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**ANALYTICAL WRITING:
SOLUTIONS TO THE REAL ARGUMENT TOPICS**

2021 Edition
60
Solved Argument
topics with
strategies

Fourth Edition

Expert

Strategies and simplified
methods to produce
focused responses

Scoring

Guides for Argument
tasks as per the
GMAT Guidelines



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GMAT[®] ANALYTICAL WRITING: Solutions to the Real Argument Topics Fourth Edition

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Chapter 1

Analytical Writing Assessment

The AWA is the first of four parts of the GMAT, and you will have 30 minutes to plan and type your essay. You will begin by reading a brief argument in which the author may state a position, make a recommendation, or make a prediction. You may agree or disagree with the author's position, but refrain from stating your own opinion. Your task is to determine how sufficiently the writer has made his case and clearly communicate your critique of the argument in writing. Two independent readers will assign a score between 1 to 6. If their scores are not exact or adjacent, a third reader will evaluate your writing. The readers, who are college professors from a variety of disciplines, will use the following criteria to score your analysis: the overall quality of your ideas; your ability to organize, develop, and express your ideas; your including relevant supporting reasons and examples; and your control of the elements of standard written English.

The following directions appear after each argument, and you should read them carefully.

Discuss how well reasoned you find this argument. In your discussion be sure to analyze the line of reasoning and the use of evidence in the argument. For example, you may need to consider what questionable assumptions underlie the thinking and what alternative explanations or counterexamples might weaken the conclusion. You can also discuss what sort of evidence would strengthen or refute the argument, what changes in the argument would make it more logically sound, and what, if anything, would help you better evaluate its conclusion.

Strategies

While planning your response, focus on the suggestions in the directions. Use the erasable notepad to take notes to help you organize your analysis.

Begin by identifying the audience for the argument. The author may have tailored the information in the argument to this audience, thereby creating some inherent biases. For example, a company's report to its stockholders may include information that makes a company seem more profitable than it really is and omit information that makes stockholders question their investment. A political endorsement will enumerate positive changes that the incumbent has facilitated and point out how his opponent disagrees with that incumbent's policies. An editorial, by its nature, expresses an opinion. Understanding how the audience may influence the type of information included in the argument will help you to single out the questionable assumptions in the argument. The author may have a vested interest in the point of view expressed in the argument. He or she may be a department head in a large company, and provide only positive information about his department's performance designed to insure job security or expansion of his department. Acknowledging hidden agendas will help you evaluate the argument.

Consider the source of the information presented in the argument. The author may cite polls or surveys. Although the survey or poll information may be accurate, it may not actually support the argument. The author may be using survey results to create an analogy, a conclusion drawn by arguing that there are clear similarities between two different events. Be wary of general descriptors like several, some, many, or recent. You should ask, "How many? How recent?"

Next, list the assumptions. Keep in mind that an assumption is not a fact, but it may be based on what appear to be facts in the argument. For example, the writer may say that over the last few years, gold chain sales at Jennie's Jewelry have declined by 20%. A recent survey shows that a significant number of women prefer sterling silver over gold, so Jennie should increase her sterling silver chain inventory to raise her profits. One questionable assumption implied in this statement is that Jennie's sales of gold chain were so high that a 20% reduction has had a big impact on her profits. Another is that Jennie can sell enough sterling silver to compensate for the reduction in gold sales. You might also assume that Jennie has taken no steps to compensate for the reduction in gold sales. The survey results cited here may also lead you to conclude that investing in more sterling silver is a good decision.

The directions tell you to consider alternative explanations or counterexamples for the assumptions in the argument. In the case of Jennie's Jewelry, you might think of reasons to explain the 20% decline in gold sales. A new jewelry store may have opened in town. The price of gold may be so high that Jennie bought less of it, and a smaller selection forced customers to shop elsewhere. The higher price may have discouraged customers from purchasing it. Jennie's Jewelry may have experienced an even greater reduction in sterling silver sales. A manufacturer may have closed its plant in Jennie's town, eliminating a significant number of jobs, so all businesses in her town may have suffered losses. If any of these conditions are true, the assumption is faulty. You might be able to draw on your own experience to develop an alternative explanation. It is likely that you live in a town whose independently-owned, small businesses have been affected by the opening of a new mall or big box store, and you can relate the impact of that in your analysis.

