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GAMSAT Essay® Writing Guide

Expert Tips & Example Essays



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SECTION 2

Overview

Section 2 of the GAMSAT[®] exam, also known as 'Written Communication', assesses your ability to express your thoughts in a logical and effective manner in response to two sets of stimuli. According to ACER, it is meant to be a reflection of your ability to produce and develop ideas in writing. Students who are strong in science and the other sections of the GAMSAT[®] exam often struggle with the writing skills and time pressure involved in Section 2.

Section 2 involves:

60 minutes in total for two essays, which means 30 minutes per essay. In terms of breaking down your time, a common piece of advice is to follow the below:

- 5 Minutes to Plan
- 20 Minutes to Write
- 5 Minutes to Review

The best way to improve your written expression is to practice. The sooner you start writing and getting feedback the better.



Writing is a skill. Thus, writing well requires practice. LOTS OF PRACTICE.

In the GAMSAT you have 30 minutes to write an essay. So, this is what you should do everyday from now until the day of the GAMSAT:

- Find a set of GAMSAT essay quotes - Use the Free Quote Generator on our website.
- Start typing.
- After thirty minutes stop.
- Read what you have written out loud to yourself. Ask yourself:
 - Does what I have written make sense?
 - Do the sentences sound natural?
 - Is what I have written interesting? Would anyone else enjoy reading it?
 - What is the central point of this piece of writing? What was I trying to say?
 - Are there any unnecessary words? Are my sentences too long or clumsy?

If you think you have written something worth reading, let someone else read it. Listen to their criticism.

If you follow this process several things will happen:

- You'll get a good sense of how much you can type in 30 minutes.
- You'll increase the amount you can type in 30 mins.
- Most importantly, you will learn how to write well.

People who write well do well in the written communication section of the GAMSAT. Doing well in this section is essential for getting into medicine—those that get in do well in all parts of the GAMSAT.

Themes Checklist

GAMSAT® Section 2 Task A Themes:

Task A generally deals with socio-cultural issues and is best suited to an argumentative style of essay.

- | | | |
|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| ✓ Freedom | ✓ Science | ✓ Poverty |
| ✓ War | ✓ Technology | ✓ Wealth |
| ✓ Punishment | ✓ Crime | |

GAMSAT® Section 2 Task B Themes:

Task B centres around themes targeted at more personal and social issues and allows for students to express themselves through a more creative or reflective essay style.

- | | | |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| ✓ Friendship | ✓ Youth | ✓ Originality |
| ✓ Love | ✓ Ageing | ✓ Conformity |
| ✓ Beauty | ✓ Suffering | ✓ Humour |

GAMSAT® Section 2 Criteria and Marking

Thought and Content		Organisation and Expression	
The quality of what is said		The quality of the structure developed and the language used	
What is made of and developed from the task		The shape and form of the piece	
The kinds of thoughts and feelings offered in response to the task		The effectiveness and fluency of the language	

Control of language, i.e. grammatical structure and expression, is not assessed as an isolated criteria but incorporated into the assessment of the overall effectiveness of the response. Your GAMSAT® essays will also be assessed on the depth of the ideas presented rather than their breadth so it is often more effective to take a few concepts and analyse them in depth rather than inundating your essay with different arguments.

Finally, ACER also notes that candidates are not assessed on the ‘correctness’ of the ideas or attitudes they display - It is not your opinion that matters but the way in which you express it. Each individual essay will be assessed by three independent markers.

GAMSAT® Essay Length

ACER does not provide any guidelines in regards to a minimum word count, or how long your Section 2 essays should be. However, a maxim that holds true even for the GAMSAT® Exam is Quality over Quantity.

The quality of what you write is much more important than the quantity and as such, you should focus on what you write about and your expression and organisation of ideas. A good guideline is to aim for:

- An Introduction
- 3 Body Paragraphs
- A Conclusion

Note however that this example structure is not necessarily applicable to every type of essay. If you were to write a creative piece, the structure of your GAMSAT® Essay could certainly be more flexible. The main factor to take into account is how best to organise your ideas to ensure that your arguments are conveyed logically and coherently.

A common piece of advice is to aim for about 500 words, but the most important point is to focus on the quality of your essay rather than the quantity. If you can express an idea clearly and effectively in less words then do it.

GAMSAT® Essay Study Guide

Step 1: How to plan your GAMSAT® Essay

- Understand the Theme: Read the quote and make sure that you look for the related ideas, not just the main theme.
- Brainstorm Ideas: Use whatever techniques you find the most useful and make the most of the Idea Bank that you’ve prepared.
- Create a Thesis: What is your main message? Is it clear? Is it communicated regularly?
- Choose a Structure: Consider what is most appropriate for the theme and explore your options.
- Plan Body Paragraphs Thematically: Plan your topic sentences and the main points of your thesis.

