English I

Expository Scoring Guide

March 2017
English I
Expository Prompt

Read the information in the box below.

The national publication *USA Weekend* began sponsoring Make a Difference Day in 1992 in partnership with the HandsOn Network. On the fourth Saturday in October, everyone is encouraged to gather with friends and neighbors to help fill a need in their community. Millions of Americans participate every year.

Working together can be one of the most effective ways to improve the quality of people’s lives. Think carefully about this statement.

Write an essay explaining one way that people can work together to make a difference. Be sure to —

- clearly state your thesis
- organize and develop your ideas effectively
- choose your words carefully
- edit your writing for grammar, mechanics, and spelling
Score Point 1

The essay represents a very limited writing performance.

Organization/Progression

- The organizing structure of the essay is inappropriate to the purpose or the specific demands of the prompt. The writer uses organizational strategies that are only marginally suited to the explanatory task, or they are inappropriate or not evident at all. The absence of a functional organizational structure causes the essay to lack clarity and direction.

- Most ideas are generally related to the topic specified in the prompt, but the thesis statement is missing, unclear, or illogical. The writer may fail to maintain focus on the topic, may include extraneous information, or may shift abruptly from idea to idea, weakening the coherence of the essay.

- The writer’s progression of ideas is weak. Repetition or wordiness sometimes causes serious disruptions in the flow of the essay. At other times the lack of transitions and sentence-to-sentence connections causes the writer to present ideas in a random or illogical way, making one or more parts of the essay unclear or difficult to follow.

Development of Ideas

- The development of ideas is weak. The essay is ineffective because the writer uses details and examples that are inappropriate, vague, or insufficient.

- The essay is insubstantial because the writer’s response to the prompt is vague or confused. In some cases, the essay as a whole is only weakly linked to the prompt. In other cases, the writer develops the essay in a manner that demonstrates a lack of understanding of the expository writing task.

Use of Language/Conventions

- The writer’s word choice may be vague or limited. It reflects little or no awareness of the expository purpose and does not establish a tone appropriate to the task. The word choice may impede the quality and clarity of the essay.

- Sentences are simplistic, awkward, or uncontrolled, significantly limiting the effectiveness of the essay.

- The writer has little or no command of sentence boundaries and spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and usage conventions. Serious and persistent errors create disruptions in the fluency of the writing and sometimes interfere with meaning.
Work together to make a difference?" I can do that," Jody said. "That looks like fun," Sarah said excitedly. "Let's do this, let me see that flyer!"

The flyer read: "The clean up, team up challenge." Jody and John came out to the National Park and have some fun. We all woke up bright and early Saturday and walked to the park. A map stood at the entrance giving us participant bands. When we got in, we saw a lot of new faces. They put us into teams and explained what we had to do. We had to pick up trash and rescue, put them into our large garbage bags that the leader was holding.

At the end whoever had the most trash won. We all talked and got to know each other as we were picking up trash. Suddenly, both teams came across the same piece of trash at the same time. Both teams wanted it, but we felt as if they needed it more. It wasn't worth arguing over.

When we got to the end we counted our trash. The blue team won which wasn't us. Sadly, we were red, both teams got prizes though. We all as a community come out, enjoyed ourselves and worked as a team. That was the importance.

Score Point 1
In this very limited writing performance, the writer uses a narrative strategy—a story about some friends working together on the “clean up, team up challenge”—to address the topic of working with others to make a difference. However, the details the writer chooses to include serve only to advance the story line and are therefore not suited to the purpose and specific demands of the prompt. The student provides no thesis, resulting in an organizing structure that is inappropriate to the explanatory task.
Working together we can make a difference. A group of more than just one person, there is more opinions and more ideas on how to help to make a difference. Working together gives more support. More people are involved and give confidence to each other to strive to success. Other people in the community might like the idea and are willing to support and work together, to reach their goal to make a difference in the community. The more people that is involved the more better they can make to change and make a difference and improve the quality of people’s lives. It would make a good impact on the people’s lives. People can make a difference.

