

PTE Academic Lesson Plan Ideas: Test Taking Strategies

Lesson 7 – Write essay

Time allocated: 60 minutes

Step 1: Introduce the Item Type

This is a long-answer item type that assesses writing skills and requires test takers to write a persuasive or argumentative essay on a given topic.

You will have 20 minutes to plan, write and revise an essay about the topic below. Your response will be judged on how well you develop a position, organize your ideas, present supporting details, and control the elements of standard written English. You should write 200-300 words.

Some people think placing advertisements in schools is a great resource for public schools that need additional funding, but others think it exploits children by treating them as a captive audience for corporate sponsors.

Choose which position you most agree with and discuss why you chose that position. Support your point of view with details from your own experiences, observations or reading.



Cut

Copy

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Total Word Count: 0

Step 2: Present the Item Type Strategies

Strategy 1

Make sure you understand what you are being asked to do. It is important that you read the prompt carefully and identify both the focus of the question and the point of view from which you are required to write. If you write off topic, your essay will be scored zero.

Strategy 2

Think of one strong sentence to sum up the main argument. Then think of one strong opening sentence and one strong closing sentence. This will help to focus your ideas. Once you have done this, expand the sentence you have written to sum up the main argument with details and supporting points to create the body of your essay. Then expand the opening sentence to create your introduction and the closing sentence to create your conclusion.

Strategy 3

Once you have written your essay, check it carefully. Make sure that you have written within the required word limit, that your essay has the correct topic focus and point of view, and that your grammar and spelling are correct.

Step 3: Explain and Practice Each Strategy

Strategy 1

Explain to your students that this item type requires them to write about a topic from a particular point of view. For their response to be scored, students need to make sure that they have correctly identified the topic and followed the requirements of the prompt exactly. The prompt may ask them to:

- respond to a question
- agree or disagree with a particular point of view
- take one of two sides in an argument
- describe a situation
- write about the advantages or disadvantages of a particular opinion

Looking for keywords in the prompt will help students identify both the topic focus and the required point of view.

To practice this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities in pairs:

- Give students copies of the following prompt:
Some people think placing advertisements in schools is a great resource for schools that need additional funding, but others think it exploits children by treating them as a captive audience for corporate sponsors. Choose which position you most agree with and discuss why you chose that position. Support your point of view with details from your own experiences, observations or reading.
- Ask students to underline the keywords that identify the topic focus and to circle the keywords that identify the point of view from which the topic should be written.
- Provide feedback to the whole class: This prompt requires students to write about the topic of *placing advertisements in schools*. It also requires them to identify two opposing points of view and choose which one *they most agree with*, namely, either that *placing advertisements in schools is a great resource for schools that need additional funding* or that *placing advertisements in schools exploits children by treating them as a captive audience for corporate sponsors*.

Strategy 2

Tell your students that once they have identified the topic focus and the point of view required, they need to construct a sound persuasive or argumentative essay. First, remind them of the basic essay format: introduction (presentation of topic, argument and counter argument), main body (details refuting counter argument, details supporting own point of view) and conclusion (restatement of argument and supporting claim).

Explain that to focus their ideas in a methodical way, students should first try to think of one strong sentence to sum up the main argument, then think of one strong opening sentence and one strong closing sentence. Once they have done this, they can add details and supporting points to expand the sentence that sums up the main argument to create the body of their essay. They can then develop the opening sentence to create the introduction and the closing sentence to create the conclusion.

To practice this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities in pairs:

- Ask students to decide with a partner which point of view they both most agree with, or can agree to write about together.
- Give each pair a large sheet of paper. Tell them to write the topic and their point of view at the top of the page. Then tell students to write the following in a column on the left:

Introduction

(presentation of topic, argument and counter argument)

Main body

(details refuting counter argument, details supporting own point of view)

Conclusion

(restatement of argument and supporting claim)

- Give students a few minutes to brainstorm ideas. Tell them to write their ideas on the paper next to the most appropriate sections of the essay. (e.g., Introduction: advertising in schools = great idea for school funding; Main body: many schools underfunded, controlled advertising could bring in needed money, students/teachers could vote on which companies are allowed to advertise, schools do not need to accept advertising from inappropriate companies, ...Conclusion: controlled advertising in schools could be very beneficial ...)
- Once students have written their sentences, have them share their ideas with the class.
- Explain that, having summed up the main argument and opening and closing ideas, they now have a framework for their essay, which they can expand on.
- Give students time to expand their sentences with details and supporting points to create a draft essay.

Strategy 3

Remind your students that they should write their essay as quickly as possible, keeping in mind the topic focus and point of view and remembering to leave time to give their work a final check. Once they have written their essay, they should make sure that they have written within the required word limit, that their essay has the correct topic focus and point of view, and that their grammar and spelling is correct.

