

Six “New ACT Essay” Prompts

The ACT has changed their essay, and it’s throwing a lot of students off! The new essay format looks like so:

<http://www.actstudent.org/writing/sample/>

I’ve updated my ACT system’s lesson plan to prepare you for the new essay - unfortunately, the ACT hasn’t released more prompts than the one above. Fortunately, I’ve done their work for them! Use the six prompts below, combined with the essay lessons within the program, and you’ll be able to knock it out of the park by test day!

Essay One:

Every day, people from all over the world are signing up for new, community-based forms of exercise such as Crossfit, yoga classes, and group cycling courses such as Soulcycle. Exercise, once seen as a solitary pursuit, has become a social activity - and with the social nature of these new fitness trends comes the trend of the “tribal mentality” and the “in groups” vs. the “out groups.” Fans of weight lifting tend to demonize the sometimes-dangerous, rapid motions of Crossfit. Cycling fans point to the superior benefits of cardiovascular injury and put down the lightweight nature of yoga and the high injury rate of Crossfit. Is a bit of tribe mentality in the exercise community good? Does it make us stick with our exercise plans and make new friends? Or is it creating needless strife among those committed to fitness, and a false dichotomy between groups that allows them to ignore the benefits of each other’s’ styles?

Perspective One: Antagonistic attitudes have no place in the world of exercise. The tribe mentalities created by these “cult” exercise groups lead to unnecessary conflicts, lack of variety in one’s fitness routine, and ignorance of the benefits of diverse forms of fitness.	Perspective Two: Social cohesion is an essential element of a good exercise program. Social fitness groups create support, motivation, and additional reasons to show up and work out. “Tribal” fitness is a positive revolution in the world of exercise and health.	Perspective Three: Focused, “tribal” exercise groups are creating a new culture of deep, intensified innovation within specific arenas of the fitness world. This intensity and “area specific” culture will lead to creative breakthroughs in the ways that we improve our bodies.
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Essay Two:

Every year, the vitamin and supplement industry grows by more than 20%. People are spending billions on everything from basic multivitamins to the petrified extract of exotic mushrooms, all in the hopes of enhancing their health, lengthening their lives, losing weight, and countless other purported benefits. While we're well aware of the effects of certain vitamins and compounds when consumed in their natural form, we're less certain of the effects of taking them in the isolated form contained within the supplements we buy - and the elevated quantities we consume. The legitimacy of these supplements is up in the air - are they worth the money? Are we risking our health and well-being by following uncertain nutritional practices? Or is any global step toward the enhancement of our overall health a step in the right direction, even if we might not have things perfected as of yet?

Perspective One: The wide availability of health supplements is a step in the right direction. People who can afford to improve their health and get additional quantities of key nutrients should be free to do so. We should all strive to be healthier and more nutritionally complete!	Perspective Two: Supplements are a waste of money at best, and a serious health concern at worst. We don't have enough science to back this practice, and far from encouraging better health, the supplement industry encourages expensive experimentation with our own bodies - at great cost.	Perspective Three: Supplement science might not be perfect, but by continuing to push the practice, we'll more rapidly get to the nutritional breakthroughs we need. The small risks involved in supplements are outweighed by the potential benefits and learnings.
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Essay Three:

With the rise of the internet, people now expect their news for free. Paying a few dollars per paper, or even a small fee for an online subscription, is a dying practice. With the countless outlets providing free news to people with an internet connection, the idea of paying money for information is rapidly falling out of favor. But at what price to the reader? Free internet news is supported by advertising - the more clicks it receives, the more money the publisher makes. This practice can lead to favoring the *sensational* over the *important*. Internet audiences will more reliably click on the latest celebrity gossip than they will on articles pertaining to important tax reform. Worse, in many cases, the news itself can be paid for by advertisers, who publish “sponsored content” that *looks* like news, but is really just an ad for their products or services. Is the reduced cost of our news worth the potential drawbacks in its quality?

