



CUNY Assessment Test in Writing (CATW)

Student Handbook

Office of Institutional Research and Assessment
Office of Academic Affairs
The City University of New York

*The most up-to-date CATW information may be found at
www.cuny.edu/academics/testing/cuny-assessment-tests.html*

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What is the CUNY Assessment Test in Writing (CATW)?

The CUNY Assessment Test in Writing (CATW) is a standardized writing test that measures a student's ability to do college-level writing in English. Entering first-year students take the test to determine their placement into English composition, ESL, or developmental writing courses. In addition, the CATW is used to determine when students are ready to exit from developmental writing courses and move on to college-level courses.

The term “standardized test” means that the test is given to all test takers in the same manner and under the same conditions; it is scored by trained readers using “standard” rules or criteria.

The CATW asks you to write an essay in response to a reading passage you are given and to show competency in five categories. The five categories, listed here, are discussed in depth starting on page 3. They are (1) critical response to a text; (2) explanation and support of ideas; (3) organization of a response that has a clear beginning, middle, and end; and two elements of language use: (4) sentence construction and word choice, and (5) grammar, usage, and mechanics.

The purpose of the CATW is to assess your skills in these areas to see if they are consistent with the instructional goals of college-level writing courses, and to assess your readiness for introductory college courses in other areas.

The literacy skills taught in first-year college courses are reflected in the CATW, which assesses your ability to read, understand, and respond to a passage of 300-350 words. In the test, you are asked to:

- identify key ideas within the reading passage
- write a brief summary of the key ideas in the reading in your own words
- demonstrate basic critical thinking in response to these significant ideas
- identify a significant idea in the reading passage and present a clearly written response to that idea
- write an essay that explains the progression of ideas and shows connections between them
- support ideas with relevant personal experience, readings, schoolwork, and/or other sources of information
- demonstrate competence in sentence construction, sentence variety, and word choice
- demonstrate correct English usage, grammar, and mechanics

The CATW uses a “rubric,” which is a tool for scoring, to measure students' writing skills. The CATW scorers are guided by the rubric so that each scorer will use the same standards or criteria as other scorers to assess student writing in five categories (see rubric on pages 4/5).

Format of the CUNY Assessment Test in Writing

The CATW has two parts: a reading passage of 300-350 words, and Writing Directions to guide students in preparing their written responses. *Students have 90 minutes to complete the test, and they may use a non-electronic dictionary, bilingual, if preferred.*

SAMPLE TEST:

Assignment

Begin by reading the passage below.

Hype

Advertisements are the most prevalent and toxic of the mental pollutants. From the moment your alarm sounds in the morning to the wee hours of late-night TV, commercial pollution floods your brain at the rate of about three thousand marketing messages per day. Every day an estimated 12 billion display ads, 3 million radio commercials, and more than 200,000 TV commercials are dumped into North America's collective unconscious. The increase in commercial advertising has happened so steadily and relentlessly that we haven't quite woken up to the absurdity of it all. No longer are ads confined to the usual places: buses, billboards, stadiums. Anywhere your eyes can possibly come to rest is now a place that, in corporate America's view, can and ought to be filled with a logo or product message.

You fill your car with gas, and there's an ad on the nozzle. You wait for your bank machine to spit out money and an ad scrolls by in the little window. You drive through the countryside and the view of the wheat fields is broken at intervals by enormous billboards. Your kids watch Pepsi and Snickers ads in the classroom. A company called VideoCarte installs interactive screens on supermarket carts so that you can see ads while you shop. (A company executive calls the little monitors "the most powerful micromarketing medium available today.") There is nowhere to run. No one is exempt and no one will be spared. In the silent moments of my life, I often used to hear Beethoven's Ninth Symphony play in my head. Now I hear that kid singing the Oscar Meyer wiener song.

Excerpted from Kalle Lasn. "Hype," in *Signs of Life in the USA: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers*, 4th ed. Sonia Maasik & Jack Solomon, Eds. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003. 217-220.

