

Test Section: THE ANALYTICAL WRITING ASSESSMENT (AWA)

Number of Analytical Writing Questions
One essay — Analysis of an Argument

Time per Essay
30 minutes

About the AWA

- AWA prompts ask you to analyze a flawed argument. Use the argument analysis skills you develop to answer Critical Reasoning questions to identify the argument's conclusion, evidence, and assumptions.
- Your AWA score does not count toward the 200–800 total score. You receive a separate AWA score from 0 to 6.
- Business schools receive the text of your essay along with your score report.
- The essay grading is almost pass/fail in nature: There's a clear line between 1–3 (bad) and 4–6 (good).
- A writer with a solid plan of attack should earn a score of 4 or higher on the AWA.

Here's an Example of a GMAT Analytical Writing Assessment Prompt:

The following appeared in the events column of a municipal magazine:

"In a recent survey, adults under the age of 50 reported spending 55 percent of their free time at the local community center, while those aged 50 or older reported spending only 35 percent of their free time there. As major employers continue to bring jobs for younger people into our area, we can expect a significant increase in usage of the facility in the near future. We should therefore begin allocating a much larger portion of the city budget toward the upkeep of the community center."

Consider how logical you find this argument. In your essay, be sure to discuss the line of reasoning and the use of evidence in the argument. For example, you may need to consider what questionable assumptions underlie the thinking and what alternative explanations or counterpoints might weaken the conclusion. You may also discuss what types of evidence would strengthen or refute the argument, what changes in the argument would make it more logically sound, and what, if anything, would help you better evaluate its conclusion.



Note that the final paragraph of the prompt is always the same. Use this fact to your advantage: you can use the same kind of analysis and essay structure on every practice essay you write, confident that you will approach your Test Day essay the same way.

Kaplan Argument Essay Template

Since all GMAT essay prompts present you with the same task, you can organize your response using a proven template:

- Paragraph 1: Show that you understand the argument, in particular the conclusion and evidence, by putting it into your own words.
- Paragraph 2: Point out one flawed assumption in the author's reasoning; explain why it is questionable.
- Paragraph 3: Identify another basis of the author's faulty reasoning; explain why it is questionable.
- In additional paragraphs, describe other flaws in the argument, as time permits.
- Second-to-last paragraph: Describe evidence that would—if it were provided—strengthen the argument.
- Final paragraph: Conclude that without such evidence, you're not persuaded.

AWA Grading Criteria

- Structure: Does your essay have good paragraph unity, organization, and flow? Use the Kaplan template to make sure your essay is organized well. Use transitions and keywords to connect ideas to one another.
- Evidence: It's not enough simply to assert good points. Do you develop them well? How strong and relevant are the examples you provide?
- Depth of Logic: Did you take apart the argument correctly and analyze its major weaknesses effectively? Use the argument analysis skills you will develop for GMAT Critical Reasoning questions to identify key assumptions.
- Style: The GMAT testmaker calls this "control of the elements of standard written English." How well do you express your ideas? Be concise, forceful, and grammatically correct.

Key Takeaway:

The Analytical Writing Assessment is the first section of the GMAT. Knowing exactly what to expect from the essay task is not only key to a high score on the AWA itself, but also a major determinant of your performance on the rest of the exam. Set yourself up for success from the very beginning of the test.