

Domain 3 of 3

Overview

The GRE Analytical Writing section measures your ability to articulate complex ideas clearly, support arguments with evidence, and examine claims critically. It consists of one task: the Analyze an Argument essay (30 minutes).

Scores range from 0 to 6 in half-point increments. The essay is scored by a trained human rater and an automated scoring system (e-rater). Scores are reported separately from Verbal and Quantitative scores.

Analyze an Argument Task

- You are given an argument and asked to evaluate its logical soundness — NOT to agree or disagree with it
- Identify the conclusion (what the author is trying to prove)
- Identify the evidence (what facts or data support the conclusion)
- Identify the assumptions (unstated premises the argument depends on)
- Explain how the argument could be strengthened or what additional evidence is needed
- Structure: Introduction → 2-3 body paragraphs → Conclusion

■ **Exam Tip:** The most common logical flaws to identify: hasty generalization, false cause (correlation ≠ causation), unrepresentative sample, false analogy, and circular reasoning. Know these cold.

Common Logical Fallacies

- Hasty generalization: drawing broad conclusions from limited evidence
- Post hoc ergo propter hoc: assuming A caused B because A preceded B
- False dichotomy: presenting only two options when more exist
- Ad hominem: attacking the person rather than the argument
- Straw man: misrepresenting an opponent's position to make it easier to attack
- Appeal to authority: citing an unqualified or irrelevant authority

Essay Structure and Scoring

A high-scoring essay (5-6) demonstrates clear, insightful analysis; well-developed, logically sound arguments; precise, varied language; and few grammatical errors.

A mid-range essay (3-4) shows adequate analysis but may have superficial reasoning, limited development, or some language errors. A low-scoring essay (1-2) shows little analysis and significant language problems.

Sample Essay Outline

- Paragraph 1 (Introduction): Briefly summarize the argument and state your overall assessment of its logical soundness
- Paragraph 2 (Body 1): Identify the first major flaw — state it, explain why it weakens the argument, give an example

- Paragraph 3 (Body 2): Identify the second major flaw — same structure
- Paragraph 4 (Body 3, optional): Identify additional flaws or discuss what evidence would strengthen the argument
- Paragraph 5 (Conclusion): Summarize the flaws and state what the argument needs to be more convincing

■ **Exam Tip:** Aim for 400-600 words. Quality matters more than quantity, but essays under 300 words rarely score above 3. Practice writing complete essays in 30 minutes to build speed.