



ACT Essay

**Colleges want these
students:**



Not this one:



**Optional? Yes, but everyone
should opt to write this essay!**

- **All Spain Park students** will take the ACT their junior year, and the essay is mandatory.
- **Some schools require an ACT Essay.** You wouldn't want to retake the whole test if you discover that your *dream school* requires the essay and you had decided not to write one.
- Writing the essay makes your college application more **attractive**. Regardless of whether the school requires the essay, they will see that you took the **initiative** to write, and **that is a good thing**.
- It's **not difficult to get a good score** on the essay. A good score is a good score no matter what!

But WHY???

You will have **30 minutes** to write your essay.

There is a difference in an ACT Grader and an English Teacher Grader.

Don't sweat the small stuff.



Some things you need to know...

- Your essay will be read by two graders who will give your essay a **holistic** grade.
- That means that each grader will read your paper and give it a score between 1 and 6 based on your ability to adhere to a few criteria.
- **4 + 6 = 10**
- 1st grader..... 2nd grader.....not too shabby

How will I be graded?



**So tell me about this
criteria...**

- You need a *clear thesis statement*.

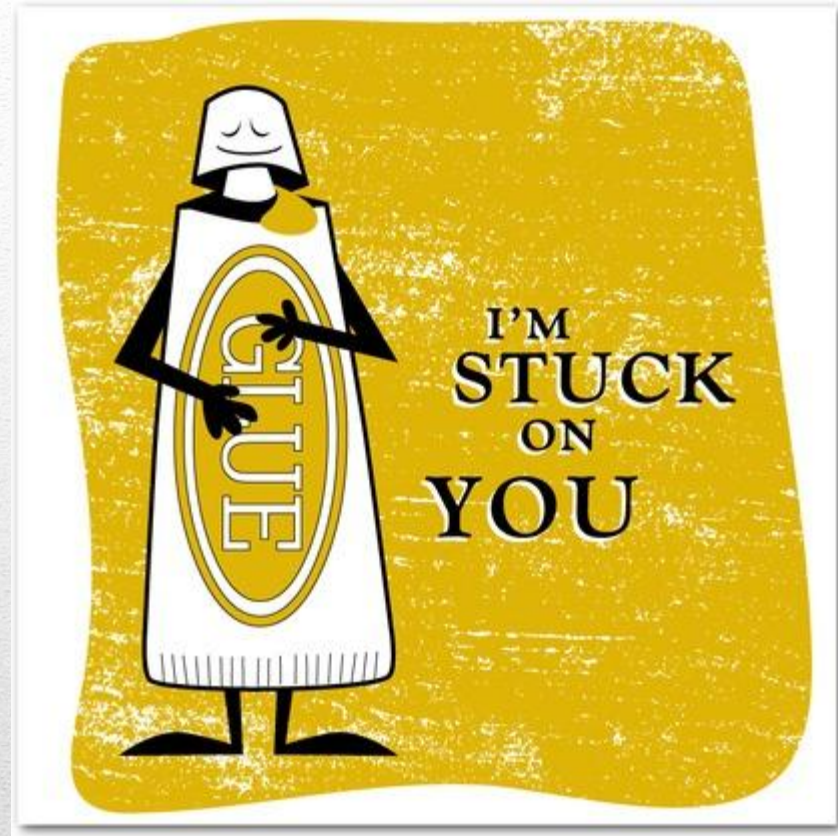
1. Take a position on the prompt.

- The Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) requires all school libraries receiving certain federal funds to install and use blocking software to prevent students from viewing material considered “harmful to minors.” However, some studies conclude that blocking software in schools damages educational opportunities for students, both by blocking access to web pages that are directly related to the state-mandated curriculums and by restricting broader inquiries of both students and teachers. In your view, should the schools block access to certain Internet websites?
- In your essay, take a position on this question. You may write about either one of the two points of view given, or you may present a different point of view on this question. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

Sample Prompt

Stick to the thesis.

Do not change or counter your thesis halfway through the paper.



2. Maintain focus on the topic.

- **SHOW** that you *understand* the issue, that you have a *position* on the issue, that you have a *reason* for your position, and that you can support that reason with *evidence*.
- You have to *address the other side of the issue*, but don't argue it as strongly as your own side. Address the other issues, and then *point out why your examples are Better*.
- This is the most important part of your essay; it's where you will be rewarded or deducted the most points. Make it good!

3. Support your ideas.

- Your goal should be to write three body paragraphs.
 - Body paragraph 1 – support your position with an example
 - Body paragraph 2 – support your position with another example
 - Body paragraph 3 – attack or disprove the other side, ending with a statement that your position is the stronger choice
- If you are running short on time, it is better to cut the attack paragraph than one of the support paragraphs.
 - It would be awfully *impressive* if you can write an attack paragraph well (it's a difficult thing to do!), but it is not a requirement. Full support for your position *is* a requirement so focus on that first!

3. Continued

If you're having trouble attacking the opposing position, try one of these techniques:

- The example is true, but...
 - State the example, and then look for ways in which it could still be true but not relevant to your argument.
- The example is true, but not as important as...
 - Acknowledge that the example is relevant, but not as important as some other factor (compare the con to your pro)
- The example is flawed because...
 - Try to attack the actual example.

Writing an Attack Paragraph

Your essay must contain
an

INTRODUCTION

BODY (3)

CONCLUSION

If you're short on time, it is better to cut one body paragraph than the conclusion.

Helpful hint: take one minute to write out a little outline before you begin writing.



4. Organize your ideas.

- Graders will deduct points from your essay for your grammar and language *only if it detracts* from their ability to identify the previous criteria.
 - But it *can* happen so *always, always, always* be mindful of your grammar and spelling!
 - Graders most often take points off for
 - Run-ons
 - Fragments
 - Slang language
 - 2nd person (1st and 3rd person are acceptable)

5. Use language clearly and effectively.



- **LENGTH**

- At least 5 paragraphs
- Graders tend to reward longer essays

- **Sentence Structure**

- Vary it—simple sentences, complex sentences, etc.

- ***Diction***

- Use your Vocabulary Words!
- But remember that a big word used/spelled incorrectly is worse than a simple word used correctly

- ***Neatness***

- Indent new paragraphs
- Make the graders' job easy by writing legibly

Other Things to Keep in Mind...