Score Point 1
In this response, the student provides ideas that do not satisfy the specific demands of the prompt. Instead of explaining one way that people can work together to make a difference, the student provides general ideas about the possible effects of working together with no sentence-to-sentence connections or transitions. Since there is no thesis statement, it is unclear what the writer is attempting to explain. Overall, the response reflects a very limited writing performance.
Score Point 1
In this very limited writing performance, the absence of a functional thesis statement results in an essay that lacks purposeful direction. The writer begins by stating that “when you have someone to help you it makes a big difference.” The repetition of this idea (“When you have to do anything hard . . . ,” “If you wanna get something done then go get somebody”) causes serious disruptions in the flow of the essay. The writer attempts to address the prompt topic of working together; however, the response’s repetition and vague examples reflect a lack of understanding of the expository task. Additionally, sentences such as “next get stuff done you gotta do things right so get it done” are awkward and poorly controlled, contributing to the ineffectiveness of the essay.
Score Point 1
In this response, the writer reflects on a time when the neighborhood came together to clean up the community park. Although this personal anecdote relates to the topic specified in the prompt, the writer demonstrates no command of sentence boundaries and is therefore unable to effectively communicate an explanation. This lack of command creates serious disruptions in the fluency of the essay. The writer places numerous ideas together without using punctuation to distinguish where one idea begins and another ends. Holistically, this essay is representative of a very limited writing performance.
Score Point 2

The essay represents a basic writing performance.

Organization/Progression

- The organizing structure of the essay is evident but may not always be appropriate to the purpose or the specific demands of the prompt. The essay is not always clear because the writer uses organizational strategies that are only somewhat suited to the expository task.

- Most ideas are generally related to the topic specified in the prompt, but the writer’s thesis statement is weak or somewhat unclear. The lack of an effective thesis or the writer’s inclusion of irrelevant information interferes with the focus and coherence of the essay.

- The writer’s progression of ideas is not always logical and controlled. Sometimes repetition or wordiness causes minor disruptions in the flow of the essay. At other times transitions and sentence-to-sentence connections are too perfunctory or weak to support the flow of the essay or show the relationships among ideas.

Development of Ideas

- The development of ideas is minimal. The essay is superficial because the writer uses details and examples that are not always appropriate or are too briefly or partially presented.

- The essay reflects little or no thoughtfulness. The writer’s response to the prompt is sometimes formulaic. The writer develops the essay in a manner that demonstrates only a limited understanding of the expository writing task.

Use of Language/Conventions

- The writer’s word choice may be general or imprecise. It reflects a basic awareness of the expository purpose but does little to establish a tone appropriate to the task. The word choice may not contribute to the quality and clarity of the essay.

- Sentences are awkward or only somewhat controlled, weakening the effectiveness of the essay.

- The writer demonstrates a partial command of sentence boundaries and spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and usage conventions. Some distracting errors may be evident, at times creating minor disruptions in the fluency or meaning of the writing.
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In the second sentence of this basic writing performance, the writer provides a thesis stating that “Having a team can help making a difference a whole lot easier by using teamwork.” To develop this idea, the writer explains how strength in numbers can help a group working toward a common goal. An appropriate but only minimally developed example about a group of people joining together and petitioning the city is provided as support for the thesis. Several awkward sentences and phrases weaken the effectiveness of the piece; however, the student is able to demonstrate a partial control of sentence boundaries, and the awkwardness in the essay causes only minor—rather than serious—disruptions to the response.
Score Point 2
The writer of this response presents the thesis that people working together can make a difference in someone’s life or environment. The writer begins this piece by discussing Johnathan, a teenager who approaches his student council president with a plan to clean up the highways. In the second paragraph, the writer transitions from a brief anecdote about helping the environment to a superficially developed example of “making a difference in someone’s life.” This essay reflects a basic writing performance because the examples only minimally explain the thesis.
Lacrosse has been one of the sports that I have really enjoyed playing. I started in 4th grade and have been going along with it until 9th grade. For the past 6 years our team has been the vipers.