Perspective One: The news <i>should</i> be free. As global citizens, it's our job to stay informed from a wide variety of sources. You shouldn't have to pay for that right. Free news democratizes the world of information and leads to a more informed global citizenry.	Perspective Two: Free internet news is destroying the very fabric of journalism. The entire purpose of reading the news is to get <i>important, relevant, and unbiased</i> information. The influence of advertising in free online news obliterates all three of these qualities in what we read.	Perspective Three: The world is always changing, and while there are drawbacks to the advertising influences within internet news, we need to give it a chance and see how it will evolve. With time, we can make papers that are both free <i>and</i> high-quality.
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Essay Four:

Soon, driverless cars will overtake our roads and transform the very ways in which we think about transportation. Automatic, driverless vehicles are safer, more efficient, and more reliable than human drivers. They don't get tired, they can't get drunk, and they don't text on the highway. They improve fuel efficiency, reduce traffic jams, and allow for split-ownership and hence the reduction of expense for the driver and waste in our planet. Yet they have significant downsides. They'll put millions of people out of work - people who rely on driving as their only source of income. And what moral decisions can we program into our robotic drivers? What happens when a driverless car kills a pedestrian or kills its driver in order to avoid a group of pedestrians in front of it? Are driverless cars the key to a better, brighter future, or will they create far more problems than they could ever solve?

Perspective One: Driverless cars are an amazing idea. They'll save countless lives, protect the environment, and allow more transportation options for the poor. The benefits of driverless cars will vastly outweigh any short-term drawbacks.	Perspective Two: Driverless cars are a threat to our lives and to our economy. They'll put millions out of work at the same time that they present unanticipated and dangerous problems on our roads. We should be wary of ever putting them on the road.	Perspective Three: Driverless cars are the future. As we adopt them, we'll see many benefits as well as many disruptions, deaths, and problems. But their adoption is inevitable - they represent an evolution in the way we use our technology that we'll need to adopt sooner or later.
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Essay Five:

Red wine, when consumed in small quantities by responsible adults, has many purported health benefits. Resveratrol, a potent antioxidant found within red wine, can reduce heart disease, cancer risk, and even aging - and synthetic forms of the compound don't come close to the efficacy of those found within red wine. Some doctors recommend that their older patients drink one or two glasses a day to receive the benefits. Yet many have serious concerns about this recommendation. For starters, any more than the 1-2 recommended glasses has the exact opposite effect - drinking alcohol in excess is one of the most devastating things that you can do to your body, and many adults might use the "doctor approved" nature of red wine to justify excessive alcohol consumption. Worse, many people who might not otherwise be tempted to drink at all might take up wine for health reasons, despite our knowledge that alcohol in *any* quantity can destroy our health, our social lives, our work lives, and countless other factors. Should doctors be recommending this practice?

Perspective One: Doctors have a responsibility to report the facts, and the science says that red wine in small quantities is good for adults. <i>Anything</i> in excess is bad for us, but that shouldn't stop doctors from prescribing a way to improve our health and lengthen our lives.	Perspective Two: The idea of "prescribing" red wine to adults is preposterous. The risks and drawbacks of alcohol consumption far outweigh the benefits of a single healthy compound - it's akin to "prescribing" cigarettes because nicotine <i>might</i> prevent Parkinson's.	Perspective Three: Our knowledge of health is always evolving, and it's good that we're experimenting with new and innovative ways of extending our lives and improving our health. The benefits and drawbacks might still be in flux, but we should always be trying new things to improve our lives.
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Essay Six:

For many, the idea of “optional” voting within a democratic nation is flawed. If we’re part of our nation, they feel that we *must* be part of its political process. Proponents of compulsory (required) voting feel that by forcing citizens to vote in all elections, we’ll create a more informed, more involved citizenry and a more progressive democracy. They feel that our current “lag” in voter turnout is a deeply troubling sign that could easily be fixed by compulsory voting mandates. However, there are many opponents to this position. Isn’t “silence” an option? Isn’t a refusal to vote one way or another a form of vote in and of itself, protected by our freedom of speech? Furthermore, compulsory voting would push people into the polling booths who aren’t informed enough to make a choice, created a “polluted” voting pool. Finally, compulsory voting could disrupt the lives of working class citizens who may choose to go to work or take care of their families instead of heading to the polls. Should American voting be compulsory, or should it remain optional?

Perspective One: Our current lack of voter turnout is a disgrace, and compulsory voting would be a serious step in the right direction. Every American needs to let his or her voice be heard, and if we don’t institute compulsory voting, we’re not really a democracy.	Perspective Two: Compulsory voting is anti-American. Our participation in our democracy is a <i>choice</i> , not a requirement. Are we to punish those who <i>choose</i> to let silence be their vote? Forcing our citizens to vote would be our downfall.	Perspective Three: Compulsory voting is an interesting, appealing idea, but we’d need to roll it out slowly and with careful experimentation. Because we’ve never tried it, we don’t know what drawbacks would arise, but it’s very important that we give it a shot and see how it works.
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