Explain to your students that they will now review their brainstormed notes to check the topic focus, the point of view and the appropriateness of their ideas.

To practice this checking strategy, ask your class to do the following activities:

- Ask each pair to compare their drafts with other pairs. Have students discuss whether they think their drafts have covered the topic appropriately and extensively enough, or whether they have missed out any key areas, lost focus or strayed from the point of view.
- Although they only have drafts at this stage, you could ask students to check their work for spelling or grammar mistakes.
- Have students share their experiences with the class and discuss any problems or queries.
- Put pairs into groups of four or six and give them copies of the sample essays for Item 1. Have students check the essays for length, topic focus, point of view, and grammar and spelling. Ask them to rank the essays from the weaker to the stronger.
- After they have done this, provide the explanations for Item 1.

Step 4: Respond to a Write Essay Item

Explain to your students that they will now respond to a test item simulating the test conditions. They will have 20 minutes to read the prompt and write their essay. Remind students of the three strategies covered in this lesson and ask them to apply these strategies.

Give out copies of Item 2.

Step 5: Provide Feedback

Ask your students if they were able to use the strategies. Which one was the most difficult to apply? Which one do they think was the most useful? Ask students to evaluate each other's essays in pairs or groups.

Now show the three sample essays for Item 2 and ask students to rank the essays from the weaker to the stronger. Then provide the explanations for Item 2.

Item 1: Sample Responses

B1 Response

In my opinion, placing advertisement is a good way for public schools to increase their funding for the additional needs. Though there are some bad affects in this method, yet I think it has more advantages and the school can carry out some actions to avoid the bad affects of this method.

Advertisement can bring many different informations to the school children. Since the schools can only bring limited informations about the word, advertisement can be an other medium for the children to know more about the world. Advertisement can bring informations about countries, news friends and interesting for the school children in the world. School gets money from advertisings. If they need money since to build or make new building or more computer or eqipment, they can make event or ask help in advertisement. Some people not happy advertisement ask somethings especaly the money. Some advertisings are bad like expensive mobile phone. They make people to feel bad. Also alchol not good to and not appropriate.

Schools can stop the advertisements wich will have bad impact on children from putting in the schools. In my opinion depends the topic. Schools can decide the tpoic and take an action to never to do it.

B2 Response

Some people think placing advertisements in schools is a great resource for public schools and need additionally funding, however, others think it exploits children by treating them as a captive audience for corporate sponsors.

In my opinion, advertisemnts should not be placed in schools on the purpose of rasing fund. Schools are different places with other organizations in the society. It is the place where children receive education. Most of them are like naive blank slate compared with adults. Kids get the knowledge of maths, English, science etc. Placing advertisement in schools will distract those kids who don't have controlling power on themselves. Clean and clear places should be protected in order to garantee a better education quality in schools and healthy growth of the students.

I remembered when I was in primary school some advertisements of food were put in our school. Everyday some kids just watched the advertisments and discussed with fellow classmates which kind of food was better. They did not focus on their studies. After they went back home, they just cried for the food from their parents. Later the advertisments were cancelled.

In conclusion, schools are quiet and non-profitable organization where children got their education. Advertisement should be banned from the schools. We should ensure a good and quiet place for kids to study.

C1 Response

Whilst public schools are largely underfunded, advertisements in schools can often condition children to grow up with certain superficial values.

Often public schools have extremely intelligent students who cannot afford to attend a better funded school due to family circumstances. Although it could be argued that such a great mind could be better utilised and developed in a better funded school with more opportunities available, advertisements may hinder the growth and negatively impact the child. The minds of children are easily molded and influenced, especially within the context of the school environment where learning is enhanced. Advertisements encourage consumerism, superficiality and can often condition a brain against independent thought. I believe that advertisements only show what is 'in vogue' which would discourage individual expression (whether it be through clothes, hairstyles or tastes). As it is, school playgrounds are highly complex social environments, where segregation frequently occurs and many students are osterized and teased. Displaying advertisements at school would only reinforce what society deems as acceptable and would further isolate any students who felt 'different' to their peers. Furthermore, advertisements encourage consumerism and make impressionable students want to spend money on expensive things to validate themselves and fit in with their peers.

School can often be a very difficult and confusing time, as students are growing up and learning more about themselves. The fewer expectations placed on them (particularly from society; through advertisements), allows them to grow into more confident adults who are comfortable with themselves, can accept themselves and have the right values.

Item 1: Explanations of Sample Responses

B1 Response

Explanation: This essay minimally answers the question on the topic. The supporting points do not demonstrate a coherent and well-developed logic that supports the test taker's position on the topic. The introduction states the test taker's position, the second paragraph contains minimal supporting points, and the conclusion is unrelated to the test taker's stated position. Incorrect use of plural nouns and preposition errors prevent this essay from receiving full credit for grammar usage and mechanics. The vocabulary is limited and imprecise. Some words are inappropriate for the context. There are several spelling errors. This essay is 204 words.