Writing Directions

Read the passage above and write an essay responding to the ideas it presents. In your essay, be sure to summarize the passage in your own words, stating the author's most important ideas. Develop your essay by identifying one idea in the passage that you feel is especially significant, and explain its significance. Support your claims with evidence or examples drawn from what you have read, learned in school, and/or personally experienced.

Remember to review your essay and make any changes or corrections that are needed to help your reader follow your thinking. You will have 90 minutes to complete your essay.

How Your Writing Is Evaluated

The CATW uses an analytic scoring guide, called a rubric, to evaluate student writing samples. Each test is scored independently by two faculty raters and both raters assign scores in each of five grading categories.

The Five Scoring Categories

1. “Critical Response to the Writing Task and the Text”: This category emphasizes your ability to complete the entire writing task and to demonstrate understanding of the main ideas in the reading text, using critical analysis, and integrating your own ideas and experiences to respond to the main ideas in the text.
2. “Development of the Writer’s Ideas”: In this category you are evaluated on your ability to develop your ideas (for example, by using summary, narrative, or problem/solution) in a clear and organized way. Your response should include both general statements and specific details and examples. These details and examples can be drawn from your personal experiences, what you have read, or other sources. ***You must make specific references to ideas in the reading with these details and examples.***
3. “Structure of the Response”: This category evaluates your ability to organize ideas into an essay that supports a central focus, or thesis. The structure of your essay is evaluated for evidence of clear connections between ideas and the use of appropriate language to convey these connections.
4. “Language Use: Sentences and Word Choice”: This category evaluates the degree to which you demonstrate sentence control and variety in sentence construction. This category also evaluates your ability to use appropriate vocabulary to make your ideas clear.
5. “Language Use: Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics”: This category evaluates your ability to follow the conventions of standard American English language use in terms of grammar and mechanics (i.e. punctuation, spelling, use of capitals, etc.), so that your meaning is clear.

CATW Analytic Scoring Rubric

	Critical Response to the Writing Task and the Text	Development of the Writer's Ideas	Structure of the Response	Language Use: Sentences and Word Choice	Language Use: Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A thoughtful and skillful response to the task effectively integrates a critical discussion of ideas in the text with relevant elements of the writer's reading and experience. • The discussion demonstrates a thorough understanding of the main ideas and the complexity of ideas in the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas are fully developed, and approaches to development (e.g., summarizing, evaluating, narrating) are used skillfully to support and convey the writer's ideas throughout the response. • Reasons and specific details and examples from the text and from the writer's reading and experience are used effectively to develop ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization demonstrates a well-designed progression of ideas that supports the writer's central focus and the clarity of ideas throughout the response. • Sophisticated, effective use of transitions conveys relationships among ideas throughout the response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences are consistently well controlled, with effective variety in structure. • Word choice is sophisticated, precise, and effectively conveys the complexity of the writer's ideas throughout the response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Though there may be a few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics, strong command of language is apparent, and meaning is clear throughout the response.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response effectively integrates a critical discussion of ideas in the text with relevant elements of the writer's reading and experience. • The discussion demonstrates a good understanding of the main ideas and the complexity of ideas in the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas are well developed, and approaches to development (e.g., summarizing, evaluating, narrating) are usually used skillfully to support and convey the writer's ideas. • Reasons and specific details and examples from the text and from the writer's reading and experience are usually used effectively to develop ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization generally demonstrates a clear plan with some progression of ideas that supports the writer's central focus and the clarity of the writer's ideas. • Transitions clearly convey relationships among ideas throughout the response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences are usually well controlled, and there is some effective variety in structure. • Word choice is usually specific and usually effective in conveying the writer's ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Though there may be a few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics, good command of language is apparent, and meaning is usually clear.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response competently integrates a critical discussion of ideas in the text with relevant elements of the writer's reading and experience. • The discussion consistently demonstrates an understanding of the main ideas and of some of the complexity in the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most ideas are competently developed and approaches to development (e.g., summarizing, evaluating, narrating) are competently used to support and convey the writer's ideas. • Reasons and specific details and examples from the text and from the writer's reading and experience are competently used to develop ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An organizational structure is evident and competently supports the writer's central focus and the clarity of the writer's ideas. Relevant ideas are grouped together, and there may be some evidence of progression of ideas. • Though often simple and obvious, transitions are usually made to convey relationships among ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most sentences demonstrate competent control, and there is enough structural variety to support the clarity of the writer's ideas. • Word choice is somewhat general but clearly conveys meaning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language use is competent. Grammar, usage, and mechanics are generally correct, and meaning is usually clear.

