

## TOEFL® Test

### Change in Your School (Expository)

If you could make one important change in a school that you attended, what change would you make? Use reasons and specific examples to support your answer.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### Change Job or Not (Persuasive)

Some people prefer to change jobs or professions during their careers. Others choose to stay in the same job or profession. Discuss the advantages of each choice. Which do you prefer? Use reasons and examples to explain your choice.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### Change Your Hometown (Expository)

If you could change one important thing about your hometown, what would you change? Use reasons and specific examples to support your answer.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### Changes in the 21st Century (Expository)

The 21st century has begun. What changes do you think this new century will bring? Use examples and details in your answer.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Dorm Roommate (Persuasive)**

You have been told that dormitory rooms at your university must be shared by two students. Would you rather have the university assign a student to share a room with you, or would you rather choose your own roommate? Use specific reasons and details to explain your answer.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Experience or Books (Persuasive)**

It has been said, "Not everything that is learned is contained in books." Compare and contrast knowledge gained from experience with knowledge gained from books. In your opinion, which source is more important? Why?

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Films (Expository)**

Films can tell us a lot about the country where they were made. What have you learned about a country from watching its movies? Use specific examples and details to support your response.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Gift of Money (Persuasive)**

You have received a gift of money. The money is enough to buy either a piece of jewelry you like or tickets to a concert you want to attend. Which would you buy? Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Group Member or Leader (Persuasive)**

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

*It is better to be a member of a group than to be the leader of a group.*

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Hiring Employees (Persuasive)**

Businesses should hire employees for their entire lives. Do you agree or disagree? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Important Animal (Expository)**

What is the most important animal in your country? Why is the animal important? Use reasons and specific details to explain your answer.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Important Plant (Expository)**

Plants can provide food, shelter, clothing or medicine. What is one kind of plant that is important to you or to the people in your country? Use specific reasons and details to explain your choice.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Important Room (Expository)**

What do you consider to be the most important room in a house? Why is this room more important to you than any other room? Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Improve Your Community (Expository)**

You have decided to give several hours of your time each month to improve the community where you live. What is one thing you will do to improve your community? Why? Use specific reasons and details to explain your choice.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Land (Expository)**

Imagine that you have received some land to use as you wish. How would you use this land? Use specific details to explain your answer.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Learn from Mistakes (Persuasive)**

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

*People always learn from their mistakes.*

Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.

### **Living Longer (Expository)**

In general, people are living longer now. Discuss the causes of this phenomenon. Use specific reasons and details to develop your essay.

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Method of Travel (Expository)**

You need to travel from your home to a place 40 miles (64 kilometers) away. Compare the different kinds of transportation you could use. Which method of travel would you choose? Give specific reasons for your choice.

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Money and Success (Persuasive)**

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

*Only people who earn a lot of money are successful.*

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Money on Technology (Persuasive)**

Some people think that governments should spend as much money as possible on developing or buying computer technology. Other people disagree and think that this

money should be spent on more basic needs. Which one of these opinions do you agree with? Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Moving (Expository)**

A person you know is planning to move to your town or city. What do you think this person would like and dislike about living in your town or city? Why? Use specific reasons and details to develop your essay.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **New Product (Expository)**

If you could invent something new, what product would you develop? Use specific details to explain why this invention is needed.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Plan Children's Free Time (Persuasive)**

Some people think that parents should plan their children's leisure time carefully. Other people believe children should decide for themselves how to spend their free time. Which idea do you agree with? Give reasons for your choice.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### **Playing and Winning (Persuasive)**

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

*Playing a game is fun only when you win.*

Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Sample Essays Available

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Preferred Source of News (Persuasive)**

Some people believe that newspapers are the best source of news. Other people think that the news is presented better on radio or television. Which of these sources of news do you prefer? Use specific reasons to support your choice.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Preferred Teacher Style (Persuasive)**

Some people learn best when a classroom lesson is presented in an entertaining, enjoyable way. Other people learn best when a lesson is presented in a serious, formal way. Which of these two ways of learning do you prefer? Give reasons to support your answer.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Prepare for a Trip (Expository)**

Imagine that you are preparing for a trip. You plan to be away from your home for a year. In addition to clothing and personal-care items, you can take one thing. What would you take and why? Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Reasons for Attending College (Expository)**

People attend a college or university for many different reasons (for example, new experiences, career preparation and increased knowledge). Why do you think people attend college or university? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Reducing Pollution (Expository)**

There are many kinds of pollution. What can you do to help reduce **one** kind of pollution in your community? Use examples and specific details to explain your answer.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### **Resources Disappearing (Expository)**

Many parts of the world are losing important natural resources, such as forests, animals or clean water. Choose one resource that is disappearing and explain why it needs to be saved. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Show Emotion (Persuasive)**

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

*People should always show their strong emotions (such as excitement, anger or joy).*

Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### **Stay in Hometown or Move (Persuasive)**



After they complete their university studies, some students live in their hometowns. Others live in different towns or cities. Which do you think is better — living in your hometown or living in a different town or city? Give reasons for your answer.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Successful Students (Expository)**

Successful students do well in school for many different reasons. Identify one or two important personal characteristics that help a student succeed in school. Use specific examples to show why you think these characteristics are important for student success.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Why Study Abroad? (Expository)**

Many students choose to attend schools or universities outside their home countries. Why do some students study abroad? Use specific reasons and details to explain your answer.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Young People Teaching Older People (Persuasive)**

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

*There is nothing that young people can teach older people.*

Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

## College Level Preparatory

### Changing Attitudes (Expository)

As we mature, our attitudes often change, and we learn to view things differently. Think about an important change in your attitude toward a person, a group of people, or a set of ideas, values or traditions.