Step 2: Write your GAMSAT® Essay

- **Be Clear & Succinct**
Write in logical and well-phrased sentences that can be easily understood by a marker who will be reading your essay at a fast pace because that’s the reality of it.
- **Support What You Write**
Each topic sentence needs to have some form of ‘evidence’ or reasoning to support what you contend. Depending on the form you have chosen to write in (e.g. essay, short story), this may occur in the style of real-life events, personal narrative, creative narrative, experience, or logical reasoning that is theoretical.
- **Always Come Back to the Thesis**
If in doubt, word your paragraph in such a way that the ‘supporting evidence’ demonstrates the topic sentence AND the thesis. Your aim is to persuade the reader such that they truly believe what you have written.

Step 3: Review your GAMSAT® Essay

Review what you have written and ensure it makes sense. There's not much time to do this, so it's a quick fly-by of your writing to ensure it is logical and communicates what you are actually thinking.

GradReady has an essay marking service where you can get 10 essays marked by our expert tutors with personal feedback within 72 hours.

Theme Finding

Avoiding common writing mistakes is easy. The hard part is figuring out what to write. In this section we discuss how to plan and write your essays.

What is the question?

In the GAMSAT® Exam, the question is:

- "Consider the following comments and develop a piece of writing in response to one or more of them."

... followed by a series of quotes. These quotes all concern a common theme. So, the first step is to identify the theme. This will be the topic of your essay.

Theme Finding

- Read the first quote. (If you don't understand it, don't panic).
- Read the second quote. (If you don't understand it, don't panic).
- Compare both quotes. Do you see any related words?
- Write down one related word from each.
- Read the third quote. (If you don't understand it, don't panic).
- Are there any words in the third quote related those you have written down?
- Read the fourth quote ... and so on.

... and if this doesn't work try going through the quotes in a different order.

At the end you'll hopefully have a list of words that will point to the theme. This is not a fail-safe technique, but it can be very helpful.

Example 1

College isn't the place to go for ideas. *Hellen Keller*

When a subject becomes totally obsolete, we make it a required course. *Peter Drucker*

The fighting in academia is so vicious because the stakes are so low. *Henry Kissinger*

The medieval university looked backwards; it professed to be a storehouse of old knowledge. The modern university looks forward and is a factory new knowledge. *Thomas Huxley*

A fool's brain digests philosophy into folly, science into superstition, and art into pedantry. Hence university education. *George Bernard Shaw*

Theme finder: college, course, academia, university, education. These words point to a theme: tertiary education and universities.

Note that these quotes do not all express the same attitude towards universities. Try to identify which are negative and which are positive.

Example 2

Don't forget your great guns, which are the most respectable argument for the rights of kings. **Frederick the Great**

The people are that part of the state that does not know what it wants. **G W F Hegel**

Those who cast the votes decide nothing. Those who count the votes decide everything. **Joseph Stalin**

Win or lose, we go shopping after the election. **Imelda Marcos**

Democracy is the worst form of government except for all those other forms which have been tried from time to time. **Winston Churchill**

The theme finder technique is not as straightforward this time: try the quotes in a different order. Again, try to assess the writer's attitude to the theme. Are the attitudes expressed always wholly negative or wholly positive?

General Study Tips

- You need to get feedback on your essays. It is vital that you get your friends, family, tutors and anyone else to read these essays, and be modest and inviting of critique. It is of utmost importance to be criticised and then learn from your mistakes. GradReady has an essay marking service where you can get 10 essays marked by our expert tutors with personal feedback within 72 hours.
- You need to possess a great deal of self-critique. After every essay you write, you must read it out loud to yourself, and listen if it makes sense.
- Make sure you type your practice essays! With the new digital format of the GAMSAT® exam confirmed as a permanent change, it's important that you get accustomed to typing your responses. For many this may be an advantage, but for some, working on your typing speed may be an important consideration - Note as well that there is no spell check function. You will still be able to use provided sheets of paper for planning and brainstorming if necessary.
- You need to vary the type of essays that you write! You should make sure you try argumentative, personal reflective essays, fictional creative essays, poetry, and any other medium that can work in the GAMSAT® exam. Even though it's recommended you write an argumentative essay, you are able to write in almost any style in the 'reflective' essay segment - this is meant to be a creative endeavour and demonstrate that you can identify, and express emotions of the characters involved.

Example GAMSAT® Essays

Even with all of the above tips and topics, it can be difficult to start writing without an idea of what a GAMSAT® Essay should look like. That's why we've decided to provide some example essays below with feedback provided by our tutors to help you make a start on your preparation for Section 2 of the GAMSAT® Exam.

Consider the following comments and develop a piece of writing in response to one or more of them.