Our team has been doing really well this season. We have won the championship, which required a lot of teamwork. If your team has teamwork you are moving to the road of success. The championship brought us to Utah. We won the whole thing in Utah because we all cheered each other on and we passed the ball around. Teamwork is a huge thing in lacrosse.

So, overall teamwork has brought us super far for our lacrosse team. It has made our team way more confident when we are playing games. Our team has been going down the right road.

Score Point 2
The writer of this basic writing performance presents a generally favorable view of teamwork using the school lacrosse team as an example. Although the thesis is not clearly stated in the introduction, the writer provides a functional thesis in the second paragraph: “If your team has teamwork you are moving to the road of success.” The organizing structure is evident; however, only some of the information pertains to teamwork. At times, the writer includes irrelevant information, resulting in development that only partially supports the thesis. For example, the detail about starting in 4th grade and playing through 9th grade does not support how people work together to make a difference on a team. The word choice is general (doing really well, super far, way more confident) and does little to contribute to the quality and clarity of the essay.
In this response, the writer opens with a broad thesis stating that “people can make a difference working together by being better, faster and bigger to help others.” The writer utilizes two examples, the movie *Avatar* and the American Revolution, to explain this thesis. In both examples, the development of ideas is minimal because the writer briefly summarizes the events with little effort to connect the paragraphs or examples to each other beyond a perfunctory transition. Each example supports the thesis in a general sense, but both examples are only minimally developed. The writer concludes with a general statement that does little to unify the response. Overall, this essay represents a basic writing performance.
Score Point 3

The essay represents a satisfactory writing performance.

Organization/Progression

- The organizing structure of the essay is, for the most part, appropriate to the purpose and responsive to the specific demands of the prompt. The essay is clear because the writer uses organizational strategies that are adequately suited to the expository task.

- The writer establishes a clear thesis statement. Most ideas are related to the thesis and are focused on the topic specified in the prompt. The essay is coherent, though it may not always be unified due to minor lapses in focus.

- The writer’s progression of ideas is generally logical and controlled. For the most part, transitions are meaningful, and sentence-to-sentence connections are sufficient to support the flow of the essay and show the relationships among ideas.

Development of Ideas

- The development of ideas is sufficient because the writer uses details and examples that are specific and appropriate, adding some substance to the essay.

- The essay reflects some thoughtfulness. The writer’s response to the prompt is original rather than formulaic. The writer develops the essay in a manner that demonstrates a good understanding of the expository writing task.

Use of Language/Conventions

- The writer’s word choice is, for the most part, clear and specific. It reflects an awareness of the expository purpose and establishes a tone appropriate to the task. The word choice usually contributes to the quality and clarity of the essay.

- Sentences are varied and adequately controlled, for the most part contributing to the effectiveness of the essay.

- The writer demonstrates an adequate command of sentence boundaries and spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and usage conventions. Although some errors may be evident, they create few (if any) disruptions in the fluency of the writing, and they do not affect the clarity of the essay.
Everyday, communities are faced with challenges that force each other to work together. When people come together for a purpose, miracles can happen.

Everyone has ideas that can contribute to prosperity and greater good. If multiple people with similar goals work together, they can accomplish this goal quicker and more efficiently. A simple illustration of this is Henry Ford’s assembly line. Workers form a line that will add parts to the car one at a time. In this way, more people would have jobs and the larger goal could be completed more swiftly. A bigger example of this is the American revolution. A few angry colonists couldn’t beat the British army. However, a gigantic group of angry colonists could. The militia slowly but surely beat the British and won America’s independence. This goes to show that there is strength in numbers. If people work together to improve our daily lives, wonders will occur. Things that some never thought possible will happen in an instant. Society can conquer all forms of evil if we all work together.

Simply put; people are stronger together. This has been clear to humankind for eons. When we all come together for a common goal, we can achieve unimaginable greatness.