Write an essay in which you contrast your earlier attitude with the attitude you now hold. Explain why the change has taken place.

---

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### Coping with Hostility (Expository)

Describe an experience in which you had to cope with resentment or hostility from others or one in which you expressed the same attitudes toward someone else. Explain how or why the situation developed and how you felt about it, reacted to it, or dealt with it.

---

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### Different Worldviews (Expository)

Write an essay about someone you have met whose way of life or view of the world differs greatly from your own. Describe in detail how that person's lifestyle or view of the world differs from yours. Discuss what you have learned about yourself from having come in contact with that person.

---

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### Difficult Undertaking (Expository)

We have all undertaken something, either voluntarily or by assignment, that we have later found too difficult to handle. Write an essay about a subject or task in your own life that you have discovered was too difficult for you. In your essay tell what you attempted and how you came to be involved in it. Describe what happened and explain why you were unable to see the effort through or why it was so difficult.

---

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Doing Things We Don't Enjoy (Expository)**

Sometimes we choose to do things that we do not really enjoy — jogging, studying, eating the right foods, and so on.

Describe something you do by choice that you really do not enjoy. Explain why you continue to do it. Discuss the changes that might occur in your life if you were to stop this activity.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **High-School Jobs (Expository)**

Many students have jobs while they are still in high school. School administrators, parents and even teen-agers themselves debate the value of working while in high school.

Discuss some arguments for and against high-school students working and explain your position. Support your views with examples from your own experience or that of people you know.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Holidays (Expository)**

We observe many different holidays. Think about a holiday or official celebration that you would like to see changed in some way or even eliminated altogether.

Write an essay in which you propose that this holiday be either changed or eliminated. Give convincing reasons to support your argument.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Insight Through Crisis (Expository)**

People often gain insight into their own personalities from stressful situations such as going through a family crisis, taking a test in school, or being the only stranger in a group of people.

Describe a stressful situation you have experienced and tell what it revealed to you about yourself. Explain how this revelation has changed your perception of yourself in some aspect of your life or activities.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **One Major Change (Expository)**

At times we may think about what could have or would have been different in our lives if persons or events had been different. Suppose that you had the power to bring about one major change in your life. Tell what change you would have made and why you would have made it.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Resisting a Popular Viewpoint (Expository)**

Write an essay describing an occasion on which you privately or openly resisted a viewpoint that had become popular with your friends and acquaintances, or one on which you felt that actions taken by them were wrong. Describe the situation, explain why you disagreed with the group, and tell how you handled the situation.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

## **College Level I — General**

[\(go to business-focused topics\)](#)

### **Acceptable Teen Behavior (Persuasive)**

In an effort to set guidelines for acceptable teenage behavior, parents and other adults in authority often make rules that restrict the freedoms of the individual.

How much freedom and responsibility should teenagers have in making their own decisions? Explain your position by using evidence from your own experience or the experiences of other people.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### **Adapting to New Technology (Persuasive)**

New technology can solve problems, but it often creates new problems. The invention of the automobile, for example, created the need for speed limits, driver's licenses and traffic lights. Can you think of an invention that created problems when it was introduced? How were these problems solved? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Attendance Policy (Persuasive)**

Is it acceptable for professors to base part of students' grades on attendance and class participation, or should grades be based entirely on students' performance on exams and papers? Support your position with evidence from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Bargain Hunting (Persuasive)**

Prices on particular products can vary significantly from store to store. When shopping for a particular item, do you always look for the store with the lowest prices? Are there factors other than price that help to determine where you buy particular products? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Being an Adult (Persuasive)**

According to the law in many states, you become an "adult" at age 18 or 21, but for most people the sense of being an adult does not depend strictly on chronological age. They would argue that a particular experience or series of experiences made them feel adult.

What does being an "adult" mean to you? Support your views with specific examples from your own experience, observations or reading.

Sample Essays Available

---

**Breaking Traditions (Persuasive)**

Many adults become upset when young people break with traditions of the past. Do you think that these adults are justified in reacting this way? Why or why not? Support your position with evidence from your own experience or the experiences of people you know.

Sample Essays Available

---

**Career Decisions (Persuasive)**

In your opinion, what factors should a person consider when choosing a career? Interests? Salaries? Talents? Write an essay in which you discuss which factors are most important for an individual to consider when choosing a career. Support your position with reasons and/or examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

**Choice of Heroes (Persuasive)**

What does our choice of heroes and role models — or the lack of heroes and role models — reveal about our society and ourselves? Use reasons and/or examples from your own reading, experience or observations to support your position.

Sample Essays Available

---

**Computers and Privilege (Persuasive)**

Some people say that computer technology gives an unfair advantage to a privileged few.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement above? Support your views with specific examples from your own experience, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Conformity and Rebellion (Persuasive)**

Conformity and rebellion are both a part of growing up, but during teenage and young-adult years we often feel a tension between the two. We may be aware of the need to conform but still have the desire to rebel, or at least to assert our individuality.

In your judgment, which force is stronger during these years — the urge to rebel or the urge to conform? Support your position with evidence from your own experience or your observations of other people.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Defining a Generation (Persuasive)**

Every generation has something distinctive about it. One generation may be more politically active, another more self-centered, another more pessimistic.