	Critical Response to the Writing Task and the Text	Development of the Writer’s Ideas	Structure of the Response	Language Use: Sentences and Word Choice	Language Use: Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response integrates some ideas from the text with some relevant elements of the writer’s reading and experience, but may do so in an uneven manner. • The response demonstrates some understanding of the main ideas in the text, but understanding is uneven, superficial, or incomplete. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of ideas is general or uneven, but approaches to development sometimes support the clarity of the writer’s ideas. • The response uses some reasons and specific details and examples from the text and from the writer’s reading and experience to develop ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response uses a basic or uneven organizational structure that sometimes supports the writer’s central focus and clarity of ideas. For the most part, relevant ideas are grouped together. • Some simple and obvious transitions are used to convey relationships among ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence control is uneven, but there is some structural variety to support the clarity of ideas. • Word choice is simple but usually clear enough to convey meaning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Command of language is uneven. Grammar, usage, and mechanics are generally correct, but some errors are distracting and may occasionally impede understanding.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is little integration of ideas from the text with elements of the writer’s reading and experience. • The response demonstrates a weak understanding of the main ideas in the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of ideas is weak, and there may be little use of relevant approaches to development. • If present, reasons, details, and examples from the text and from the writer’s reading and experience are brief, general, inadequately developed, or not clearly relevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response shows an attempt to create a central focus and to put related ideas together, but relationships among ideas may be unclear. • Few, if any, transitions are used to convey relationships among ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences demonstrate weak control, and there is little, if any, sentence variety to provide clarity. • Word choice is simple, and sometimes meaning is not clear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response demonstrates a weak command of language. Grammar, usage, and mechanics are sometimes correct, but errors are often distracting, and some impede understanding.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is minimal, if any, integration of ideas from the text with elements of the writer’s reading and experience. • The response demonstrates little, if any, understanding of the main ideas in the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is minimal or no development of ideas and little, if any, use of relevant approaches to development. • If any reasons, details, and examples from the text or from the writer’s reading and experience are present, these elements are brief, general, undeveloped, or irrelevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be an attempt to group related ideas together, but the main focus of the response is unclear. • Transitions are rarely used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences demonstrate minimal or no control. • Word choice is often unclear and often obscures meaning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response demonstrates minimal command of language. Grammar, usage, and mechanics are often incorrect, and errors frequently impede understanding.

Calculating Your CATW Total Score

You should notice that the scoring rubric describes levels of performance in each of the scoring categories. You can get anywhere from 6 points from a rater for a very strong performance, to 1 point for a poor performance.

Scores in the 1 & 2 point range identify minimal or weak responses to the assignment; scores in the 3 & 4 point range identify somewhat adequate or competent responses; scores in the 5 & 6 point range identify very good or superior responses.

Your response will receive a Weighted Total score on the CATW. Weighted Total scores are calculated by adding up the individual rater scores across the five scoring dimensions; however, scores in the three content dimensions – Critical Response, Development of Ideas, and Structure of Response – are weighted twice as much as those in the two language use dimensions – Sentence and Word Choice, and Grammar; and Usage and Mechanics. For example, if your response is rated 4 in each dimension by both raters, the total weighted score would be $2(4+4) + 2(4+4) + 2(4+4) + (4+4) + (4+4) = 64$.