What additional information would help you to better evaluate the assumptions? The following pieces of information may help you: the portion of Jennie's total sales that can be attributed to gold jewelry; changes in the price of gold over the last few years; changes in the local economy; what is selling well at Jennie's Jewelry. If you know this information, you can determine if the author's recommendation is reasonable. Try manipulating some numbers that make a 20% decline in gold sales seem either significant or of little concern. For example, consider that gold sales account for 80% of Jennie's total sales. Losing one-fifth of those sales would result in gold sales equaling only 66% of total sales, a significant loss. Sales of other merchandise would have to increase from 20% of the total to 34% of the total. On the other hand, if the sale of gold jewelry accounts for only 10% of total sales for the store, a 20% decline, which would reduce the contribution to 8% of total sales, would be almost negligible.

Making separate lists for the assumptions and/or claims, alternative explanations or counterexamples, and missing information will provide a visual aid to assist you in developing your evaluation of any argument. Now, you are prepared to begin composing your evaluation of the argument. You will be able to perform basic word processing functions like cut and paste, so feel free to begin writing about your ideas in any way that is comfortable for you. Some writers complete the introduction before moving on to the body paragraphs, while others prefer to write the introduction after developing their ideas in the body paragraphs. Whatever style suits you, keep in mind the following strategies.

- ☐ Read the argument carefully; reread it as you write to insure that you maintain your focus.
- ☐ Refer to your notes, lists, or outline as you write, but do not hesitate to include ideas that come to you as you write. Your prewriting is just a guide.

- ☐ Fully develop your examples; do not simply list them.
- ☐ In your discussion of alternative explanations or counterexamples, feel free to draw on your own experiences, observations, or readings.
- ☐ Be sure to use a narrative format for your evaluation.
- ☐ Leave some time to reread your response and make any necessary revisions.
- ☐ Keep in mind that you are critiquing the argument, and you may point out both strengths and weaknesses.

Complete enough practice essays to become comfortable with the format. Take as much time as you need with the first few responses, but, eventually, you should complete some practice analyses while timing yourself. Ask someone whose opinion you respect to read some of your analyses and ask him or her to provide constructive feedback. Share the scoring criteria with that person, so he or she can phrase the feedback in the language of the scoring guide.

Scoring Guide

Your goal, after completing practice essays, is to use what you have learned to get the highest score possible on your analysis. In order to earn a score of 6, your analysis must be **Outstanding**. At this level, you will have created a response that demonstrates an insightful analysis of the argument after clearly identifying its important features. Your ideas will be organized logically and be connected with clear transitions to create a cogent response as you provide effective support for your points. Use a variety of sentence structures and apt and accurate vocabulary. Although your writing may have some minor flaws, you should strive for control of the conventions of standard written English, including grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Analyses at score point 5 are described as **Strong**. You have demonstrated the ability to identify the important features of the arguments and analyze them thoughtfully. Your analyses are not formulaic. Your analysis proceeds logically with appropriate transitions between ideas. You demonstrate control of language with sentence variety and appropriate vocabulary. Your response may contain occasional flaws in usage, grammar, and mechanics.

A score point of 4 is for analyses that are considered **Adequate**. You have delivered a competent critique of the argument. You are able to identify and analyze the important features of the argument. You may omit transitions between satisfactorily developed and well-organized ideas. You provide adequate support for the main points in your critique and demonstrate reasonable clarity and sufficient control of language. Although your analysis may have some flaws, your writing generally follows the conventions of standard written English.

Papers that are given a score of 3 are considered to be **Limited**. Although you demonstrate some ability to provide a written analysis of an argument, your flaws are evident. You have failed to identify or analyze

most of the important points in the argument. Although some analysis is present, it addresses only tangential or irrelevant matters. Your reasoning is weak. Development of ideas lacks substance, and the organization lacks logic. The analysis may contain either occasional major errors or frequent minor errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics. There is little variety in sentence structure, and sometimes vocabulary is weak or inappropriate.

An analysis assigned a score of 2 is **Seriously Flawed** due to serious weaknesses in analytical writing skills. At this level, your response may state your own opinion on the subject of the argument. If you attempt a critique, you do not develop your ideas or provide relevant support for them. Your response is poorly organized and has serious and frequent errors in sentence structure. Numerous errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics interfere with meaning and coherence.

A **Fundamentally Deficient** analysis earns a score of 1. This paper lacks even the basic skills of analytical writing. Your writing demonstrates the inability to understand the argument, thereby preventing you from identifying important ideas. Any response at this score level has severe and persistent errors in language and sentence structure. The response is virtually incoherent as a result of pervasive errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.

The final two scoring options are **No Score** and **NR**. Your response will earn a No Score if you simply attempt to copy the prompt, write off topic, write in a language other than English, or write using only keystroke characters. NR is assigned to blank responses.