Identify a significant characteristic of your own generation, and explain why you think that this characteristic is good or bad. Support your point of view with examples from your own experience, reading or observation.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Division of Labor (Persuasive)**

For many people, college provides their first experience of living in a room or house with their peers, rather than family. In order to live together harmoniously, roommates often need to agree on a set of rules that define each roommate's rights and responsibilities. In your view, what kinds of rules are necessary to ensure fairness and harmony among roommates? Support your position with reasons and examples from your experiences and observations.

---

### **Fads and Trends (Persuasive)**

Briefly describe a fad or trend that you dislike. Explain why it has attracted so many followers and why you dislike it. Develop your point of view by giving reasons and/or examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Games (Persuasive)**

"Children waste far too much time playing games when they could be involved in more constructive activities."

—E. Gorkin

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the opinion stated above? Support your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Gap Year (Persuasive)**

At least one major United States university officially recommends that high school students take a year off — a so-called gap year — before starting college. The gap year idea is gaining popularity. Supporters say it helps students mature and focus on their goals. Detractors say taking a year off from school will get students off track and that many will never go to college if they don't go right away. Do you think taking a gap year is a good idea? Why or why not?

---

### **Heroes Today (Persuasive)**



Who, if anyone, do you think are our heroes today? How do they influence our lives for better or worse? Support your position with reasons and/or examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Images of Beauty (Persuasive)**

Images of beauty — both male and female — are promoted in magazines, in movies, on billboards, and on television. Explain the extent to which you think these images can be beneficial or harmful.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Instincts (Persuasive)**

People are often advised to follow their own instincts and behave in a way that feels natural.

Do you think this is good advice? Why or why not? Develop your point of view by giving reasons and/or examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Liberal Arts Education (Persuasive)**

In the ancient world, the term "liberal arts" referred to the education appropriate for free people (as opposed to slaves). In modern American higher education, the term is used to describe an education that focuses on general, rather than vocational, knowledge.

Proponents believe that a liberal arts education is valuable because it prepares students for life by teaching them how to think. Opponents contend that the study of topics unrelated to one's professional path is a waste of time. Is a liberal arts education worthwhile? Develop your position by using evidence from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Male and Female Roles (Persuasive)**

Some people believe that major changes have occurred over the past few decades in attitudes toward what male and female roles should be in society. Others, however, believe that although some changes have taken place, traditional attitudes toward male and female roles continue in the family, in the workplace and in personal relationships.

In your view, to what extent have attitudes toward the roles of men and woman changed or remained traditional? Support your positions with examples drawn from your own experiences or from your observations of others.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Mandatory Voting (Persuasive)**

Many United States citizens who are eligible to vote choose not to do so. Some people argue that low voter turnout is a threat to democracy because it results in a government that does not represent all of its citizens. Australia and other countries have addressed this problem by passing laws that require all eligible voters to participate in elections. Are mandatory voting laws an acceptable solution to the problem of low voter turnout? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Modern Conveniences (Persuasive)**

Modern conveniences such as fast food, automated teller machines, and labor-saving appliances promise to make life easier. Do these products and services actually make our lives more convenient or do they simply create new problems? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Music (Persuasive)**

Some have said that music not only entertains people but also influences their thinking and behavior.

To what extent do you think music has the power to influence as well as to entertain people? Support your views with reasons or examples from your reading, observations or experience.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Parties Over? (Persuasive)**

Surveys show that about 38 percent of the American public considers itself politically independent: not affiliated with either the Democratic or Republican Party. There are more independents than either Democrats or Republicans. These independent voters report that they see little difference between the Democrats and Republicans, and they are less likely to vote than members of the dominant parties. Given that so few Americans align themselves with a political party, does it even make sense to preserve the old party distinctions? In your opinion, would America be better off or worse off if political parties were abolished and all candidates ran as independents? Support your position with reasons and/or examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Peer Pressure (Persuasive)**

Peer pressure — the influence that friends and classmates have on one another — is almost always described as a negative force that leads to undesirable behavior, but it can also encourage positive behavior. Under what circumstances can peer pressure have positive effects? Write an essay exploring the potentially positive effects of peer pressure. Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Physical Education Requirements (Persuasive)**

Most universities require students to take at least one physical education course in order to graduate. Some require as many as four courses. Supporters of the physical education requirements argue that these courses are important to maintain student wellness. Others feel that college students should be responsible for their own physical health and that academics, not exercise, should be the focus of a college degree. Write an essay in which you argue for or against university physical education requirements. Support your

position with reasons and/or examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Product Liability (Persuasive)**

"Recently, major tobacco companies agreed to pay a financial settlement to several states, including California, for health problems caused by cigarette smoking and other kinds of tobacco addiction. This is unfair and unreasonable. Should car manufacturers be made to pay big settlements because people drive badly and have accidents? Should the makers of cell phones be held responsible for accidents people have because they are driving or using equipment while talking? No company should be made to pay because people misuse its products."

—Edna Hacker

Explain Hacker's argument and discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with her analysis. Support your position, providing reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Raising Children (Persuasive)**

Discuss what you consider an important challenge that parents face in raising children today, and explain how this challenge affects family life. Support your position with reasons and/or examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Reality Class (Persuasive)**

A reality television show about college life has requested permission to film one of your classes throughout the semester. How do you think the presence of a film crew would affect your educational experience? Write an essay making a case for or against granting the reality show permission to film your class. Use reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading to support your position.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Rebellion (Persuasive)**

Some people claim that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing. What do you think: is it a good thing to rebel a little now and then? Support your position with evidence from your own experience or from the experiences of people you know.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Senior Year (Persuasive)**

"As far as I'm concerned, we can do away with the senior year of high school. The majority of students spend most of their time and effort either avoiding class work or planning their social activities."