B2 Response

Explanation: This essay answers the question on the topic and is well organized. There is a clear introduction, body and conclusion. Personal experience is used to support the main idea. There are obvious grammar errors in sentences with complex grammatical structures. However, most grammatical errors do not impede communication. Imprecise vocabulary prevents the response from receiving full credit for general linguistic range. There are four spelling errors. This essay is 219 words.

C1 Response

Explanation: The position is discussed in the first paragraph, supported by the details in the second paragraph and then summarized in the conclusion. The response demonstrates very good general linguistic and vocabulary range and control of standard English grammar. There is 1 spelling error. This essay is 253 words.

Item 2: Sample Responses

B1 Response

In my point of view, I am agree with the statement "exploring outer space is important". Nowadays, some people might not be consider about what would happen in the future. By exploring outer space, we could describe and detect the situation over there. It's very important that we could see how far the outer space growth and the effect of global, instead of doing nothing by save our money indeed. We learn many thing in space and may be make another place. The moral thing about this case is different person has a different perspective to look after their future life. We need to spend money for our future and knowledges. Don't to spend the moni to war, break building and an kill. Spend the moni to explor and make plan for future. Also another enegy in space.

We need to know others people in space. May be other far the outer space. We need to find. May ne they come here and make war. Exploring outer space is important to learn. May be we need space. There are more people, more building house every day. In the future we need other place to live. Space is other place if we know.

B2 Response

Nowadays you can travel without problems to the moon if you have enough money. In a few years it will be the same with other planets. Regarding that the earth is in danger, scientologists pretend there are just a few years left, it is very important to look for alternatives. If there is a planet where human being is able to survive it should be found soon. Otherwise menhood will die out. As already mentioned, we actually have to be scared about the world going under. Based on experts it will come soon, nature will take its place back either by water or by eruptions/earth quakes. Thus, we really need an alternative.

As I know a planet similar to our Earth has already been found. Now there are doing some test about the ability to life there. I think in future travelling from Earth to Saturn will be like today travelling from Sydney to Melbourne. Thus, it is really important that they are goining on doing tests there.

To sum up, it is a good idea to examine space. There is hope, that something even better than Earth will be found. Actually, I would like to see another planet, but I think that won't happen in that time.

C1 Response

I believe that space exploration has its advantages and its disadvantages. However, I feel that its disadvantages outweigh its advantages.

Firstly, many people argue that the universe is so big and that it would be an awful waste of space if we were the only ones occupying it and it is for this reason that we should explore new frontiers in the space. I do not agree with this stance because we have enough to discover here on our planet as it stands. There are uncharted territories and breath-taking vistas that we have yet to encounter or even species of flora and fauna that have yet to be identified.

Secondly, there is talk of us humans having so much to learn from the universe and that the cure for our diseases and pain is out there somewhere in the universe. If we were to look at the amount of money being pumped into space exploration we will see that billions of dollars are essentially being 'wasted'. Back in the 1950s there was the 'Space Race' between Russia and the USA to put the first man into space. All the money spent on the race could have been put to much better use i.e. preventing world poverty. I firmly believe that money spent on space could be spent on much more important research here on earth such as finding a cure for cancer or even just better quality of life in third world countries.

In conclusion there are still many things to do here on our beautiful planet. As humans we are the only species that does not contribute to the ecosystem -we make things worse off for everyone. I think we should work towards making our planet a better place instead of just looking for a replacement.

Item 2: Explanations of Sample Responses

B1 Response

Explanation: This response addresses the prompt by agreeing that “exploring outer space is important.” However, the details are not developed and do not strongly or logically support the test taker’s position on the topic. There are obvious grammar errors. The vocabulary is limited and imprecise. The vocabulary range is basic. Some words are not appropriate for the context. There are several spelling errors. This essay is 202 words.

B2 Response

Explanation: This essay addresses the topic by taking a position in favor of space exploration. The main ideas and details relate to the topic of the essay and the test taker’s position is explicitly stated in the final paragraph. Ideas within paragraphs are not organized and there is no introduction to the essay. There are obvious grammar errors in sentences with complex grammatical structures. However, most grammatical errors do not impede communication. Imprecise vocabulary prevents the response from receiving full credit for general linguistic range. The vocabulary range is basic. There are several spelling errors. This essay is 208 words.

C1 Response

Explanation: The test taker’s position is clear and supporting details are provided and explained. The essay follows a logical structure. Minor grammatical mistakes prevent this response from receiving full credit for grammar usage and mechanics, although the intended meaning of sentences with grammatical errors is clear. General vocabulary range is good. There are no significant spelling errors. This essay is 297 words.