A passing score on the CATW is 56, which can be obtained by getting a combination of 3's and 4's in each of the scoring categories: $2(3+4) + 2(3+4) + 2(3+4) + (3+4) + (3+4) = 56$. Of course, there are other combinations of scores that will add up to a 56, but overall you should think of aiming your writing level at getting at least a 4 from at least one of the raters in each of the scoring categories, and avoid getting a 2 in any category.

The CATW Reading Selection

One way to prepare for the test is to understand the types of readings used on the test. The reading passage that you will be asked to respond to will have the following characteristics:

- The text is 300-350 words in length.
- Reading passages are at 11th or 12th grade reading level and appropriate for high school graduates.
- Topics are familiar and interesting to high school graduates, and they will come from general knowledge areas (for instance, sociology, psychology, technology, popular culture, etc.).
- Readings are clearly written, with the author's main idea placed early in the passage, so that you can better identify the writer's central point and write a response based on the text.
- Readings come from the following sources: general interest magazines, newspaper articles, speeches, and excerpts of essays from academic anthologies. For example, *The Utne Reader*, *The New York Times*, *The Week* and Slate.com are good sources of engaging general interest articles.
- Reading passages will appear with a title and the author's name. You are encouraged to refer to the author's last name and the title of the passage in your response.
- Reading passages always appear with the following standard writing directions:

Read the passage above and write an essay responding to the ideas it presents. In your essay, be sure to summarize the passage in your own words, stating the author's most important ideas. Develop your essay by identifying one idea in the passage that you feel is especially significant, and explain its significance. Support your claims with evidence or examples drawn from what you have read, learned in school, and/or personally experienced.

Remember to review your essay and make any changes or corrections that are needed to help your reader follow your thinking. You will have 90 minutes to complete your essay.

How to Understand the CATW Writing Directions

There are two parts to the CUNY Assessment Test in Writing. The first is the reading passage and the second, Writing Directions, follows the reading. The Writing Directions reflect the five categories of the scoring rubric, as illustrated below. (The Writing Directions are in quotation marks.)

“Read the passage above and write an essay responding to the ideas it presents.”

This sentence instructs you to respond directly to the reading passage and reminds you that your response must address the ideas presented in the text.

“In your essay, be sure to summarize the passage in your own words, stating the author’s most important ideas.”

This direction focuses on your understanding of the reading passage, and your ability to demonstrate this understanding in an organized response, emphasizing the key ideas in the reading passage.

“Develop your essay by identifying one idea in the passage that you feel is especially significant, and explain its significance.”

This direction instructs you to develop an organized piece of writing that focuses on a specific idea in the reading passage. You are free to choose any “significant idea” and develop your response to this idea by using one or more ways of organizing (for example, summarizing, analyzing, personal narrative, cause and effect, persuasion).

“Support your claims with evidence or examples drawn from what you have read, learned in school, and/or personally experienced.”

Here you are reminded that the ideas you present in the essay must be supported with details, examples, or personal experiences. You may use supporting details from a variety of sources, but whatever you use should demonstrate some ability to combine supporting details and examples to discuss specific ideas from the reading passage. *You must always refer to ideas from/in the reading in your response.*

“Remember to review your essay and make any changes or corrections that will help your reader follow your thinking.”

You are reminded that you must edit and proofread the response for clarity and correctness.

“You will have 90 minutes to complete your essay.”

You should be careful to manage your time so that you can complete your response, with time to carefully proofread and edit your work. For instance, you should spend 20-30 minutes reading, annotating, and taking notes about the text. Then spend 30-40 minutes writing your response. Finally, spend 20-30 minutes re-reading, editing and proofreading your work.

Writing the CATW Response

To be successful on this test, you need to understand some basic ideas about the CATW response.

The Nature of the Test

The CUNY Assessment Test in Writing is a text-based writing sample that reflects the kinds of writing done in introductory college-level courses. (“Text-based writing sample” simply means that you are writing in response to a passage you have read.) The CATW assesses your readiness for writing in English in college composition courses and other introductory college-level courses.