Conclusion

The Analytical Writing Assessment does not measure the extent of your knowledge about any specific topic or academic content. The argument topics may be about business or any area of general interest. Use your familiarity with the scoring criteria and your practice writing analyses to approach the argument in a manner that displays your ability to think critically about the content of the argument and write your analysis in a thorough and well-developed manner. Express your ideas in an original manner, avoiding formulaic phrases and comparisons.

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Chapter **2**

Solved Argument Tasks with Strategies

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The following essays and prewriting activities are designed to help the test taker successfully complete the Analytical Writing Assessment portion of the GMAT. To obtain a good score, first determine what the directions are asking you to do. Basically, you must evaluate the strength of an argument. You are not being asked to create an argument or take a position but to analyze the credibility of a position that someone else has taken on an issue. Develop points for your critique by following the suggestions in the directions. Identify any claims and/or assumptions in the argument. This will enable you to create alternative explanations for the conditions that exist in the argument. The argument may need more information to strengthen the author's position. Make a list of additional information that would help you to better evaluate the argument. This list might include questions that you have. As you read the essays, refer to the lists the author has made and notice how development of points in them either weakens or strengthens the argument presented. In the time allotted to craft your essay during the exam, you will not be able to develop each point. Notice that the authors of these essays have selected some points while omitting others. Some essays may include points that do not appear in the prewriting lists. Ideas may come to you as you write, and you should feel free to include them. Just as these authors have done, evaluate how the audience for each argument may affect the content of the argument and the biases inherent in some of them. Use the pattern created here or one that works better for you. However you decide to approach the arguments, practicing will make your essay more coherent and eligible for a high score.

Argument Task 1

1

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The following appeared in an announcement issued by the publisher of *The Mercury*, a weekly newspaper:

*"Since a competing lower-priced newspaper, *The Bugle*, was started five years ago, *The Mercury's* circulation has declined by 10,000 readers. The best way to get more people to read *The Mercury* is to reduce its price below that of *The Bugle*, at least until circulation increases to former levels. The increased circulation of *The Mercury* will attract more businesses to buy advertising space in the paper."*

Discuss how well reasoned you find this argument. In your discussion be sure to analyze the line of reasoning and the use of evidence in the argument. For example, you may need to consider what questionable assumptions underlie the thinking and what alternative explanations or counterexamples might weaken the conclusion. You can also discuss what sort of evidence would strengthen or refute the argument, what changes in the argument would make it more logically sound, and what, if anything, would help you better evaluate its conclusion.

.....



Strategies

A good place to start your analysis is by creating a statement that reveals the main idea of the argument. Although the writer is creating an argument, he may ultimately be stating a position, making a recommendation, or making a prediction. It may be helpful for you to determine which of these formats is most evident in the argument.

Recommendation

The publisher should lower the price of *The Mercury* to increase readership and attract more advertisers.

The directions for crafting your response include suggesting that you identify any questionable assumptions that may underlie or support the writer's conclusion. The assumptions may be stated or implied.

Claims and/or Assumptions

- ◆ The 10,000 readers who no longer read *The Mercury* now read *The Bugle*
- ◆ The *Bugle's* circulation is greater than that of *The Mercury*

1

- ◆ Readers choose their newspaper based on the price of the paper and will choose the cheapest paper
- ◆ Businesses choose to advertise in papers with circulations higher than that of *The Mercury*
- ◆ Other than price, there is no difference between *The Bugle* and *The Mercury*

The author of the argument may have omitted some information to make his position appear stronger. What information would help you decide if the argument has validity or what should the writer's audience know in order to make an informed decision?

Additional information needed to analyze the argument

- ◆ The circulation data for both *The Mercury* and *The Bugle*
- ◆ The difference in price between *The Mercury* and *The Bugle*
- ◆ The cost for advertising in both *The Mercury* and *The Bugle*
- ◆ Information to track the decrease in *The Mercury*'s circulation (when did it begin? Is it still declining?)
- ◆ Information about *The Bugle*'s circulation. (Is it increasing? Decreasing?)
- ◆ Information about the content of both papers.
- ◆ Information about when *The Bugle* is published. Is it weekly? Daily?



Sample Essay

The author of this recommendation has identified a problem; that the circulation of the weekly newspaper, *The Mercury*, has declined over the last five years. The author claims that this decline is the direct result of the introduction of a lower-priced paper, *The Bugle*, five years ago. He recommends lowering the price of *The Mercury* so that it is less than that of *The Bugle*, which, he believes, will increase readership and attract more advertisers. It may be that the author has accurately identified the cause of *The Mercury*'s decline. However, he has made assumptions and omitted key information to support his recommendation.

