

A Generic AP Open Essay Rubric

9 Essays earning a score of 9 meet the criteria for an 8 and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their argument, thorough in development, or impressive in their control of language. They demonstrate uncommon skill and sometimes put a cultural/historical frame around the subject. Descriptors that come to mind are: **“a rising 8”, masterly, sophisticated, unusually impressive, complex.**

8 Essays earning a score of 8 **effectively** develop an argument for the prompt topic. They combine adherence to the topic with excellent organization, content, and insight, facile use of language, and mastery of mechanics. The evidence and explanations appropriately and convincingly support the writer’s position. The prose demonstrates a consistent ability to control a wide range of elements of effective writing but is not necessarily flawless. Descriptors that come to mind are: **maturely written, specific, consistent, well-supported.**

7 Essays earning a score of 7 meet the criteria for a 6 but provide more complete explanation, more thorough development, or more mature prose style. It is a thinner version of the excellent paper, still impressive, cogent, convincing, but less well handled than an 8 in terms of organization, insight, or vocabulary. Descriptors that come to mind are: **“a rising 6”, clear understanding, less precise, less well-supported, maturing, this writer has potential but hasn’t quite got it all.**

6 Essays earning a score of 6 are **adequate** in developing an argument for the prompt topic. The evidence and explanations appropriately and sufficiently support the writer’s position. The language may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but generally the prose is clear. It may be less mature in thought or less well handled in terms of organization, syntax, or mechanics. Descriptors might include: **less mature, says something, on target, clearly worded, some difficulties, but just above average.**

5 Essays earning a score of 5 develop an argument for the prompt topic, but their evidence and explanations used to support that argument may be uneven, inconsistent, or limited. The writer’s argument is generally clear but the link between the evidence and the argument may be strained. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the writer’s ideas. Descriptors might include: **uneven, limited, inconsistent development, says something but perhaps not so eloquently.**

4 Essays earning a 4 are average to below average and inadequately develop an argument for the prompt topic. The essay maintains the general idea of the writing assignment, shows some sense of organization, but is weak in content, maturity of thought, language facility, and/or mechanics. The writer’s position may be inappropriately, insufficiently, or unconvincingly supported by the evidence and explanations used. The student may misunderstand or distort the topic or fail to deal adequately with one important aspect of the topic. Descriptors may include: **incomplete, oversimplified, unconvincing, rambles, paper is too thin, not enough support, inconsistent in controlling the elements of effective writing.**

3 Essays earning a score of 3 meet the criteria for the score of 4 but demonstrate less success in developing an argument on the prompt topic. They are less perceptive in their understanding, or the evidence and explanations may be particularly limited or simplistic. The essays may show less maturity in control of writing. The 3 essay compounds the weaknesses of the 4. Some descriptors may include: **“a falling 4”, meager, irrelevant, insufficient.**

2 Essays earning a score of 2 demonstrate **little success** in developing an argument on the prompt topic. The student may misread the prompt information, fail to develop an argument, or substitute for a simpler task. The student may merely respond to the prompt tangentially with unrelated or inaccurate explanation. The prose often demonstrates consistent weaknesses in writing, such as grammatical problems, a lack of development or organization, or a lack of control. It attempts to deal with the topic but demonstrates serious weaknesses in content and coherence and/or syntax and mechanics. Descriptors include: **serious misreading, unacceptably brief, poorly written, unrelated, doesn't really say anything, says something poorly.**

1 Essays earning a score of 1 meet the criteria for a 2 but are undeveloped, especially simplistic in their explanation, weak in their control of writing, or completely missed the focus of the prompt (though the general topic may be named). Essays may be very brief or very long, but will usually be scarcely coherent or full of mechanical errors. Descriptors include: **“a falling 2”, vacuous, inexact, mechanically unsound, doesn't say anything at all.**

0 Indicates an off-topic response, one that merely repeats the prompt, an entirely crossed-out response, a drawing, or a response in a language other than English.

-- Indicates a blank response.