Score Point 3
In this satisfactory writing performance, the writer provides an explanation focused on how “simply put: people are stronger together.” The student attempts to provide specific concrete support for a mostly philosophical discussion of how “there is strength in numbers.” Henry Ford’s assembly line workers and a “gigantic group of angry colonists” are referenced to illustrate how working in a larger group can help people achieve shared goals. The examples, although concise, are appropriate and add some substance to the composition. Overall, the essay flows well, and the sentence-to-sentence connections support the fluency of the response, show the relationships among ideas, and establish a clear expository tone. The word choice (“everyone has ideas that can contribute,” “communities are faced with challenges”) is specifically related to the idea of working together. Additionally, the conclusion of the essay adds some thoughtfulness to the piece.
Score Point 3

In this essay, the writer states that “when you have multiple people helping you the task then becomes easier than before.” To explain this thesis, the writer offers appropriate examples about the Houston Texans football team and the soldiers who fought in World War II. Although the student does not provide a transition to connect the examples, the specific details in each section, such as “the linemen block so that the backs can run the ball and pass it” and “paratroopers would fly in and save the infantry if they needed help,” add substance to the piece by clarifying how individuals can contribute to a larger effort. The details and the sentence-to-sentence connections within each paragraph help this writer achieve a satisfactory writing performance.
I think one way people can work together to make a difference is with the establishment of liter patrols. Liter Patrols are groups of volunteers who take either daily or weekly shifts who go out once a day or once a week to go around the neighborhood picking up trash on the ground. How much time they’re out depends on the neighborhood. If you live in a small gated community with only twelve units you might be out there for only less then twenty minutes, but if you live in a large urban neighborhood with three apartment buildings, you might have to be out there for at least an hour. But don’t think of just the commitment, think of all the advantages. The cleaner streets will make it safer and cleaner for kids to play. It will bring neighbors together through a common goal. Plus the property value will go up if the neighborhood looks well tended to which improves the selling market. It all starts with getting outside. It all starts with picking up that one piece of trash. It all starts with you.

Score Point 3
In this satisfactory writing response, the writer focuses on one specific way that people can work together to make a difference: the establishment of patrols that collect litter. This organizational strategy is appropriate and responsive to the specific demands of the prompt. The writer is able to develop the essay with some substance by maintaining focus on one idea. A specific example explaining a positive outcome (the property value will go up if the neighborhood looks well tended to) emphasizes and supports the thesis. Although the word “litter” is misspelled throughout the piece, the writer’s control of English writing conventions is adequate. Overall, the writer demonstrates a good understanding of the expository task.
When you look around you can see people helping other people, and people working together to reach a goal. You can also see people standing away from the crowd, independently. But, what if we brought all those people together? Working together can really change peoples lives, and I believe that the only way to be truly happy is to help make other people happy.

I was born two months early, and almost didn’t survive because my body hadn’t developed enough, and my heart wasn’t beating correctly. But, I made it because of a wonderful charity organization called March of Dimes. March of Dimes helps babies all over the world that were born early, or were born with life-threatening diseases. Every year, March of Dimes gets together and sells beanie babies, the beanie baby money goes to the organization which then goes to hospitals, to help. They also do the Walk of Dimes which is when they gather up a lot of people who then walk for the babies in need. This organization has really made a difference in millions of lives.

You can really change someone’s life by working together, and I believe that when you do that it makes people happy which in turn causes you to be happy.

Score Point 3
The writer of this response begins with a somewhat thoughtful introduction, immediately establishing a tone that is appropriate to the expository purpose. The student establishes a clear thesis that states that “working together can really change peoples lives, and I believe that the only way to be truly happy is to help make other people happy” in the last sentence of the introduction. The writer uses a personal anecdote to substantiate the thesis, explaining in detail what the “March of Dimes” is and how the organization makes a difference. The response is focused and progresses logically. Overall, the essay demonstrates a good understanding of the expository task.
Score Point 4

The essay represents an accomplished writing performance.

Organization/Progression

- The organizing structure of the essay is clearly appropriate to the purpose and responsive to the specific demands of the prompt. The essay is skillfully crafted because the writer uses organizational strategies that are particularly well suited to the expository task.