—P.N. Tracton

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the argument above? Support your position with evidence from your own experiences or observations.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Single-Sex Education (Persuasive)**

Women's colleges, once common in the United States, have been going coeducational in increasing numbers in the past 40 years. Many people argue that women's colleges are unnecessary, now that all of the major United States colleges and universities are open to women. Others, citing studies that show that graduates of women's colleges are more successful than women who graduate from coed colleges, argue that women's colleges still have much to offer. Are single-sex colleges obsolete, or do they still provide an important alternative to coed colleges? Support your position with reasons and/or examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Speaking of Sloth (Persuasive)**

"Indolence is a delightful but distressing state; we must be doing something to be happy."  
—Mahatma Gandhi

According to Gandhi, true happiness comes through work or action rather than through leisure. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this view? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Television President (Persuasive)**

In 1960, presidential candidates John Kennedy and Richard Nixon faced off in a televised debate. The debate is now famous because it established the power of television in politics. The handsome, camera-friendly Kennedy won the approval of the viewing audience, while Nixon came off looking sour and uncomfortable. Since then, presidential candidates' personalities and screen presence have made a huge difference in their chances of winning office. Are Americans justified in giving so much weight to candidates' television presence? Support your position with reasons and/or examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **The Age of Cynicism (Persuasive)**

Some people believe that 24-hour news coverage of corporate, government and celebrity scandals has led to an increase in cynicism, the belief that people are motivated only by self-interest. What evidence do you see that supports or refutes the idea that we live in an age of cynicism? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **The Five- (or More) Year Plan (Persuasive)**

Statistics from the United States Department of Education show that the majority of students who enroll in four-year colleges now take longer than four years to graduate. Why might today's students take longer to graduate than students in past generations? Support your position with reasons and/or examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **The Way Things Are Today (Persuasive)**

"We have all heard someone say, 'They just don't make them like they used to.' When I was a kid, my grandmother would stand at her kitchen counter and almost instantly throw together a little flour, some sugar, butter — and something else magical — to produce flaky, rich biscuits. Apparently it's now a lost art. Oh, I can find some doughy things in a foil tube at the grocery store or follow some package directions to 'just add water,' but the results are disappointing; those so-called biscuits just stick to the roof of my mouth, and they're tasteless except for the faint flavor of chalk. I find, though, that I just don't have the time to make biscuits from scratch, and no one in my family quite remembers Grandma's recipe anyway."

Complaints like the one above are common, but are they accurate as criticisms of the way things are today? Discuss whether you think that, in general, older and better ways of doing things are being replaced by newer but less satisfactory ways. Support your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### **Too Many Questions? (Persuasive)**

High school and college students in the United States are encouraged to think independently, to challenge accepted ideas, and to question new ideas and opinions. Although most people agree that it is essential for students to think critically about the ideas they encounter, some worry that too much emphasis on independent thinking may encourage students to reject or ignore other people's ideas. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this view? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### **Virtual Friends (Persuasive)**

The use of instant messaging, online social networks, e-mail and other forms of electronic communication has become increasingly common among people of all ages. How do these new technologies affect the way we socialize and build relationships? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### **Want/Should (Persuasive)**

Often in life we experience a conflict in choosing between something we want to do and something we feel we should do.

In your opinion, are there any circumstances in which it is better for people to do what they want to do rather than what they feel they should do? Support your position with evidence from your own experience or your observations of other people.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Young People and Selfishness (Persuasive)**

"Too many young people are motivated by selfish interests; they lack concern for anything beyond themselves."

—E. Boyle

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement above? Support your views with specific examples from your own experience, reading or observations.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

## **College Level I — Business-Focused**

[\(go to general topics\)](#)

### **Advertising and Obesity (Persuasive)**

A recent study in the *Journal of Pediatric Obesity* reports that, if current trends continue, almost half the children in North and South America and 38 percent of those in the European Union will be obese by 2010. Physicians studying the trend place much of the blame on the advertising and marketing industry, which, they say, pushes junk food on kids relentlessly. Some physicians argue that, given the massive human and financial toll this potential epidemic could take, all advertising of junk food to children should be banned. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.



---

**CEO Salaries (Persuasive)**

The salaries of chief executive officers (CEOs) reportedly grew by 480 percent between 1980 and 2003. As a result, the gap between CEO salaries and employee salaries has widened every year since the 1980s. Many CEOs of public companies earn 100 times or more what their average employees make. Is it appropriate for CEOs to receive multimillion-dollar compensation packages, or should CEO salaries be brought more in line with employee salaries? Support your position with reasons and/or examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

**Choosing a Job (Persuasive)**

If two different companies offered you similar jobs at similar salaries, how would you decide which offer to accept? What qualities might make one company more or less attractive than the other? Write an essay exploring the information you would use to make your decision. Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

**Company Loyalty (Persuasive)**

It used to be common for workers to spend their entire careers with the same company, but workers today are more likely to work for several different companies during their careers. Do you think that this trend benefits workers or hurts them? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

**Corporate Criminals (Persuasive)**

Charges of fraud, shady accounting practices and other corporate misdeeds have rocked the business world in recent years. Though the perpetrators of such crimes cost employees and investors millions of dollars, they usually receive fines instead of jail

sentences. When a jail sentence is given, it is usually only a few months in a minimum-security facility. Should the punishment for corporate leaders who commit white-collar crimes be more severe? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Customer Service (Persuasive)**