What Your Response Should Demonstrate

To prepare for the CATW, you should be aware of the required components of the response, as described in the scoring rubric.

You should be able to:

- read and understand a short (300-350 words) reading passage written at the 11th or 12th grade reading level.
- identify and re-state in your own words the author’s main ideas—and important supporting ideas—in the reading passage.
- read and understand the writing directions that accompany the reading passage, and address all parts of the writing task.

Your response should:

- include a brief summary of the author’s main ideas and supporting ideas (two or three key points in the reading) in your own words. This summary can be written either at the beginning of your response to the reading passage or throughout your essay.
- make direct reference to ideas in the reading passage, either with direct quotes or paraphrasing.
- demonstrate the ability to identify and address a *specific* idea in the reading passage that you feel is “significant” (it needn’t be the author’s main idea) and develop an essay in response to that idea, expanding your response through the use of explanation, supporting details, personal experience, and/or other reading you may have done.
- be organized in a clear way, with appropriate use of language to connect your ideas, supporting details, and examples.
- demonstrate your ability to write an essay that has a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- combine ideas from the reading passage with your own ideas about the text.
- demonstrate the ability to write clear and varied sentences, and use vocabulary that clearly and effectively communicates your ideas.

You should:

- manage your time during the exam period (90 minutes) to allow for reading the passage, writing your response, proofreading and editing.
- check your response for errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Strategies for Taking the CUNY Assessment Test in Writing

The CATW is a 90-minute test that measures your ability to write a college-level essay. Keep in mind that this test focuses on the following criteria:

- addressing all parts of the Writing Directions in an essay that summarizes the main ideas in the reading passage;
- discussing a significant idea from the reading passage in a clear and coherent essay;
- integrating references to specific ideas and details in the reading passage with your own ideas about the text;
- constructing a written response that has a clear beginning, middle and end;
- writing sentences that are constructed correctly and use correct word choices;
- understanding and using good grammar and mechanics to convey your ideas clearly.

When you take the test, you may find the following strategies helpful in planning how to use your time:

Reading: Spend about 20 minutes reading the passage and underlining significant ideas. You should decide which ideas in the reading you will use to write your summary.

Planning and Pre-Writing: Spend about 10 minutes planning and pre-writing. Your test booklet gives you two blank pages for planning notes or writing an outline. Briefly write down the key idea from the passage that you will develop in your response, along with some significant details and/or examples. Make a note about the order you might use to present your ideas most clearly and effectively. *The planning work you do on these pages will not be evaluated.*

Writing the Response: Spend about 50 minutes writing your response. Be sure to use the lined pages in your test booklet. Refer to your plan, or outline, and remember that the Writing Directions require you to include a summary of key ideas in the reading, select one idea and explain its significance, make specific references to the reading in your response, and develop your response with relevant details and examples, using standard edited American English.

You may begin with a summary of the key ideas in the reading passage. Be sure to write it in your own words; do not copy it word-for-word from the text. Then identify at least one significant idea in the reading passage. Explain why you think that idea is significant, using appropriate supporting details and examples from your personal experience or from your own reading.

Revising and Editing: When you have finished writing your response, spend about 10 minutes proofreading and editing your response, and making any necessary changes. Consider the following questions when you review your response:

- Did you complete all parts of the Writing Directions?
- Did you include a summary of the reading passage?
- Did you clearly identify at least one significant idea from the reading and discuss it in detail?
- Are the details and examples you present in your response clear and relevant?
- Is there any unnecessary repetition of ideas in your response?
- Is your response written in clear well-constructed sentences, using correct grammar and punctuation?

Sample Student Papers

These papers are responses to the writing assignment and the reading text: “Hype,” by Kalle Lasn in *Signs of Life in the USA: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers*, 4th ed. (Sonia Maasik & Jack Solomon, Eds.) Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2003. 217-220.

Please go back to page 2 to review the reading passage and Writing Directions.