- The writer establishes a clear thesis statement. All ideas are strongly related to the thesis and are focused on the topic specified in the prompt. By sustaining this focus, the writer is able to create an essay that is unified and coherent.

- The writer’s progression of ideas is logical and well controlled. Meaningful transitions and strong sentence-to-sentence connections enhance the flow of the essay by clearly showing the relationships among ideas, making the writer’s train of thought easy to follow.

Development of Ideas

- The development of ideas is effective because the writer uses details and examples that are specific and well chosen, adding substance to the essay.

- The essay is thoughtful and engaging. The writer may choose to use his/her unique experiences or view of the world as a basis for writing or to connect ideas in interesting ways. The writer develops the essay in a manner that demonstrates a thorough understanding of the expository writing task.

Use of Language/Conventions

- The writer’s word choice is purposeful and precise. It reflects a keen awareness of the expository purpose and maintains a tone appropriate to the task. The word choice strongly contributes to the quality and clarity of the essay.

- Sentences are purposeful, varied, and well controlled, enhancing the effectiveness of the essay.

- The writer demonstrates a consistent command of sentence boundaries and spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and usage conventions. Although minor errors may be evident, they do not detract from the fluency of the writing or the clarity of the essay. The overall strength of the conventions contributes to the effectiveness of the essay.
Every Tuesday morning, on my way to school, I see practically every house with a blue recycling bin along side the regular green trash can. The recycling bins are all so full, that the lid won’t even close all the way. A dedicated neighbor had sent a flyer to the entire neighborhood to promote recycling. He would weigh each and every recycling bin, and the house with the heaviest bin will receive a gift card. Even though seeing the competition might not be the sole reason why some neighbors are recycling, this recycling competition going on has increased our neighborhood’s recycling output exponentially. Seeing how effective a little competition could be, I tried a similar method with my friends.

I challenged a large group of my friends to recycle. Each person would have their own box, and the person with the heaviest box would also get a gift card. After a month or two, my friends invited their friends to the competition we had, and we nearly had our entire school recycling! Everyone donated a small amount of money to add up the prize. Rather than weigh one box per person, everyone had at least three full boxes, quite a jump compared to the initial amount when I had started the competition.

One person has a small chance of making a huge difference. It’s not impossible, but highly unlikely. Not everyone can be recognized by the press and gain publicity for their contributions and efforts. A group of people can do so much more. They can get more done and make a difference. Recycling, in this case, started off as one person recycling a couple of pounds, then grew to practically a whole community recycling a couple tons. People working together can make a difference.

Score Point 4
In the last paragraph of this accomplished writing performance, the student presents the idea that people working together can “get more done and make a difference.” As support for this idea, the writer focuses specifically on an anecdotal example that illustrates how efforts to recycle are more effective when the undertaking is shared by more participants than just one individual. The strong transition “seeing how effective a little competition could be, I tried a similar method with my friends” effectively links the neighbor’s efforts to the efforts of the student while narrowing the focus of the essay and moving the response forward. In the second paragraph, the student provides a personal experience with recycling, adding to the development and strengthening the sentence-to-sentence connections and fluency of the piece. In the final paragraph, the student continues to use strong transitions that add to the overall unity of the essay, allowing the student to tie recycling to the broader theme of working together to make a difference. This response is effectively organized, maintains a clear explanatory tone, and demonstrates a thorough understanding of the expository writing task.
In this concise essay, the writer presents the clear thesis that “sometimes the only way to make a difference is [through] cooperation.” This essay is tightly controlled because the writer maintains a clear focus on Africa and the Red Nose Day. All of the ideas support the thesis, and each sentence builds on the one before it, increasing the overall development and fluency of the piece. Pertinent details emphasize how cooperation rests at the heart of Red Nose Day’s success. Additionally, purposeful and precise word choice (“agglomeration of skills”) reflects a keen awareness of the expository writing task and establishes an appropriate expository tone.
Workshopping to make a difference in the world may seem like a difficult task, but it can bring rewarding results. A way that people can accomplish this is in a community as small as a school. For example, a school may begin a recycling program to benefit the environment.

