READ the information in the box below.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy said that the United States should set a goal of landing an American on the moon by 1970. After much hard work and preparation, two Americans landed on the moon in 1969.

THINK carefully about the following statement.

Some people think it is easier to accomplish something if they set a goal in advance.

WRITE an essay explaining why setting a goal is important.

Be sure to —

- clearly state your controlling idea
- organize and develop your explanation effectively
- choose your words carefully
- use correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and sentences
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 controlling idea 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 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 age-appropriate spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and usage conventions. Serious and persistent errors create disruptions in the fluency of the writing and sometimes interfere with meaning.
Score Point 1
The controlling idea of this response is that goal setting is needed to make accomplishments happen. The brief mention of “a goal to pass to the next level” and “getting to the moon” provides vague development, and repetition of the importance of preparing a goal causes a weak progression of ideas. Additionally, the student’s limited word choice, awkward sentence construction, and errors in conventions impede the clarity and quality of this very limited writing performance.
A goal I set for myself was to make the B-Team. When our first practice was over, I was sweating so hard! But, I pushed through the try-out. Then, it was Friday. The day we used helmets and pads. It was one of the hardest practices. But, it got better, and I built some muscle, lost some fat, and kept going. Then the last day comes before they announce what teams people are on. That practice I didn't screw up once. I pushed so hard that day. And guess what? The next day, it paid off. I was made B-Team tight end. But that season, we didn't do so hot (1-7), but I never dropped a pass. And you can ask anyone, that's really good for a 9th grade kid who hasn't played football for a long time. That was the time I set a goal for myself in football.

Score Point 1
Instead of explaining the importance of setting a goal, the writer of this very limited writing performance shares a personal narrative about how goal setting “paid off.” Although the writer addresses the topic of setting goals, the organizing structure of the response is inappropriate to the expository purpose. The controlling idea is missing, and the development is weak because the details tell only what happened as the writer moves through time with the first practice, the try-out, and the result of making the team. Overall, the writer’s response to the prompt is confused and demonstrates a lack of understanding of the expository writing task.
Score Point 1
This essay begins with the writer describing a hypothetical scenario to establish his controlling idea, which focuses on the importance of setting a goal. Although the writer attempts to tie the importance of goals to a personal example about preparing for a test, no connection is made between study habits and achievement. Instead, random examples of goal setting (International Space Station; building monuments) are only briefly presented and are not linked to the controlling idea stated in the last paragraph (“If nobody ever had a goal nothing would be accomplished”). In addition to insufficient development, perfunctory transitions and sentence-to-sentence connections do not support the flow of ideas or show the relationship among ideas. The result is a weak progression of ideas in this very limited writing performance.
People set goals in life to work through them, and be successful and hard working.

Why are goals important? They make us want to get them. When we set goals we fight to get them. If I set a goal I would try to make it there and I won’t give up without trying to get better. How do goals help us in life? They help us be telling us to go get them. It is like a video game when you want something you go get it. When you set a goal there’s nothing holding you back so go get it. Goals are worth fighting for; if you set one you will be like everyone successful.

Score Point 1
The writer of this very limited writing performance introduces the controlling idea that goals are important because they help people work hard through them. The writer attempts to organize ideas by presenting rhetorical questions as topic sentences to each paragraph; however, the vague and repetitious answers to those questions (go get them) inside the paragraphs contribute little substance and impede the flow of ideas in the essay. Overall, the writer develops the essay in a manner that demonstrates a lack of understanding of the expository writing task.
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 controlling idea is weak or somewhat unclear. The lack of an effective controlling idea 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 age-appropriate 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.
In this response, the writer offers the somewhat unclear controlling idea that goals make people want to accomplish everything and goals are ways “to think about your future.” However, the writer then shifts from idea to idea about goals (the importance of determination; examples of goals; the effects of goals on people; many people set goals; goals are important to set). These ideas are not specifically linked to the controlling idea and are superficially developed. Repetition causes an uncontrolled progression of ideas, weak development, and a lack of focus. All these factors contribute to an essay that represents a basic writing performance.
Score Point 2
In this basic writing performance, the writer introduces the controlling idea that one must set a goal to accomplish something. The writer attempts to support the idea with two examples: how Abraham Lincoln set a goal to end slavery and how college football players set goals to become professional football players. However, the essay is superficial because the details the writer chooses are too partially presented to contribute to the development in a substantial way. Extraneous information about many people having goals and about the possibility of people having more than one goal in life stalls the progression of ideas and impedes the coherence of the essay. Overall, this essay represents a basic writing performance.
Score Point 2
In this basic writing performance, the writer introduces the controlling idea that “you should always set a goal if you want something to be done.” To support this idea, the writer states that “setting goals makes you work harder” and prevents you from quitting, as long as the goal is “reasonable.” The writer concludes with the idea that goals help you “reach your best work.” Although the progression of ideas is clear, the writer’s word choice is general, and the details and examples are too briefly presented to be effective. Overall, the writer demonstrates a limited understanding of the expository writing task.
The controlling idea of this formulaic response is that goal setting “makes things easier to accomplish and it helps you push for the goal.” To support this idea, the writer provides minimal explanation about how goal setting makes it easier to clean a room and run the mile; however, the details are too briefly presented to add substantive development and are not clearly tied to the controlling idea. In addition, wordiness and repetition of “easier to accomplish” and “pushing” to reach goals cause minor disruptions in the flow of the essay. Perfunctory transitions and sentence-to-sentence connections are too weak to show the relationships among ideas. As a result, the essay demonstrates that the writer has a limited understanding of the expository writing task, resulting in 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 controlling idea. Most ideas are related to the controlling idea 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 age-appropriate 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.
Growing up can be hard; especially when you don’t know what to do. By taking one day to just figure out what you want to do with your life, everything can become easier. Goals will allow you to become a new person and reach heights you thought were unattainable.

