

WINNING STRATEGIES FOR

ACT[®]



ESSAY WRITING:

[Redacted text]

ACT ESSAY WRITING (40 MINUTES)

Education and the Workplace

Many colleges and universities have cut their humanities departments, and high schools have started to shift their attention much more definitively toward STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) and away from ELA (English, Language Arts). Representatives from both school boards and government organizations suggest that the move toward STEM is necessary in helping students to participate in a meaningful way in the American workplace. Given the urgency of this debate for the future of education and society as a whole, it is worth examining the potential consequences of this shift in how students are educated in the United States.

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Read and carefully consider these perspectives. Each suggests a particular way of thinking about the shift in American education.

Perspective 1	Perspective 2	Perspective 3
<p>ELA programs should be emphasized over STEM programs. Education is not merely a means to employment: ELA education helps students to live more meaningful lives. In addition, an exclusively STEM-based program cannot help but limit students' creativity and lead them to overemphasize the importance of money and other tangible gains.</p>	<p>ELA programs should be eradicated entirely, except to establish the basic literacy necessary to engage in the hard sciences, mathematics, and business. Reading and writing are activities that are best saved for the leisure of students who enjoy them.</p>	<p>ELA and STEM programs should always be in equal balance with one another. Both are necessary to providing a student with a well-rounded education. Moreover, equal emphasis will allow the fullest possible exposure to many subjects before students choose their majors and careers</p>

ACT ESSAY WRITING (40 MINUTES)

Essay Task

Write a unified, coherent essay in which you evaluate multiple perspectives on the issue of how schools should balance STEM and ELA subjects. In your essay, be sure to:

- **analyze** and **evaluate** the perspectives given
- **state** and **develop** your own perspective on the issue
- **explain** the relationship between your perspective and those given

Your perspective may be in full agreement with any of the others, in partial agreement, or wholly different. Whatever the case, support your ideas with logical reasoning and detailed, persuasive examples.

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How to Write the ACT Essay

Your job is to write an essay in which you take some sort of position on the prompt, all while assessing the three perspectives provided in the boxes. Find a way to anchor your essay with a unique perspective of your own that can be defended and debated, and you are already in the upper echelon of scorers.

Step 1: Work the Prompt

What in the prompt requires you to weigh in? Why is this issue still the subject of debate and not a done deal?

ALWAYS TAKE 2-3 MINUTES TO MAKE AN OUTLINE AND WRITE A SOLID THESIS STATEMENT!

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Step 2: Work the Perspectives

Typically, the three perspectives will be split: one *for* , one *against* , and one *in the middle* . Your goal in Step 2 is to figure out where each perspective stands and then identify at least one shortcoming of each perspective. For the example above, ask yourself:

- What does each perspective consider?
- What does each perspective overlook?

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Step 3: Generate Your Own Perspective

Now it's time to come up with your own perspective! If you merely restate one of the three given perspectives, you won't be able to get into the highest scoring ranges. You'll draw from each of the perspectives, and you may side with one of them, but your perspective should have something unique about it.

- Be sure to point out the counter-arguments and then disprove them with your examples (strongest when placed in the *penultimate* — second to last — paragraph)

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Step 4: Put It All Together

Now that you have your ideas in order, here's a blueprint for how to organize the ACT essay. This blueprint works no matter what your prompt is.

Introduction

- Start with a topic sentence that restates the central issue
- Clearly state your position on the issue

Body Paragraph (1)

- Start with a transition/topic sentence that discusses the **OPPOSING SIDE** of your argument
- Discuss the given perspective(s) that would support the opposing argument
- Give a specific example that could be used to support the opposing perspective
- Explain why you disagree with the opposing perspective

Body Paragraph (2)

- Start with a transition/topic sentence that discusses **YOUR POSITION** on the central issue
- Explain your position including any of the given perspectives that support your position
- Give an example that supports your position
- End the paragraph by restating your position

Conclusion

- Recap your discussion
- Restate your perspective and arguments
- Provide a final overarching thought on the topic

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Step 5: (If There's Time): Proofread

Spend one or two minutes on proofreading your essay if you have time. You're looking for big, glaring errors. If you find one, erase it completely or cross it out neatly. Though neatness doesn't necessarily affect your grade, it does make for a happy grader.