

PERSONAL BEST TEST TRAINING

ESSAY STUDY GUIDE

ACT and PSAT/SAT and Other Standardized Tests

 Doorway to College
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Writing Strategies

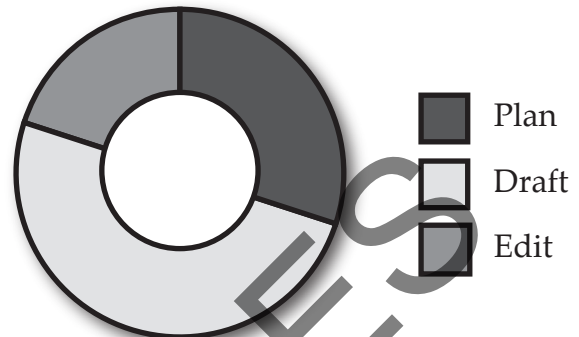
We recommend that you approach the Writing Test with a three-step attack plan based on the stages of the writing process.

Step 1: Plan

Step 1 is the most important. Spend about 10 minutes on this step. If you plan well, the actual writing should go quickly.

- **Analyze the prompt.** Expect the prompt to contain the following elements: the topic, examples, the controversy in the form of a question, and a hint at the writing task. Feel free to mark up the prompt as you read, and jot down any ideas that pop into your mind as you go.
- **Evaluate the perspectives.** Expect to see one positive viewpoint, one negative viewpoint, and a third viewpoint that could go either way. Try to summarize each perspective into a single sentence in your mind. Again, take notes as you read, marking ideas you agree or disagree with and jotting down ideas as they come to mind.
- **Analyze the writing task.** The actual writing task will likely be very similar to those given in the sample prompts in this book. Only the topic will change.
- **Draft a thesis statement.** In a single sentence, state your position on the issue. Your position may be the same as, or in partial agreement with, one of the three perspectives, or it may be all your own.
- **Generate ideas.** Explain the relationship between your perspective and the given perspectives. Generate plenty of specific reasons to back up your general statements. You can use evidence (facts, experience, authority), logical reasoning, and emotional appeals. There are several ways to generate ideas, including free-writing, listing, brainstorming, and clustering. Use the approach that works best for you. The work you do on the planning pages won't be scored.
- **Organize your ideas.** Some students prefer to stick to the traditional five-paragraph essay format. Others want to try a different approach. It's fine to get creative, as long as you fulfill the assignment. The test writers are hoping students will not be afraid to step away from formulaic writing and really show their skills. Check Appendix D of this workbook for a few possible organizational structures.

Three-Step Attack Plan



| | |
|---------------|------------------|
| Step 1: Plan | First 10 minutes |
| Step 2: Draft | 24–25 minutes |
| Step 3: Edit | Last 5–6 minutes |

Key Terms

Here are a few important words you are likely to see in the ACT Writing prompt:

- Unified** – to unite into a whole
- Coherent** – well-ordered, understandable
- Evaluate** – to judge the value or quality of
- Perspective** – viewpoint
- Analyze** – to closely and carefully examine the parts of
- State** – to express
- Develop** – to make clear through elaboration and detail

Traits of a Strong Thesis Statement

- Takes a clear stand on the issue
- Directly answers the question being asked
- Is more than just an observation; it justifies a discussion by making a claim that others might disagree with
- Is specific
- Can usually be stated in a single sentence

Practice Prompt 3

Behavior-Tracking Technology

Individual behavior is increasingly monitored by technology called *behavior learning* or *behavior tracking*. Retailers recommend products and provide coupons to consumers based on past purchasing habits. Internet users see advertisements relevant to their lives, based on their online behavior. Social media and online media outlets present viewers with news and entertainment based on their interests. Behavior tracking is generally seen as a technological advancement, but are there dangers inherent in such data gathering? Given how the mining of “big data” is accelerating, it is worth considering the implications of behavior tracking on our lives.

Consider the following perspectives, which suggest varying viewpoints about behavior-tracking technology.

| Perspective One | Perspective Two | Perspective Three |
|---|---|--|
| Behavior tracking is an invasion of privacy. Data is often gathered about customers without their consent. Such data may one day be used against us in ways we have not yet imagined. | Behavior tracking allows businesses and other organizations to better serve consumers. People can more easily learn about ideas, products, and services that can improve their lives. Such individualization provides better consumer experiences for everyone. | Behavior tracking opens up new possibilities for technology to improve our lives. This challenges us to think about what is possible while also adapting our laws and technologies to protect our freedom and privacy. |

Writing Task

Write a unified, coherent essay evaluating multiple viewpoints on behavior-tracking technology. Be sure to do the following:

- analyze and evaluate each of the given viewpoints
- state and develop your own point of view on the issue
- explain the relationship between your viewpoint and the given viewpoints

Your stance may be in full agreement with any of the others, in partial agreement, or completely different. Support your ideas with reasoning and persuasive details and examples.