"Always treat your employees exactly as you want them to treat your best customers."  
—Stephen Covey

Do you agree with Covey that good customer service comes from managers modeling proper behavior, or should employees be treated one way and customers another? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Data Mining (Persuasive)**

Many businesses now use computer records to collect and track information on their customers' shopping habits — a strategy called data mining. Retailers use this information to make decisions about what products to carry, or even to tailor their advertisements to particular customers who have bought specific products in the past. Businesses say the practice leads to better understanding of, and better service for, their customers, but consumer advocates worry that consumer privacy is at risk. Which argument do you believe is right? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Do Not Call (Persuasive)**

Since 2003, United States residents have had the option of registering their telephone numbers on the National Do Not Call Registry to limit the telemarketing calls they receive. Once a number is registered, most telemarketers would be legally barred from calling. In your opinion, is it a good idea for the government to intervene in business practices — like telemarketing — that many people find annoying, though not damaging? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

**Dress for Success (Persuasive)**

Until the 1990s, business suits were standard attire in the corporate world. These days, corporate dress codes vary — some employers still expect employees to wear suits while others welcome much more casual dress. While many people welcome the increased comfort and freedom of casual business attire, others believe that casual dress in the corporate workplace is unprofessional or even harmful. Write an essay exploring the pros and cons of the trend toward casual dress in the workplace. Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

**Long Hours, More Perks (Persuasive)**

The days of 9-to-5 jobs are past. United States office workers are increasingly expected to work nine or more hours a day, with lunches eaten hastily at the desk and extra work done at home on weekends. In order to keep employees functioning and reasonably happy, some companies have begun offering a variety of on-the-job perks: subsidized gourmet lunches in the company cafeteria, a company gym, free on-site massages, on-site daycare, even on-site pet care. In your opinion, are these types of perks effective in keeping employees productive and happy? Support your position with reasons and/or examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

**Management by Objectives (Persuasive)**

A popular management technique is Management by Objectives, wherein managers ask employees to suggest their own goals and timelines for work and hold the employee responsible for meeting those goals. Do you believe this approach would be more or less effective for motivating employees than traditional management-directed assignments? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

**Maternity Leave (Persuasive)**

In Sweden, all working parents are entitled to 16 weeks of paid leave per child. The cost is shared by the government and the employer. In the United States, the Family and Medical Leave Act requires some employers to provide a maximum of 12 weeks of unpaid leave for parents, but the act only applies to about 60 percent of workers. Should the United States enact more generous parental leave laws? Why or why not? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Net Gain (Persuasive)**

"I have found no greater satisfaction than achieving success through honest dealing and strict adherence to the view that, for you to gain, those you deal with should gain as well."

—Alan Greenspan

Greenspan argues that one person's success should not come at someone else's expense. To what extent do you agree or disagree with Greenspan's opinion about a successful career? State your opinion, and support your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Retirement Age (Persuasive)**

Many consider the current standard retirement age of 65 a relic of a time when health woes often hampered the productivity of older workers. Today, with life expectancy in the United States reaching 80 years, many older workers argue that they are fit and willing to continue working into their 70s and beyond. Medical research, however, seems to indicate that while older Americans are fitter than they used to be, they are nonetheless physically and mentally slower than their younger counterparts. Should older workers still be compelled to retire at age 65? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Shorter Weeks (Persuasive)**

In the European Union, a statute dictates that employees may not work more than 48 hours per week, and any work done after the standard 35 hours per week is considered

overtime. In many member countries, fixed employment usually comes with four to six weeks of paid leave per year. In the United States, the standard work week is 40 hours, although many people put in much longer hours without overtime compensation, and fixed employment generally comes with two weeks of paid leave. Would it be a good idea for the United States to adopt a more European model by imposing government restrictions on working hours and encouraging business to offer longer paid leaves? Why or why not? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Smoke Out (Persuasive)**

In an effort to reduce future health-care costs, a major United States company is considering giving a small pay increase to all of its nonsmoking employees. They hope to encourage employees who do smoke to quit, thus reducing the amount they may have to pay in future health coverage. Do you believe this decision would be an effective way to both reduce health-care costs and encourage employees to lead healthier lifestyles? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Surfing at Work (Persuasive)**

Most companies monitor Internet and e-mail use by their workers. Employers are concerned about excessive personal Internet use during business hours and threats from spyware and viruses. Employers have the right to set policy about use of computers, but how restrictive should they be? Should all personal use of the Internet and e-mail be banned? Should employers rely on their workers to use their best judgment on Internet use? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Team Building (Persuasive)**

Some managers believe it is important for employees working toward a common goal to feel bonded to each other so they can work well as a team. Many programs and activities exist to foster such relationships. Is the team mentality a crucial factor in a group's success? Are team-building activities good for employees, or are they unnecessary or

perhaps even detrimental? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **The Electronic Office (Persuasive)**

The Internet, laptop computers, cellular phones and other technology allow many people to stay in touch with colleagues and clients even when they are at home or on the road. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this kind of technology? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **The Four P's (Persuasive)**

People who are trying to market a product often speak of the Four P's that need to be considered in any marketing campaign: Product (what is being sold), Price (how much it costs), Place (where it is being distributed), and Promotion (how one communicates with customers). In your opinion, which of the Four P's is least important? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

## **College Level II — General**

[\(go to business-focused topics\)](#)

