

Lesson 15

In this lesson, test takers will look again at the *Write essay* item type, which assesses their ability to write a persuasive or argumentative essay on a given topic. The lesson focuses on the following skills:

Writing

- Writing for a purpose (to learn, to inform, to persuade)
- Supporting an opinion with details, examples and explanations
- Organizing sentences and paragraphs in a logical way
- Developing complex ideas within a complete essay
- Using words and phrases appropriate to the context
- Using correct grammar
- Using correct spelling
- Using correct mechanics
- Writing under timed conditions

Reading

- Identifying the topic
- Identifying supporting points or examples
- Identifying the relationships between sentences and paragraphs

Test takers will look again at the description, rubrics and scoring of this item type, analyze the strategies for approaching it successfully, build on the skills introduced in Lesson 7 and complete practice items under test conditions.

Information about the item type in *The Official Guide to PTE Academic*

	<i>Write essay</i>
Item type task description	pp. 74–75
Skills tested	p. 77
Scoring	pp. 75–77
Strategies	pp. 77–78
Practice item	pp. 78–79
Answer key feedback	pp. 176–178

Suggested activities

Activity 1

Revise written discourse skills previously taught

- Project an image of the item prompt on page 74 in the *Official Guide* on the board. Elicit the process that test takers should follow to successfully answer a prompt such as this (i.e., analyze the question for content and task requirements; make an essay plan with a main argument or opinion and supporting reasons; draft an essay which has logically organized paragraphs; edit the essay for organization, grammar, punctuation and vocabulary, and spelling).
- Remind test takers that a key skill for successful completion of this item type is the ability to write well structured paragraphs that include clear topic sentences and logically linked supporting sentences. Tell test takers they will now revise this skill.
- Write the following sentence on the board: *A well written paragraph needs good planning, logical organization and careful editing.* Put students into pairs and have them write up to six supporting sentences to explain and extend the idea in the sentence. They should be logically organized and use linking words and phrases.
- Remind them to use the “Paragraph editing” checklist they created in Lesson 7 to structure and edit their work.
- Ask groups to read out their supporting sentences, discuss whether the sentences support the main ideas of the topic sentence, provide appropriate content and are organized logically.

Activity 2**Familiarize test takers with strategies for successfully structuring a whole essay**

- Remind test takers that in Lesson 7 they practiced writing sentences to state their opinions and structuring paragraphs. Explain that in this lesson they will practice structuring an entire essay.
- Ask test takers to read the prompt and elicit the task requirements (i.e., to discuss whether governments should regulate one's right to smoke). Elicit test takers' general opinions in response to the prompt, as well as some of their reasons for and against smoking regulations.
- Tell test takers to remain in small groups, and give each group a cut-out set of the five paragraphs of the C1 essay on page 177 in the *Official Guide* in a jumbled order.
- Have them work together to determine the first paragraph (i.e., the introduction), the middle of the essay (i.e., the body), and the final paragraph (i.e., the conclusion). They should clearly label the parts and give reasons to support their choices, e.g., the organizational features, information and other language clues.
- Give groups five minutes to order the paragraphs and elicit the answers.

Activity 3**Familiarize test takers with the structure of a successful essay**

- Ask test takers to look at the B2 essay on pages 177–178 in the *Official Guide*. Ask them to describe the information that is contained in the introduction (i.e., background information to the topic and the main opinion), the body (i.e., reasons supporting the main opinion) and the conclusion (i.e., reiteration of main opinion).
- Elicit from test takers the type of information a good essay response must contain (i.e., relevant background information to orientate the reader to the topic; a clearly stated opinion that addresses the prompt; relevant reasons in support of the main opinion which are extended and developed in the body of the essay).

Activity 4**Practice planning, writing and editing an essay**

- Project the following essay prompt on the board: *Many animals around the world are in danger of becoming extinct in the wild due to loss of natural habitat. Some of these animals may soon exist only in zoos. Is it ethical to keep animals alive in captivity when they can no longer exist in the wild, or is it better to let these animals become extinct?*
- Elicit the topic of the essay question and the requirements of the essay. Put test takers into pairs and give them five minutes to work together to discuss their thoughts and brainstorm some ideas.
- Ask each pair to take a stance on the topic so that they can state a clear opinion (rather than stating arguments for and against and remaining neutral). Once they have decided on their argument, give test takers a few minutes to plan their essay by sorting the ideas they have jotted down into three groups: for the introduction (to introduce topic and/or argument), for the body (to provide supporting reasons), and for the conclusion (to sum up the reasons and argument).
- Now give test takers 15 minutes to work together to complete their essay. They should check their writing for logic, clarity of argument and flow, and think about the use of linking words, vocabulary and grammar.

Activity 5**Practice editing an essay**

- Have test takers look at the strategies on pages 77–78 in the *Official Guide* and the "Paragraph editing" checklist they created in Lesson 7. Work with the whole class to create an "Essay editing" checklist including points related to the introduction (Does it introduce the topic clearly? Does it have a clearly stated main opinion?, etc.), the body (Does it contain reasons to help support or explain the main opinion? Are they clearly explained? Are the paragraphs logically ordered?, etc.) and the conclusion (Does it clearly restate the essay main opinion or argument?)
- Give pairs five minutes to assess their essays and decide whether any of the features from the checklists are missing or inadequate and whether and/or how their essay should be improved.

Activity 6**Practice an item under timed conditions**

- Project Writing Item 4 from the CD-ROM Practice set 2 on the board. Draw test takers' attention to the fact that although this prompt is also related to the topic of zoos they need to construct a different argument from the one they worked on previously. Give test takers 20 minutes to work individually.
- Then put them back into their previous pairs and ask them to swap their work with their partner. Tell them to use the "Essay editing" checklist, the "Paragraph editing" checklist and the strategies listed on pages 77–78 in the *Official Guide* to assess their partners' writing and discuss any features that could be improved.
- Project the sample answer on the board and ask them to compare their essays with the sample.

Round up**Review test problems and strategies**

- Ask test takers to reflect on their attempt at the *Write essay* item task. To do this, elicit answers to the following questions:
 - Did you clearly analyze the question and understand its topic and requirements?
 - Did you plan your answer carefully? Did your answer only include content that was relevant to the question?
 - Did you provide a main opinion and supporting reasons? Where did you state your main opinion?
 - Did you write paragraphs that had a topic sentence, and relevant and logical supporting sentences?
 - Did you check your grammar, punctuation, variety of vocabulary and spelling?
- Refer them to the "Improving general writing skills" on pages 80–84 in the *Official Guide* and encourage them to use the strategies suggested.

Homework activities

- For further practice, test takers can complete the *Write essay* items on the CD-ROM Practice sets 1 and 3. You can also ask test takers to select some persuasive or argumentative topics of interest and write about them.