College isn't the place to go for ideas. **Hellen Keller**

When a subject becomes totally obsolete, we make it a required course. **Peter Drucker**

The fighting in academia is so vicious because the stakes are so low. **Henry Kissinger**

The medieval university looked backwards; it professed to be a storehouse of old knowledge. The modern university looks forward and is a factory new knowledge. **Thomas Huxley**

A fool's brain digests philosophy into folly, science into superstition, and art into pedantry. Hence university education. **George Bernard Shaw**

Low standard essay

The powers which dominate a community are manipulative from the moment they get office. They do this simply because they can and because people like you and me don't stop them when we probably should. Prime Ministers, Presidents, military generals all sway the happenings under their command to their liking which they should not be allowed to do just because they are leader. Being a leader doesn't solve everything. Those who count the votes determine the direction of the future.

Votes should not really be considered as a way to measure how democratic a society is. The vote counters may be blackmailed or threatened by a competing party or even by their own party. Consequently, the number of counted votes will never fully represent the number of votes made. For example, with such political turmoil in the middle east, elections are always rigged, with the more oppressing and violent parties having power.

The people who vote cannot change anything. They just tell their leaders what they would like to happen with current affairs. It's the powers that be who decide the direction of the future, and in turn the direction of the past. For example, the policy on the emissions trading scheme was given the thumbs up regardless of its immense unpopularity among the people. They voted in their candidates to represent what they wanted but these superior powers still went ahead with the ETS.

The counter point is that those who count the votes on disputes don't determine the outcome. But as described previously, this is not the case. If it were to be, honesty would be a prevailing virtue in our society, and there would be no deceit. If this was the case, why do we still have juries in the courtroom. Shouldn't the suspect just tell the truth? Our society refuses to be truthful for personal gain, which leads to destruction. We want our desires and will lie to get it. Being truthful is better. You learn that even when you are a little kid. So voting is always subjective. Votes are always going to be determined by the counters.

Critique

This essay introduces a lot of interesting content. However, the written expression and structure is very confused. To get at least an average grade, the reader must be able to identify the central argument the writer is making. Then it should be easy to follow this argument through each paragraph with relevant supporting evidence.

In this case, the writer appears to have good spelling and vocabulary, however their written expression is let down by the lack of cohesion between each sentence and paragraph. Similarly, the structure of the essay is not well established as it is difficult to follow one central argument through the essay.

The essay is also missing a conclusion. The writer of this essay has attempted to record all their thoughts and knowledge on a given theme, however, the lack of a clear structure has made this essay difficult to follow.

Medium standard essay

The people are lead to believe that their votes decide the power, however the real power resides with those who count the votes. Whether the power is attained by corruption or manipulation, the people have little say even what they try to stage a backlash. Examples of corruption aren't hard to find, but the frustrating case of Robert Mugabe is a strong example. Constant broken pre-election promises try to manipulate the people even at a staged constituency. Time and again tyrants pop up to demonstrate clearly how compromised the electoral process can sometimes become.

The strings of bad decisions made by Robert Mugabe have devastated Zimbabwe, whilst somehow benefiting him and his family. In 200 President Mugabe enacted the removal of white ownership of farmland. His plan was to give the land to the native Zimbabwean's to make them more successful and therefor give them more of the power. This was an important promise and made him very popular with his countrymen. During the crossover period, Mugabe's family ended up with 39 farms, with the rest going to un-experienced Zimbabweans. The result was a complete slump in food production and in return a failing economy for Zimbabwe, forcing them to abandon their currency in 2009. Ironically the white farmers had been very effective in their farming and had bolstered the economy. In the 2010 election, despite being generally despised by many Zimbabweans, Robert Mugabe won another term by a giant 60% of the votes. It seems unlikely he would win reelection given the circumstances. Corruption among the voting officials who were under the control of Mugabe is suspected but few are willing to question his authority.

It's partially expected by citizens of democratic countries that pre-election promises are seldom kept. However when a candidate is making promises that would highly benefit you and your community, it's hard not to jump on their bandwagon. In the 2013 election, the Labor party promised millions to rural communities to fund different community projects which would have provided stimulation for their economy. However since winning the election and releasing the budget, those promises have been revoked in order to cut costs. Resulting in thousands of rural citizens feeling manipulated by false promises made by the Labor party.

Most recently in WA, an alleged 1800 people have voted multiple times at different polling stations in the 2013 election. Before this, thousands of votes had believed to have simply vanished so a new election was to be held, but in light of this new information an additional investigation is being held. This is an example of the people trying to take back the power. Although it is illegal, most would not consider it to be any less morally wrong than corruption or manipulation especially on a huge scales such as the examples of Robert Mugabe and the Labor party. Voting is only a human invention, and it can be easily manipulated just like any other human invention.

