



# Preparing for the GRE Writing test

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# What is the GRE?

- GRE stands for Graduate Record Examination
- GRE is used as a test to get into graduate school
  - MCAT: Medical school
  - GMAT: Business school
  - LSAT: Law school
- Evaluate your skills
- Evaluate your verbal, writing, and math

# What are the parts of the GRE?

- Writing
  - 2 essays
- Verbal
  - Reading comprehension
  - Test questions
    - A feather is to a bird as a \_\_\_\_\_ is to a dog.
- Math
  - Math up to Geometry
  - Test questions
    - $X + Y = 12$ . Find  $x$

# Writing Section

- 2 essays
  - 1 essay: Analyze an argument
    - Critique the argument
      - What is valid about the argument?
      - What is not valid about the argument?
    - 1 essay: Respond to an Issue
      - Write an argument
      - Consider the issue and provide a solution
        - What would you suggest be done?
        - Need specific reasons and support
  - 30 minutes to write each essay

# Preparing for the Writing Section

- Basic format: 5 paragraph essay
- Read the question and underline the important parts
- Outline your answer first
  - Write down a thesis statement
  - Think of supporting examples
  - Use personal examples
- Make sure to write down an outline before you start.

# Outline Example

- Outline your answer
- Basic format of an outline
  - Thesis
    - 1<sup>st</sup> supporting point
      - Examples that support that point
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> supporting point
      - Examples that support that point
    - 3<sup>rd</sup> supporting point
      - Examples that support that point
    - Conclusion
      - Restate your main points 2-5 sentences

# Example of “Respond to an Issue ” Questions

- Universities should require every student to take a variety of courses outside the student's field of study.
  - Write a response in which you discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the claim. In developing and supporting your position, be sure to address the most compelling reasons and/or examples that could be used to challenge your position.
- How would you outline this answer?
  - First, determine what is being asked. What are you supposed to argue?
    - Do you agree or disagree with the statement?

[http://www.ets.org/gre/revised\\_general/prepare/analytical\\_writing/issue/pool](http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/analytical_writing/issue/pool)

# Thesis Creation

- Universities should require every student to take a variety of courses outside the student's field of study.
- Thesis: Agree
  - Simple way to write thesis:  
Statement because \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_.
  
  - Universities should require students to take a variety of courses because \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_

# Outline of Essay

- **Question:** Universities should require every student to take a variety of courses outside the student's field of study.
- **Thesis:** Universities should require every student to take a variety of courses outside the student's field of study because many students need the opportunity to figure out what they want to study, multiple courses help make a more well-rounded person, and different courses teach different skills.

# Outline Continued

Thesis: Universities should require every student to take a variety of courses outside the student's field of study because many students need the opportunity to figure out what they want to study, multiple courses help make a more well-rounded person, and different courses teach different skills.

- 1st point: Many students need the opportunity to figure out what they want to study
  - Supporting Points:
    - Average college student changes majors 7 times
    - Freshman students may be undecided and need options

# Outline Continued

Thesis: Universities should require every student to take a variety of courses outside the student's field of study because many students need the opportunity to figure out what they want to study, multiple courses help make a more well-rounded person, and different courses teach different skills.

- 2<sup>nd</sup> point Multiple courses help make a more well-rounded person
  - Supporting Points:
    - Society respects well rounded people
    - Have some knowledge about many different subjects

# Outline of Essay

Thesis: Universities should require every student to take a variety of courses outside the student's field of study because many students need the opportunity to figure out what they want to study, multiple courses help make a more well-rounded person, and different courses teach different skills.

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Point: Different courses teach different skills.
  - Supporting Points:
    - I'm an education major, but still need math skills in my job
    - Chemistry class helps me understand the Anthrax scare that I heard on the news.

# Outline of the Answer

Universities should require every student to take a variety of courses outside the student's field of study because **many students need the opportunity to figure out what they want to study**, **multiple courses help make a more well-rounded person**, and **different courses teach different skills**.

- **1st point: Many students need the opportunity to figure out what they want to study**
  - Supporting Points:
    - Average college student changes majors 7 times
    - Freshman students may be undecided and need options
- **2<sup>nd</sup> point Multiple courses help make a more well-rounded person**
  - Supporting Points:
    - Society respects well rounded people
    - Have some knowledge about many different subjects
- **3<sup>rd</sup> Point: Different courses teach different skills.**
  - Supporting Points:
    - I'm an education major, but still need math skills in my job
    - Chemistry class helps me understand the Anthrax scare that I heard on the news.

Conclusion: Restate your main points

# Essay

- Introduction:
  - Provide background information
  - Begin with a story
  - Last sentence: thesis
  - 3-5 sentences
- Body
  - 2-3 supporting points with example
  - Include personal info and stories
- Conclusion
  - Re-state main argument

# Example of “Analyze the Argument” Questions

- The following appeared as part of an article in a business magazine.
- "A recent study rating 300 male and female advertising executives according to the average number of hours they sleep per night showed an association between the amount of sleep the executives need and the success of their firms. Of the advertising firms studied, those whose executives reported needing no more than 6 hours of sleep per night had higher profit margins and faster growth. These results suggest that if a business wants to prosper, it should hire only people who need less than 6 hours of sleep per night."
- Write a response in which you examine the stated and/or unstated assumptions of the argument. Be sure to explain how the argument depends on these assumptions and what the implications are for the argument if the assumptions prove unwarranted.

# Flaws in the Argument

- Amount of sleep someone needs varies by person
- The product being sold matters in terms of business success
- Location: Where are the products being advertised? Magazine vs. radio
- Location: Where is the business located? New York vs. Delta, Utah
- Why look at the amount of sleep a manager has? Other employees may be more important.

# Thesis and Outline

- Similar to previous example
- Organize example
- Thesis: The study links the amount of sleep advertising exec. receive to the success of their business. The study's argument is flawed and makes assumptions that cannot be supported with the limited data.
- Figure out 2-3 points to discuss
- [http://www.ets.org/gre/revised\\_general/prepare/analytical\\_writing/argument/sample\\_responses](http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/analytical_writing/argument/sample_responses)

# Suggestions for studying

- Use a GRE study book (make sure it is the updated GRE)
- Take a GRE class
- Practice the Writing sections
- Visit the Writing Center to work on how to outline an essay

[www.writingcenter.utah.edu](http://www.writingcenter.utah.edu)

- Look at GRE prep sites
  - <http://www.sparknotes.com/testprep/books/gre/chapter13section3.rhtml>
  - [http://www.ets.org/gre/revised\\_general/prepare/analytical\\_writing/argument/sample\\_responses](http://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/analytical_writing/argument/sample_responses)