/writing-sample-essays/sample-essay-1.html>

### **Tips for Taking the ACT Writing Test**

#### Pace Yourself

The ACT writing test contains one question to be completed in 40 minutes. When asked to write a timed essay, most writers find it useful to do some planning before they write the essay and to

do a final check of the essay when it is finished. It is unlikely that you will have time to draft, revise, and recopy your essay.

### Plan

Before writing, carefully read and consider all prompt material. Be sure you understand the issue, its perspectives, and your essay task. The prewriting questions included with the prompt will help you analyze the perspectives and develop your own. Use these questions to think critically about the prompt and generate effective ideas in response. Ask yourself how your ideas and analysis can best be supported and organized in a written argument. Use the prewriting space in your test booklet to structure or outline your response.

### Write

Establish the focus of your essay by making clear your argument and its main ideas. Explain and illustrate your ideas with sound reasoning and meaningful examples. Discuss the significance of your ideas: what are the implications of what you have to say, and why is your argument important to consider? As you write, ask yourself if your logic is clear, you have supported your claims, and you have chosen precise words to communicate your ideas.

### Review Your Essay

Take a few minutes before time is called to read over your essay. Correct any mistakes. If you find any words that are hard to read, recopy them. Make corrections and revisions neatly between the lines. Do not write in the margins. Your readers know you had only 40 minutes to compose and write your essay. Within that time limit, try to make your essay as polished as you can.

Tip 1: Know what a 12 looks like

Tip 2: Pick a perspective and stick to it

Tip 3: Use concrete examples

Tip 4: Pay attention to timing & your energy level

### **Fine Tuning Tips**

1. <https://magoosh.com/hs/act/act-writing/2016/how-i-got-a-perfect-36-on-the-new-act-essay/>
2. <https://blog.prepscholar.com/how-to-get-a-perfect-12-on-the-act-writing-essay>
3. <https://blog.prepscholar.com/how-to-write-an-act-essay-step-by-step-example>
4. <https://blog.prepscholar.com/act-writing-tips-15-strategies-to-raise-your-essay-score>

### **Writing Samples**

<https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-preparation/writing-sample-essays.html?page=0&chapter=0>