### **A+ Professor (Persuasive)**

What makes a professor great? Prominence in his or her field? A hot new book? Good student reviews every semester? What standards should be used to assess the quality of college faculty members? Support your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Academic Achievement vs. Age (Persuasive)**

"School children should be grouped according to their levels of academic achievement rather than by their ages."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Achievements vs. Talents (Persuasive)**

"Parents, teachers and employers should reward achievements rather than talents."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **An A for Effort (Persuasive)**

"Although some people argue that grades should be based entirely on students' level of mastery, rewarding effort will teach students the importance of hard work."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Billionaire Dropouts (Persuasive)**

A number of high-profile businesspeople are college dropouts who abandoned college to focus on following their dreams. With such success stories in the high-tech and entertainment fields, it is easy to understand the temptation some students feel to drop out of college to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams. If a friend was considering dropping out of college to start a business, how would you decide whether to encourage that decision? Support your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Bullying and E-Learning (Persuasive)**

"Students who are bullied by their classmates should have the option to attend school via the Internet."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Cell Phone Jammers (Persuasive)**

The use of mobile phones is discouraged in many public spaces, with varying degrees of success. If the technology were legal and available, should places like theaters, restaurants and parks install blocking devices that would make it impossible for patrons to make calls? Support your position with evidence from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Challenging Ideas (Persuasive)**

"Students should be encouraged to challenge the ideas and facts that are presented to them in school."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **College and Career Goals (Persuasive)**

"High school graduates should delay college until they have a clear idea of their career goals."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE



---

### **College Costs (Persuasive)**

"The rising cost of a college education is the fault of students who demand that colleges offer students luxuries unheard of by earlier generations of college students — single dorm rooms, private bathrooms, gourmet meals, etc."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Community Service (Persuasive)**

Some people have suggested that everyone between the ages of 18 and 21 should be required to perform one year of community or government service, such as in the Peace Corps, Environmental Conservancy Corps, a hospital, the military, a rural or inner-city school, or other community outreach projects.

Should government or community service be required of 18- to 21-year-olds? Support your point of view with reasons from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Electives (Persuasive)**

"Schools should offer electives such as music and art only to those students who have mastered core subjects such as reading, math, and science."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **E-mail and Writing Skills (Persuasive)**

"Educators should encourage the current popularity of e-mail and instant messaging among teenagers because this trend is sure to improve their students' reading and writing skills."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Entertainment Options (Persuasive)**

"A college education should equip one to entertain three things: a friend, an idea and oneself."

—Thomas Ehrlich

Ehrlich suggests that a college education should prepare us not just to understand ideas but also to entertain ourselves and others. How might a college education equip us to entertain friends or ourselves? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **File Sharing (Persuasive)**

In the United States, it is considered illegal to download and share music files over the Internet. But should online file sharing be illegal? Both Canada and France have declared peer-to-peer music file sharing to be legal. Should the United States follow in their footsteps? Why or why not? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Gadgets and Self-Reliance (Persuasive)**

"Our increasing reliance on high-tech gadgets will eventually make us less able to take care of ourselves."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

### **Getting Along with Others (Persuasive)**

"One of the most important skills that children need to learn in order to succeed is the ability to get along with others."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

### **Going for Distance (Persuasive)**

Thanks to the Internet, distance education is a booming business. The ability to pursue a college degree online is allowing many people who could not attend a traditional college because of constraints such as work and child-rearing get the education they want. But should a degree earned entirely online be considered equivalent to a degree earned at a traditional brick-and-mortar university? How might the differences between online education and traditional classroom learning affect the educational experience? State your position and support it with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

### **Good Manners (Persuasive)**

"Traditional 'good manners' are meaningless today, and parents should no longer stress them."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

### **Grades (Persuasive)**

Some people argue that having grades in our school systems puts too much emphasis on competition among students and not enough emphasis on learning for its own sake. Others argue that without a precise grading system, students would not work as hard to excel in their studies because they would not have a standard against which to measure their performance.

Should letter grading systems be replaced with pass/fail grading systems? Support your point of view with specific reasons and/or examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

Sample Essays Available

---

### **Handwriting vs. Typing (Persuasive)**

"In the current computer age, schools should replace handwriting instruction with keyboarding."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### **History Then and Now (Persuasive)**

A professor of ancient Roman history constantly compares past events to current news items, so much so that the class seems more about current events than ancient Rome. The professor contends that learning about the past is pointless if the lessons are not applied to the present. Do you agree or disagree with the professor's statement? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### **Living Wage (Persuasive)**

"Employers have a moral obligation to ensure that their workers are paid well enough to maintain a decent standard of living."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Making Decisions (Persuasive)**

"The academic knowledge that is taught in high schools is worthless if schools don't also prepare students to make their own decisions."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Multimedia Teaching (Persuasive)**

"In order to hold their students' interest, teachers should try to present material through video and multimedia presentations rather than through books and lectures."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Naturally Lucky? (Persuasive)**

"I am a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it."  
—Thomas Jefferson

Jefferson believed that luck was often the result of hard work rather than mere chance. Are some people just lucky, or do good things more often come to those who work hard to create opportunities for themselves? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Nonviolence (Persuasive)**

"Nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time; the need for mankind to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to oppression and violence. Mankind must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love."

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

Do you agree or disagree with King's assertion that love and nonviolence can be powerful enough to overcome oppression? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### **Now You See It (Persuasive)**

Some people believe that "absence makes the heart grow fonder." Others believe that "out of sight is out of mind." In your experience, which of these clichés holds true more often? Support your position with reasons and examples from your experience and observations.