At the outset, the author assumes that *The Bugle*'s readership is greater than that of *The Mercury*, and that the 10,000 readers who no longer buy *The Mercury* now spend their money on *The Bugle*. This may be the case, however, the author has not provided circulation data or other information that would identify why readers are no longer interested in reading *The Mercury* or to prove that *The Bugle*'s readership is increasing in correlation to *The Mercury*'s decrease. Without this information, there is no way to know what has become of the lost readers of *The Mercury*. They may have moved from the city in a mass exodus due to housing or

employment issues. They may now read their news online or rely on television news sources, and see no reason for the additional expense of a newspaper, and it could be that the circulation of both papers is on the decline. If the reason for the loss of readers is anything other than readers choosing a less expensive paper, lowering the price will decrease the company's revenues without increasing circulation.

The author also assumes that other than price, the two newspapers are identical. If *The Bugle* is a daily paper, it may be that readers prefer news that is more current than the weekly paper, *The Mercury*, can provide. If that is the case, reducing the price of *The Mercury* will have no impact, as readers will continue to avoid the stale weekly news in *The Mercury*. It may also be the case that the two papers do not cover the same type of news. Perhaps *The Bugle* is staffed by experienced journalists who provide in-depth reporting of issues that are of great concern for citizens, while *The Mercury* focuses on human interest stories and publishing births, deaths, and anniversaries. If that is the case, those interested in learning more about the issues facing the community will not purchase *The Mercury* now that a hard newspaper is available.

Finally, the author asserts a causal chain: lowering the price of the paper will increase circulation, which will then attract advertisers. He suggests that advertisers are motivated primarily by a newspaper's circulation. If advertisers are motivated by other factors, the potential for increased circulation will not result in additional advertisement sales. The author has not compared advertising rates or presentation between the two papers. Perhaps *The Bugle's* advertising rates are similar to those of *The Mercury*, but ads are presented in full color, or, perhaps, *The Bugle's* rates are less than those of *The Mercury*. Or, perhaps, advertising in newspapers is universally declining and neither paper should expect to increase advertising revenues, as advertisers turn to other media, such as radio and internet marketing.

The publishers of *The Mercury* should review the assumptions made in this memorandum very carefully before taking action. The base assumptions, that *The Bugle* has a greater circulation than *The Mercury*, and that the difference is the direct result of the price difference between the two papers are not evident, and the other claims and recommendations presented fail to make the author's case for lowering the price of *The Mercury*.

Argument Task 28

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 The following appeared in an article in a college departmental newsletter:

“Professor Taylor of Jones University is promoting a model of foreign language instruction in which students receive 10 weeks of intensive training, then go abroad to live with families for 10 weeks. The superiority of the model, Professor Taylor contends, is proved by the results of a study in which foreign language tests given to students at 25 other colleges show that first-year foreign language students at Jones speak more fluently after only 10 to 20 weeks in the program than do nine out of 10 foreign language majors elsewhere at the time of their graduation.”

Discuss how well reasoned you find this argument. In your discussion be sure to analyze the line of reasoning and the use of evidence in the argument. For example, you may need to consider what questionable assumptions unlike the thinking and what alternative explanations or counterexamples might weaken the conclusion. You can also discuss what sort of evidence would strengthen or refute the argument, what changes in the argument would make it more logically sound, and what, if anything, would help you better evaluate its conclusion.

.....



Strategies

A good place to start your analysis is by creating a statement that reveals the main idea of the argument. Although the writer is creating an argument, he may ultimately be stating a position, making a recommendation, or making a prediction. It may be helpful for you to determine which of these formats is most evident in the argument.

Argument

Professor Taylor’s method of foreign language instruction at Jones University surpasses the method used at other universities.

The directions for crafting your response include suggesting that you identify any questionable assumptions that may underlie or support the writer’s conclusion. The assumptions may be stated or implied.

Claims and/or Assumptions

- ◆ The audience for the newsletter is other foreign language teachers

- ◆ Other professors of foreign language at Jones do not use Taylor's approach

To help you create your analysis of the argument, list alternative explanations for the claims made in the argument. What else may explain the events listed? What claims might someone on the opposite side of the argument make?

Alternative explanations and/ or counterclaims

- ◆ First-year students at other universities compare favorably to Jones first-year students
- ◆ The newsletter is not at Jones University

The author of the argument may have omitted some information to make his position appear stronger. What information would help you decide if the argument has validity or what should the writer's audience know in order to make an informed decision?