Setting goals is like planning a party. You must know who, when, and where you want things. Taylor Swift became pretty used to this cycle. She set new goals for herself all the time. First she needed to know who to play the guitar, then to be signed to a record label, and now she must not forget the lyrics. She wouldn’t have been able to get this far in life, without knowing what she had wanted all along.

Goals allow you to go farther in your life. Without setting goals, people would just give up once things got tough. People have created more things by using goals than they ever would have. These prove that you can do anything in life.

One day is all it takes to start thinking about your future. Setting a significant goal can very well change your life. There will be some bumps in the road, but eventually you will reach your incentive and feel complete.

Score Point 3

Beginning this essay with the observation, “Growing up can be hard; especially when you don’t know what to do,” the writer reveals the controlling idea that goals allow you to “become a new person and reach heights you thought were unattainable.” To support this idea, the writer provides a specific example about how Taylor Swift set and achieved goals in various stages of her singing career. Although the third paragraph is weakened by the inclusion of only general statements about how goals help people in life (Without setting goals people would just give up; People have created more things by using goals), overall the writer develops the essay in a manner that demonstrates a good understanding of the expository writing task. The writer ties the ideas together with some thoughtfulness in the concluding paragraph. Additionally, specific word choice, varied sentence structures, and a control of sentence boundaries contribute to this satisfactory writing performance.
Score Point 3
The writer begins this essay with the controlling idea that goals have allowed many people over time to achieve “something they always dreamed of doing.” The writer offers two examples (Thomas Edison’s persistent attempts to develop a light bulb; Michael Jordan’s repeated attempts to make his high school basketball team) to support this idea with sufficient development that adds some thoughtfulness to the essay. The progression of ideas is generally logical and controlled, although meaningful transitions between the two body paragraphs would better support the flow of ideas. The conclusion adds to the response by challenging the reader to work hard to achieve a great future. In addition, the writer’s word choice is clear and specific, enhancing this satisfactory writing performance.
People set goals because it helps organize efficiently how they will reach their goal; by planning and evaluating your options will make it easier. Setting yourself a goal is important because you set your mind to it. Setting a goal is important because you know strategically how you are going to achieve that goal. For example, John F. Kennedy wanted an American to land on the moon. He was not just going to go with the first decision that someone presented him, he was going to have someone statistically evaluate the rocket and make sure it was well built and sturdy. He also needed to make sure that the proper equipment was on the rocket and if there was any climate difficulty. If everything was ready to go, the rocket could then proceed to the moon. Having to set a goal is important because it helps you think through all the possible issues and how to grow past them. Another important reason setting a goal is a good idea is because it gets you determined and it makes you focus on your goal. For instance, when you have a young man, who has no professional background, play basketball, he is most likely not able to shoot a hoop. But if he practices everyday and has the determination, this young man can accomplish anything he sets his mind to. Setting a goal is important because strategically helps you plan different ways to achieve it and helps you grow determination. Accomplishing a goal might have hurdles on the way, but you can always make it to the finish line.

Score Point 3
The controlling idea of this response is that goal setting “strategically helps you plan” how to achieve a goal and keeps you determined. The writer provides two examples (John F. Kennedy planning the task of putting a man on the moon; a basketball player’s determination to play professionally). Although the example about how daily practice improves a man’s basketball skills is somewhat general, the John F. Kennedy example is specific and thoughtful, with clear and appropriate word choice that contributes to the effectiveness of the essay. In the conclusion, the student ends the composition by stating the controlling idea. In addition, the writer adds some thoughtfulness by comparing accomplishing a goal to reaching the finish line, “even though there are hurdles on the way.” Overall, this response represents a satisfactory writing performance.
Setting goals has been a part of human nature for centuries, guiding us towards our ambitions. Many well-known people in history like Christopher Columbus and the Wright Brothers set big goals and accomplished them with hard work and effort.

Not having goals may seem like an easy way to cruise through life, but it makes life arduous down the road. Even the small goals count because they kind of have a snowball effect on your life. For example, a girl saving up for a doll now can help her know how to invest in a business later. Some kids buy as soon as they get money and don’t learn the values of saving and end up broke later in life.