---

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### **On One Condition (Persuasive)**

A wealthy graduate offers to donate a large sum of money to your college with the condition that the college require all students to pass a course in personal money management before they can graduate. Should the college accept the donation and the conditions? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### **Optimizing Summer Vacation (Persuasive)**

Some students look forward to summer break as a time to relax and escape the pressures of college life. Others see summer break as a time to work to earn money for school. Still others scramble for high-profile internships that they believe will help them in the job market when they graduate. Assuming that you could afford any of these options, which would you choose and why? Explain your decision with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Realistic Career Goals (Persuasive)**

"Schools and parents should encourage young people to be realistic rather than idealistic about their career goals."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Reality TV (Persuasive)**

"Television shows and movies should spend less time portraying how things are now and more time on how things should be."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Require Community Service (Persuasive)**

Some high schools and colleges require their students to perform community service before graduation. Some critics of these policies worry that turning this service into a requirement will make students less likely to do volunteer community service after graduation.

Should schools and colleges require students to perform community service? Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Setting Expectations (Persuasive)**

"It is cruel and dishonest to tell children that they can achieve anything they set their minds to."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Sick Days (Persuasive)**

Some people pride themselves on never missing work or school even when they are ill, but many employers and teachers have begun to encourage sick workers and students to stay home in order to avoid spreading illnesses to others. Should we make an effort to go to work or school even when we're ill, or is it acceptable or even preferable to stay home when we are sick? Develop your position by using evidence from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Smoking and Health Insurance (Persuasive)**

"Insurance companies and government health-care programs should not pay for the treatment of medical conditions caused by smoking cigarettes or abusing drugs or alcohol."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Summer School (Persuasive)**

Some college students take summer courses in order to earn their degrees more quickly; others believe that a summer break from academics allows them to return to their studies refreshed and ready to study. What are the main advantages and disadvantages of taking college classes over the summer? Do you believe the positives outweigh the negatives, or are you mostly against taking classes over the summer? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **SUV TV (Persuasive)**



Recent years have seen an explosion in the number of cars, SUVs, and minivans that come equipped with DVD players and video screens. Busy parents like the DVD players because they keep kids quiet and entertained on trips. But with kids already watching an average of four hours a television a day, is putting a video player in the family vehicle just too much? Do you believe it is a good idea to let children watch videos in the car? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Teacher Salaries and Student Achievement (Persuasive)**

"Teachers' salaries should be based on their students' level of achievement rather than on seniority or other factors."

Discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with this opinion. Support your views with specific reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **The C Prof (Persuasive)**

A world-renowned professor at your college offers a class that all other students say is the most insightful and brilliant on campus. The topic of the class interests you, but the professor is a notoriously hard grader. If given the opportunity, would you take the class or not? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **The Letter of the Law (Persuasive)**

Your school's official honor code has not been updated for a decade. As it is currently written, the school's code prohibits the use of pocket calculators on exams but does not specifically state that using other electronic equipment like laptops or handheld computers is against the rules. Should a student who uses the calculator function on a laptop computer or other device during an exam be punished for breaking the honor code? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

**Untested Virtue (Persuasive)**

"I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue."  
—John Milton

British poet John Milton famously argued that a belief or conviction that is never tested by contact with challenging or contrary views is not worthy of praise and perhaps should not even be called a "virtue." Therefore, someone who believes in something like protecting the environment or free speech must be willing to stand up for that belief even in the face of strong opposition. Do you agree with Milton? Why or why not? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

**When in Rome (Persuasive)**

An adage advises, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." When is it preferable to adapt your behavior to local customs and when should you maintain the standards of your own culture? Explain your position with examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

**Who's Watching You? (Persuasive)**

With computers tracking the Web sites we visit, and surveillance cameras observing us in many public places, many people feel that their right to privacy has been violated. Do think that this kind of monitoring is justifiable? Support your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

**College Level II — Business-Focused**

[\(go to general topics\)](#)

### **A Reflection on Society (Persuasive)**

"Advertising reflects the mores of society, but it does not influence them."  
—David Ogilvy

Ogilvy argues that advertising does not influence a society's accepted customs and attitudes, it merely reflects the values that already exist. To what extent do you agree or disagree with Ogilvy's opinion about advertising? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### **Bad for You (Persuasive)**

In the 1990s, former smokers met with success in various lawsuits against big tobacco companies. More recently, a number of people have attempted to sue fast-food chains, blaming medical problems like obesity and diabetes on the food that these companies sell. Do you believe businesses that offer products that are legal but bad for you should be held liable for the effects their products have on people's health? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### **Blow the Whistle? (Persuasive)**

When should an employee report misconduct by his or her boss? Most people would agree that illegal or dangerous activity should be reported to higher-ups or the police. But what if the misconduct is relatively minor — like failing to report sick days or engaging in an interoffice romantic relationship? Do you believe an employee should report such minor misconduct? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

---

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

### **Caveat Emptor (Persuasive)**

Caveat emptor is a Latin phrase meaning "Let the buyer beware." The phrase dates from a time when buyers had no assurances of the quality of the goods they bought, and no legal recourse if dissatisfied with their purchases. Today, most stores allow buyers to return unsatisfactory products. There are no such policies, however, on many popular Internet sites that allow individuals to sell, trade or auction goods. Should a law be passed

protecting Internet swappers and shoppers? Or should online buyers be left to their own best judgment? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Focus (Persuasive)**