For a school-wide recycling program to work, it’s necessary for someone, to take initiative and encourage a large amount of participation. For example, this can be done by passing out flyers promoting a recycling program throughout the school and having administrators, such as principals and vice principals, endorse the recycling program, encouraging its efficiency.

As mentioned before, to be able to make a difference, a good cause needs many participants. This can be achieved by speaking to the students about the recycling program and encouraging everyone to help. Some examples include reusing plastic grocery bags, reusing containers such as cardboard boxes, placing water bottles in a recycling bin so it can be taken to a recycling center, and recycling paper. As part of the recycling initiative, a school will also organize events such as park cleanups where volunteers, students, teachers, and administrators all go to a designated place with litter (such as a park) and assist in cleanup to make it a safer, cleaner area. In time, the efforts of the community will pay off, which may encourage other people or groups to do the same.

By working together, a group of people are able to achieve great things. A school-wide recycling program will not only benefit the environment in the larger picture, but it can also be a way to foster teamwork in a small community, and to have an enjoyable experience while making a difference in the world.

Score Point 4
In this accomplished writing performance, the writer begins by establishing a clear thesis, stating that “working together to make a difference in the world may seem like a difficult task, but it can bring rewarding results.” To illustrate this thesis, the writer thoroughly outlines and develops a plan of action for a “schoolwide recycling program.” The organizational structure is clearly appropriate to the expository purpose and is responsive to the specific demands of the prompt. All the ideas are strongly related to the thesis, and the writer’s train of thought is logical and easy to follow. The essay is thoughtful and engaging, as the student thoroughly explains everything from the necessity “to take initiative and encourage a large amount of participation” to the specific ways in which people can work together to make a difference by improving the environment. The sentences are varied and well controlled, each adding more detail and substance to the development. The conclusion further expands upon the thesis set forth in the introduction, emphasizing the positive potential effects of the recycling initiative at both the local and global level.
Many children around the world will never step foot in a classroom, enjoy the joy of a good test grade, or experience the pain of a bad test grade. While some American students would rejoice if they were told that school was cancelled forever, the effects of a lack of education slow the global community and deny children of their rights. To make a difference, people must work together to broaden education throughout the world. To provide a successful learning community, it is necessary that one person cannot bear alone. There is a need for teachers, nurses, administrators, and funding. In order to take education worldwide, lawyers and government corporations would also be necessary. None of these factors would be easy to obtain, but the effects would be tremendous.

When one looks to the U.S., one can hear bells ringing and children screaming. For many places around a public elementary, middle, or high school. Because education is widespread and mandatory, the U.S. has been a superpower in the world economy. Education in the U.S. was not always widespread; when people spread together and asked the government for reform, it happened. It took cities, states, and organizations filled with individuals asking for change to occur.

When one looks to India’s education, the picture is not quite as pretty. Something truly occurs. Many experts agree that the widespread abuse of women is even due to a lack of education. However, many organizations with many volunteers work to educate young children, so women do not have to face this problem. These same experts say that educating women they are able to survive on their own. Men know the importance of women in society when looking at the contrast between the U.S. and India. Dramatic differences are seen. The positive aspects of the U.S. are due to education, and the negative aspects of Indian society are due to lack of education. When people came to get their education, spread so the positive reigns over the negative...

Score Point 4
In the introductory paragraph of this accomplished writing performance, the writer establishes a vivid contrast between the children who will “never step foot in a classroom” and those who are fortunate enough to “experience the pain of a bad test grade.” This engaging introduction immediately establishes an appropriate expository tone that is maintained throughout the entirety of the response, culminating with a clear thesis: “to make a difference, people must work together to broaden education throughout the world.” The writer sustains focus on educational systems from beginning to end, providing insightful commentary and specific, well-chosen examples. Purposeful, precise word choice consistently reflects a keen awareness of the explanatory task and fully illustrates the writer’s ideas in every paragraph. The writer develops the essay in a unique and thoughtful manner, demonstrating a thorough understanding of the expository writing task.