Also, if you set a goal, you’re more likely to stay on it, and not lose track of the path to success. Think about it like this; goals are like instructions, telling what to do and not to do, they keep you on track. If you don’t even set a goal, you’re more likely going to get distracted by something else and not achieve the set goal. If you’re a goalie in soccer and your set goal is to block all score attempts by the other team and you start playing offense, chances are they’ll score on you.

In conclusion, goals are extremely important in life because without them, what kind of life would you even have? Setting goals has been a part of life for centuries and hopefully will stay that way for centuries to come.

Score Point 3
The student states the controlling idea of this response in the first two sentences of the paper. The writer develops the controlling idea by briefly mentioning two relevant historical examples (Christopher Columbus; the Wright Brothers) and then focusing on a philosophical view of setting goals. The second paragraph explains how even small goals can have “a snowball effect on your life.” The development of this idea reflects some thoughtfulness by the writer’s observation that not having many goals “makes life arduous down the road.” In the third paragraph, the writer adds an example about playing soccer to support the idea that goals will “keep you on the path to success.” The progression of ideas is sufficient to support the flow of the essay and show the relationship among ideas. This response demonstrates a satisfactory writing performance.
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 controlling idea. All ideas are strongly related to the controlling idea 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 age-appropriate 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.
Score Point 4
The clear controlling idea of this accomplished writing performance is that setting goals is “essential” because it “raises one’s success rate and gives [people] something to work towards.” Although the first example about John F. Kennedy’s quest to put a man on the moon repeats information provided in the prompt, the writer adds specific details that add substance to the response. The second example about VIA’s (the San Antonio transit agency) goal to put more streetcar routes in downtown San Antonio is also strongly related to the controlling idea. By sustaining focus on how goal setting is related to accomplishments, the writer is able to craft an essay that is unified and coherent. Meaningful transitions and the inclusion of strong sentence-to-sentence connections allow the reader to easily follow the writer’s train of thought. The quality of the essay is strengthened by a consistent command of conventions as well as purposeful and precise word choice. Overall, this essay reflects a keen awareness of the expository task.
Score Point 4
In this skillfully crafted essay, the writer establishes the controlling idea that a goal gives you a path to take so you can become better at whatever you wish. The writer develops an extended metaphor by explaining that goals prevent you from swerving off course (with daily schoolwork) and by sharing the observation that a goal works like a rental car after an accident (You may run into issues but should always keep on your way). To reinforce the idea of continuing on despite roadblocks, the writer provides a quotation from the movie *Toy Story* (“To Infinity and Beyond!”), explaining that the message encourages people to reach a goal and then “crave to go beyond it.” The strong transitions within paragraphs and precise word choice enhance the effectiveness of the piece. Additionally, the introduction and conclusion contribute to the unity and coherence of this accomplished writing performance.
No one wants to go through life in a conglomerate of regret, unfulfilled dreams, and muddled half-ideas. Having no specific task is a setup for failure. Setting goals keeps you focused on a single task at a time.

There are two types of goals - short-term and long-term - both of which are quintessential to a productive life. Long-term goals give people more motivation to get where they want to be in life, short-term goals help to achieve long-term goals. Goals can be as simple as passing a math test, to aiming to be the CEO of a major corporation.

Goals help to finish projects on time. When I was building a model fish, I set daily goals of what to get done. By building it piece by piece, each part was detailed, and when they were put together each piece made the model greater. If the model was done as a whole less attention to detail would be needed and the project may have not gotten done on time.

One long-term goal might be to learn how to ride a skateboard and perform tricks. Trying to learn to ride a skate board and perform tricks would be frustrating at first. But if you break it up into several smaller goals, the whole experience becomes less stressful. By becoming proficient in riding the board and only then learning tricks the goal becomes more manageable.

Setting goals keeps you focused on a single task at a time. This makes achieving dreams within reach. Many achievements could never be made without the aide of goals.

Score Point 4
The writer of this composition begins the response with the observation that “No one wants to go through life in a conglomerate of regret, unfulfilled dreams, and muddled half-ideas” to establish the clear controlling idea that setting goals “keeps you focused on a single task at a time.” Using a compare-contrast organizational structure, the writer compares long-term with short-term goals and provides personal examples of each (building a model of a fish and learning how to skateboard). With specific, well-chosen details, the writer is able to craft an essay that is unified and coherent. The sentence-to-sentence connections enhance the flow of ideas, and purposeful, precise word choice further contributes to the quality and clarity of this accomplished writing performance.
Score Point 4
The writer of this engaging response offers the controlling idea that “Setting a goal helps make a task easier and increases the chances of reaping success.” The student uses an organizational strategy that begins with a general description of the process of how to set a goal. In the next paragraph, the student provides a specific example of someone who used this process and reaped success by winning the National Geographic Bee. This strategy unifies the piece. Inside each paragraph, the student is able to maintain a nice expository tone by using precise and relevant word choice. The writer shares a unique view of the world and connects ideas in interesting ways, demonstrating a thorough understanding of the expository task. Throughout the essay, strong sentence-to-sentence connections enhance the flow of the essay and contribute to the coherence and unity of this accomplished writing performance.