Paper #1

I was hooked from the opening sentence of this passage, and as I finished, I couldn’t resist a small internal cheer. I believe most of us would agree with the author’s sentiments, in that advertisements (ads) are truly the “most...toxic of the mental pollutants” [line 1]’ Who doesn’t fly through the channels when there is a break in your program, and the endless commercials, and infomercial begin? Today, our lives are saturated with ads occupying every square inch of viewing space. It is enough to make one scream!

The statistics the author quotes are staggering. To imagine that “12 billion display ads, 3 million radio commercials, and over 200,000 TV commercials” air each day, and this is in North America alone. By my count that adds up to 12,003,200,000 types of ads each day. Or, on a more personal note, each of us is exposed to more than 2,000 advertisements/some form of marketing message each day! The author’s view is easily apart from the description of this (utterly ridiculous) amount of advertising as “pollution flooding the brain,” “dumped into our environment.” 12,003,200,000. A ludicrous number. It means that our minds are continually bombarded, assaulted with a message of consumerism, courtesy of corporate America. Another outstanding factor is the variety these ads take.

The author mentions buses, billboards, stadiums, gas nozzles, even shopping carts! Anywhere you look you can find ads. It actually reminded me of a fantasy novel by Michael Crichton. Unfortunately, the name escapes me at this point, but what I found remarkable was that in the Protagonist’s world, “bio-ads” were the norm. Advertisements were placed onto living organisms such as fish, coral reefs, birds, etc. , through genetic manipulation. Thus turning beautiful and majestic living creatures into cheap advertisements. Imagine, if you will, a dolphin with Chrysler emblazoned onto its side, or a Golden Eagle with the Lockheed-Martin symbol upon its plumage. While we may laugh at such a ridiculous mental image, it should also make us pause for thought. I just described a novel, a work of fiction, but is today’s world really so different? As we learned from the article “Hype,” advertisements are found EVERYWHERE, on our own clothes, on cereal boxes, on buses and taxis, maybe it’s only a matter of time before the natural beauty we so admire is exploited as well. To return to the novel, entire species were licensed by certain companies, all sanctioned in an effort to preserve them. The thinking being that businesses would protect their “advertisements.” Effective, true, but what a sad state for the world to be in, a world corrupted by advertising.

I’ll stay with the prevalence of advertising for just a little longer, simply because when I think about it, the author is completely right – nowhere to run and hide. I remember when I first came to America a year ago (I’m originally from Barbados), one of the first things I wanted to do, was visit Times Square. Why? Because every movie, or television program, I had seen about, or set in, New York had a scene with the huge building-sized ads of Times Square in it. An article I was reading in the IEEE journal recently dealt with a company seeking governmental permission to place ads on the moon. That article in turn reminded me of another I had read previously. When subliminal messaging was first being researched, several companies paid movie theatres to flash their ads on the screen during the showing. The ad would flash so quickly, that the conscious mind would be unable to register it. They just wanted to see if they could subconsciously cause individuals to crave their product, (I believe it was the Coca-Cola company). To return to my own

experiences, one of the most novel things to me when I first arrived, was the bus stop ads which actually change every few minutes. I would never have dreamed of such an approach.

I suppose I've written all of this to show, as the author points out, how advertising permeates our entire society. There's a chemical term which I think would apply to this, the Point of Saturation. Basically, when you have mixed so much solute (e.g. sugar) into a solvent (e.g. water) to the point that the solvent can hold no more of the solute (In my example, any further sugar crystals would just drop to the bottom), it had reached its P.O.S. Somehow, I think this aptly describes our minds when it comes to advertising. I wonder if we can take much more without any adverse effects. The author starts to delve into this when they mention how children watch ads in the classroom, and in the last sentence [kid singing the ... song]. Actually, most advertisements target children. They want children to see the ads, desire the product, and then beg their parents to buy it. As an additional bonus, this constant message of consumerism at such a young age will ensure that many children wanting (overspending) all sorts of products into adulthood. To illustrate, one study found that Polish families spend the most family time when shopping together. Maybe facts like this, and the rising number of families in perpetual credit card debt, can be taken as evidence of the adverse effects of advertising.