Often, the most successful people — in business, athletics, entertainment or any field — are those who have focused all of their attention on achieving a specific goal. Those who spread their energy in many directions may not be as successful. In your opinion, how much of success is the result of remaining focused? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Forgotten Jobs (Persuasive)**

Twenty years ago, almost all documents were created using typewriters. Today, the typewriter industry is virtually nonexistent, as most work is done on computers. Twenty years from now, what current industry or industries do you think will be obsolete? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Free E-mail (Persuasive)**

One of the greatest uses of the Internet is e-mail, which allows messages and other data to be sent anywhere in the world instantly with no cost. The downside of e-mail is spam, which clutters many e-mail accounts with unwanted messages. Some of the larger Internet service providers have floated the idea of charging a small fee for every e-mail. This would, they argue, put an end to much of the spam being sent. Is charging a fee a good idea, or are the benefits of a free system to be kept at all costs, including excessive spamming? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **High Oil Prices (Persuasive)**

"Although rising oil prices may hurt the United States economy in the short run, they will ultimately benefit the economy by encouraging the development of alternative forms of energy and more fuel-efficient vehicles."

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the argument above? Support your position with evidence from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Holiday Parties (Persuasive)**

Office winter-holiday parties have a reputation for being awkward, obligatory functions that cost companies a lot of money even though no one really enjoys them. Still, most people like the idea of a company-sponsored social function of some sort. If you were running a company, would you have a holiday celebration, and if so, how might you change the tradition to make it less awkward? Explain what kind of company holiday social function you think would be best. Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Internet Shopping (Persuasive)**

As people have become more at ease with shopping online, the number of Internet retailers has boomed. Most major retailers have an online presence. Local specialty stores that were being forced out of business by big-brand retailers are suddenly finding new, international demand for their wares. As more and more families have computers at home and access to the Internet approaches 100 percent, will Internet shopping come to replace physically going to the mall, bookstore or even the supermarket? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Model Company (Persuasive)**

From time to time, a particular company is vilified in the press for engaging in questionable business practices, such as accounting fraud or insider trading. Other businesses receive bad press for other misconduct, such as damaging the environment.

Clearly, there are some corporate actions that make companies very unpopular with the public. Are there actions that can make a company popular instead? What sort of personality traits should a truly admirable company exhibit? Give your own definition of a model company and support that definition with reasons and examples from your experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Protect or Change? (Persuasive)**

To control costs and remain competitive in the global economy, many United States businesses are outsourcing jobs previously performed by United States workers to countries with lower labor costs. United States workers have been losing manufacturing jobs to overseas factories for years, but now service-industry jobs such as telemarketing, customer service and technical support are also being outsourced. Should the United States government institute measures to discourage businesses from finding cheaper labor in other countries, or should it encourage its workers to focus on developing the kinds of skills that will make those workers more desirable to employers? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Protective Governments (Persuasive)**

In most cases, a nation with free, open markets for a given commodity benefits by having low prices for that product, although this can often mean that the product is produced primarily overseas. For some industries — like steel, public utilities, and basic agricultural goods — governments often impose barriers on overseas companies, believing that losing control of such industries could weaken the nation. This leads to national control, but also higher prices. Do you feel the extra cost is worthwhile for a nation, or is it unnecessary? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Robber Barons (Persuasive)**

The term "robber barons" first referred to several prominent late-nineteenth-century industrialists who made vast fortunes by employing modern manufacturing techniques and monopolizing their various industries, often to the detriment of workers and those who needed the goods and services they provided. Some people defend these

industrialists by pointing out that these were self-made successes, born into modest or even poor families, who earned their wealth through hard work and ingenuity. Others point to their ostentatious displays of wealth and their seeming disregard for the welfare of their workers. Can you think of any industry leaders today who might be deemed robber barons? Explain why you think the label fits using reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Salary and Satisfaction (Persuasive)**

Having a high-paying job certainly has financial advantages, but a lifetime of work in an industry that is unappealing to a person is not a recipe for happiness. Should salary be the most important factor when deciding on a job, or are there other things that are more important? If so, what are they? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **Setting Salaries (Persuasive)**

A common model for establishing employee compensation is that salary should be determined solely by an individual's contribution to an organization. In your opinion, are there circumstances in which people's salaries should be based on something other than their contributions to their organizations? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **The Business of Politics (Persuasive)**

It has been said that running a big company is no different than governing a state or a country. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **The Customer Is Always Right (Persuasive)**

The notion that the customer is always right is very common, especially in businesses where employees have direct contact with customers. The idea behind the phrase is that businesses, in order to be successful, must meet the demands of their customers, even when those demands are unreasonable. Do you agree or disagree that the customer is always right? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **The Harm in Charity (Persuasive)**

"Charity is injurious unless it helps the recipient to become independent of it."  
—John D. Rockefeller

Rockefeller was not alone among wealthy industrialists in his thoughts on charity. Fellow business titan Andrew Carnegie also observed, "One of the serious obstacles to the improvement of our race is indiscriminate charity." Do you agree with Rockefeller and Carnegie, or do you believe that charity is necessary and beneficial? Explain your position with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---

### **The Lone Superpower (Persuasive)**

The United States' economy is, by far, the largest in the world. Do you think this will still be the case 10 years from now? What about in 50 years? What factors do you believe are most important in determining the United States' future economic position? Explain with reasons and examples from your own experiences, observations or reading.

SCORING GUIDE  
6 PT SCALE

---