Tactics of politics are harsh. With emotional and physical tries to power, its not a surprise that votes feel the need to use the same tactics in order to win back the power. Examples can be found all over the globe with Zimbabwe and Australia just scratching the surface. In the words of Joseph Stalin – "Those who cast the votes deiced nothing. Those who count the votes decide everything."

Critique

This essay is well written and appears to make a sound argument by incorporating some well informed examples.

There is no major flaw with the written expression in this essay. While sentences in some cases can be shortened and written in a more direct manner, this is not a major criticism of the essay.

The structure of the essay also follows the basic argumentative essay structure, however, the first big issue with this essay which prevents it from a high mark is that the quote that the writer has selected is not compatible with the second example that they have provided. This example talks about a political party changing its tune after an election, it is not clear how it furthers the argument that the electoral process itself is compromised in some way.

The content of this essay appears well informed. However, the writer has made a crucial mistake in saying that the Labour party won the 2013 election. It was the Liberal party. If this mistake was made once in the text it could be dismissed as a typographical error under the time pressure, however it is repeated.

This essay is quite good, and it has chosen a challenging argument to present. However, it can be improved by a better selection of content that goes directly to the argument that the writer is trying to make.

High standard essay

Communism and democracy can be placed on opposing sides of the political spectrum. However, both these forms of government have converging facets. People will see the advantages and disadvantages in both and so it seems that we are always trying to look only to the left or to the right for the answer, rather than looking forward. Rather than choosing from a given set of options, as inventors and innovators, we should look ahead towards a new form of government that incorporates the benefits of both styles.

Both democracy and communism are theoretically favourable. Communism espouses a classless society, where everyone is equal, no rich, no poor, full employment of manpower and an equitable distribution of wealth. Democracy as Abraham Lincoln perfectly described it is: "Government of the people, by the people, for the people." Freedom of speech, and the right to vote depicts a superb society to be apart of. In essence, both forms of government seek to empower individuals.

In fact communism was formed very much on the essential appeal of these ideas to its creators. Yet the catch is, in reality this isn't the case. Human beings, it could be argued, have a natural predisposition to compete. It is here in which these two polar forms of government are woven to share a common thread. Both never get to the true forms of their governments. They aren't what they make out to be. For example in Australia, yes we have the right to vote, and have our say but are we really getting a fair choice? It could be argued that we are forced to choose between two parties which are very similar in the end. The true form of communism is alike the true form of democracy: they just don't exist.

On one level nobody's questioning that democracy or communism is the best form of government for their country, they see it as the only game in town. The problem is that people are starting to believe that it is not a game worth playing. For the last 30 years, political scientists have observed that there is a constant decline in electoral turnout. The 2006 Bulgarian election saw 83% of people vote with a blank ballot, it was a way of showing that they had nobody to vote for. I think we are starting to see the signs that people are waking up to this situation. People are starting to realize that neither form of government is what it makes out to be. We saw this through the Occupy movement back in 2011 and I believe that this is just once step towards changing our outlook on how we govern our countries.

Technology has played a major role in our silence but also reforms against our current government. if we turn the Arab Spring, then we see that technology has the potential to start a revolution. We saw the use of Facebook bringing together people from the virtual world to the real world, sharing the same ideas, the same anger, and the same desire for freedom, to change their ruling. So you see we have the same tool creating to very different affects, one sedative, the other stimulating.

As Thomas Jefferson said, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be." Instead of turning to one from of government, just because it's seen as the best fit for our country, we need to wake up from this phase and look to new, innovative and stronger forms of government, as the ones that have long served us are slowly starting to crack.

Critique

This essay is a high standard essay as it argues a central thesis, that a new form of government should be considered, in an informed way. There are no written expression errors detract from the readability of the full essay. Each sentence is clearly constructed and is not overly verbose.

The structure of the essay is coherent and easy to follow. The student introduces the thesis that neither democracy nor communism is the best option and that a new form of government should be considered. The student then proceeds to consider both these forms of government, their advantages, disadvantages and other factors such as the reduced voter turnout and the impact of technology in making a strong case for the consideration of a new form of government.

While the student covers different ideas and examples, the essay is easy to follow and each paragraph fits in well.

The line of reasoning that the student has chosen in response to this particular set of quotes is uncommon and therefore stands out from other essays. The writer has used novel evidence such as the voter turnout in the Bulgarian elections, the Occupy movement of 2011 as well as a quote by Thomas Jefferson to demonstrate their broad knowledge in relation to the theme.

This essay successfully combines significant content in a coherent way. While there may be better ways to express some of the ideas conveyed in this essay, this can be expected given the limited time frame in the exam and these errors do not detract that much from the score.



Average Improvement of **20+** Percentile
Points over the last **7** Years

7000+
Happy Students

10+
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