Additional Information needed to better evaluate the argument

- ◆ How Jones University students score on the test at graduation
- ◆ If other colleges use the Taylor model and how those student's compare
- ◆ If the model is used by the turns every year of their college career
- ◆ If it applies to all languages
- ◆ How first-year students at other universities compare to Jones' first-year students
- ◆ How Taylor selected the 25 other schools



Sample Essay

It appears that professors at a college other than Jones University are considering a new approach to foreign language instruction. Professor Taylor recommends his own approach which involves 10 weeks of intensive training followed by 10 weeks of living abroad with families for his students. He based his recommendation on a study that compares his first-year students' fluency with the fluency of students about to graduate from 25 other universities. The results seem to scream approbation for Taylor's method, but other universities should examine them more closely before changing what they already do.

The first thing those at other schools should ask to see is how Professor Taylor's first-year students compare with the 25 other schools' first-year students. Those universities may have a first-year approach

Argument Task 47

.....
 The following appeared as part of a letter to the editor of a local newspaper:

“Bayview High School is considering whether to require all of its students to wear uniforms while at school. Students attending Acorn Valley Academy, a private school in town, earn higher grades on average and are more likely to go on to college. Moreover, Acorn Valley reports few instances of tardiness, absenteeism, or discipline problems. Since Acorn Valley requires its students to wear uniforms, Bayview High School would do well to follow suit and require its students to wear uniforms as well.”

Discuss how well reasoned you find this argument. In your discussion be sure to analyze the line of reasoning and the use of evidence in the argument. For example, you may need to consider what questionable assumptions unlike the thinking and what alternative explanations or counterexamples might weaken the conclusion. You can also discuss what sort of evidence would strengthen or refute the argument, what changes in the argument would make it more logically sound, and what, if anything, would help you better evaluate its conclusion.

.....



Strategies

47

Argument

The directions for crafting your response include suggesting that you identify any questionable assumptions that may underlie or support the writer’s conclusion. The assumptions may be stated or implied.

Assumptions

- ◆ Wearing uniforms will cause Bayview students to earn higher grades
- ◆ More students from Bayview High School will go to college if they switch to uniforms
- ◆ Wearing uniforms ensures that students at Acorn Valley avoid tardiness, absenteeism, and discipline problems
- ◆ If students at Bayview wear uniforms, their behavior will mimic that of students at Acorn Valley
- ◆ Switching to uniforms will have only positive results at Bayview

To help you create your analysis of the argument, list alternative explanations for the claims made in the argument. What else may explain the events listed? What claims might someone on the opposite side of the argument make?

Alternative explanations and/or counterexamples

- ◆ Acorn Valley may have more serious consequences for tardiness, absenteeism, and misbehavior
- ◆ More parents of Acorn Valley students are college graduates than parents of students at Bayview High School
- ◆ Discipline policies at Bayview High School are inconsistently enforced
- ◆ Acorn Valley accepts only high achieving students

The author of the argument may have omitted some information to make his position appear stronger. What information would help you decide if the argument has validity or what should the writer's audience know in order to make an informed decision?

Additional information needed to better evaluate the argument

- ◆ How uniforms affect behavior and academic success in several schools
- ◆ Discipline procedures at both schools
- ◆ The education level of parents of students at both schools

After completing these steps, you should have enough material to write your analysis. Remember that you are not creating a position of your own; you are evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the existing argument. You do not have to include all of the points that you have created in your prewriting. In fact, during the process of drafting your analysis, other ideas may come to mind, and, if they strengthen your analysis, you should include them.



Sample Essay

The author suggests that Bayview High School should require all students to wear uniforms since Acorn Valley Academy requires uniforms and its students have higher grades, fewer disciplinary problems, better attendance and a higher rate of college attendance. Unfortunately, the author's argument is based on a comparison of a private and public school that likely have very different cultures and norms.

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ANALYTICAL WRITING: SOLUTIONS TO THE REAL ARGUMENT TOPICS

**Includes
Rubrics,
Prompts
& Tips**

- Are you able to identify the **strengths and weaknesses** of an argument?
- Can you determine what additional information might make an argument **easier to evaluate**?
- Can you create **alternative, plausible explanations** for the claims in an argument?

Because these skills are important for a successful career in management, the **GMAT** requires each test taker to complete the **Analytical Writing Assessment**, a timed task that reveals the writers analytical abilities and his or her facility in crafting a coherent evaluation of an argument.

The **essays** and **prewriting** activities in this book are intended to serve as models for the test taker to use when responding to practice arguments. Use them as it is or to inspire yourself to create your own process. Either way, practicing for the **AWA** will ensure the best score possible on the test.

This book contains **sixty** sample **Analyze an Argument essays** along with the rubrics, prompts and tips to use when writing your own essays. The **prewriting activities** demonstrate how the writer selected a point of view and created evidence to use in developing the responses.

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