All things considered, we suffer. We are victims of a malady known as overabundant advertising. Maybe one day, a commission will be formed to limit the amount, and location of advertisements companies can use. But until then, one thing is certain. It is only a matter of time before we all begin hearing that Oscar Meyer song in our heads.

Paper #1 received a score of **6,6,6,6,6**. A discussion of the score for each category follows.

Critical Response to the Text: 6

The response integrates ideas from the text with ideas from the writer's own experience in many ways. For example, the writer relates Lasn's comment about the pervasiveness of ads to a Michael Crichton novel s/he read (paragraph 3). The writer also compares Lasn's idea of how advertising "permeates" society (paragraph 5) to a chemical concept the student learned in school called the "Point of Saturation." The response demonstrates a thorough understanding of the main ideas and complexity of ideas in the text by discussing the pervasiveness of advertising and the impact of this pervasiveness on people today.

Development of Ideas: 6

The writer summarizes the main ideas found in the reading passage by integrating them throughout the response. The writer draws upon a variety of personal resources (what s/he has learned in school, read, and experienced) to evaluate and extend the argument in the passage. The development of the writer's response is extensive, detailed, and relevant to the main focus of the reading and to the response itself.

Structure of the Response: 6

The response has a strong central focus and maintains that focus throughout the essay. In a well-designed progression, the writer moves from a summary of the statistics in the passage (and the writer's judgment of their implications), to the writer's extension of ideas in the passage with a discussion of the Michael Crichton novel. Then, it moves to the writer's personal experience and observations, which demonstrate that extreme examples of advertising exist in real life, not just in science fiction. The conclusion brings the essay back to the central image of the passage and suggests a possible solution (a new idea). The writer makes transitions effectively from paragraph to paragraph (idea to idea) to introduce new ideas and to guide understanding of relationships among ideas.

Sentences and Word Choice: 6

Both sentence structure and word choice are strong in this response, and, as a result, it has a strong voice. The writer makes good choices in constructing sentences. From the beginning ("I was hooked from the opening sentence of this passage...") to the end ("hearing that Oscar Meyer song in our heads," which brings the essay back to the imagery of the reading), sentences are well controlled and word choice is precise and vigorous ("staggering," "flooding the brain," "permeates").

Grammar, Usage and Mechanics: 6

The writer makes a few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics, but overall, demonstrates a strong command of language.

Paper #2

Advertisements have been influencing the American lifestyle and regulating what we buy, eat, or even do. Over the years, these companies have grown larger and figured out more ways to put advertisements into our every day life. In "Hype," Lasn states "There is nowhere to run. No one is exempt and no one will be spared." This tells us that no matter where you are, there is going to be some form of advertisement trying to influence you. I agree with Lasn that advertisements are toxic to our way of thinking and decision making.

Everywhere I go, I see a form of advertisement trying to influence me to try or buy something. According to Lasn, there's an estimated 12 billion display ads, 3 million radio commercials and over 200,000 T.V. commercials, all of which are trying to influence me. Sometimes it is necessary to get a break from these ads because it can be like taunting you everywhere you go. There are times where I can just read about the product description and decide for myself if I'm going to purchase it or not, without having any type of pressure or influence to it.

Too much of anything eventually can become harmful. I can accept a few commercials and ads that inform me about a product or service but when it is everywhere you turn, then it is a problem. A good example is when I use the restroom, sometimes they have ads right on top of the urinal, so as I'm standing there I'm face to face with some type of advertisement.

Even though advertisements can boost a company's revenue, it can also end up cause trouble in society. The cigarette and alcohol industry spend more money then any other to advertise their products. Some of these forms of advertisement can lead people to thinking you cannot have a good time without their products. So, in return, teens and minor can be influenced to smoke and drink which can lead to a negative effect on society. When Lasn

states, “Advertisements are the most prevalent and toxic of the mental pollutants,” it is true, because then it’s as this industry wants me to stop using my brain or to think for myself.

Advertisements have crept into all of our lives without most of us not noticing it. Maybe that’s one of the factors, that the industry is trying to think for us instead of us thinking for ourselves. Regardless of what we are doing, as mentioned by Lasn, filling up gas, walking down the street, or even driving in the country, advertisements are finding a way to reach us. Some of the peaceful ways and less-advertising days may have only been experienced by our parents or grandparents, and our society has turned to a society influenced by commercials. We all need a break at some point.

Paper #2 received a score of **5,5,5,5,5**. A discussion of the score for each category follows.

Critical Response to the Text: 5

The response frequently interacts with the passage by integrating data and images from the passage with the writer’s own observations and judgments. The response demonstrates a good understanding of the text by talking about the pervasiveness of advertising and its negative impact on society. For example, the writer notes that ads for cigarettes and alcohol may persuade people that they must use these products to enjoy themselves. The response also appropriately concludes with the idea that persistent exposure to ads seems designed to make people stop thinking for themselves, an idea implied but not directly stated in the reading passage.

Development of Ideas: 5

The writer summarizes the main ideas found in the reading passage by integrating them throughout the response. The writer effectively uses ideas and quotations from the text and from the writer’s own experience to explain and evaluate the claims in the passage. Development of the writer’s own ideas, however, is somewhat limited. Much of the detail in the essay is drawn directly from the reading. Also, the claim that advertising can lead to “trouble in society” (paragraph 4) is not clearly supported with evidence.

Structure of the Response: 5

The overall structure of the essay is conventional, but some progression of ideas is demonstrated by the approach of, first, describing the pervasiveness of advertising and, then, discussing its negative impact on society. Some transitions are used, though the transition from the first part of the discussion to the second is not skillfully controlled, as, for example, the transition from the second paragraph to the third.

Sentences and Word Choice: 5

For the most part, sentences are well constructed, and there is some sentence variety. The response demonstrates a good ability to use complex sentence structures to show relationships among ideas. Some sentences may stop the reader because of awkward sentence structure and made-up words: e.g., “Some of the peaceful ways and less-advertising days may have only been experienced by our parents and grandparents” (paragraph 6). Generally, word choice is clear and specific, though not sophisticated.

Grammar, Usage and Mechanics: 5

The writer shows a good command of these elements is evident but makes agreement errors (“I can accept a few commercials and ads...but when it is everywhere”). Vague pronoun usage (“it can be

like taunting you”), as well as some punctuation errors, prevents the response from demonstrating strong command of these elements.

Paper #3

In “Hype,” Kalle Lasn speaks of the significant number of advertisements that people are exposed to today. He refers to them as “mental pollutants,” implying that these ads are taking over our minds and playing a significant role in the way we think. Although I agree that I see hundreds of ads everyday, I feel that they are, in some ways, necessary to our functioning in society.

When I sit down and turn on the television, there’s a good chance many of the channels I flip through are showing a commercial for a new product, or a new movie, or a new T.V. series. Every ten minutes, the showing I’m watching goes into commercials for five minutes, in which time I may see five to ten different commercials. I don’t always realize it when I’m watching T.V., but I receive information about a lot of new things. I may learn about what hot new gadgets are available or about what kind of movies are showing in theatres. When I’m in the train or on the bus, there are ads within the cars, and also many can be seen outside through the window. Even when I’m on the internet, almost every website has ads by Google. I don’t always immediately take note of the ad I see, but I remember seeing a video once that explained how an ad may just be looked upon and the image of which remains in our brains, affecting us psychologically. Thus ads are a significant in our lives.

Although it may be irritating to see an ad come on in the middle of your favorite show, the information supplied by that ad may not be available to you anywhere else. Corporations create ads to keep us updated on what is new. In a world where everyone is so busy working and studying, many people won’t take the time to research and investigate what’s new in the world. Ads keep us informed while we’re busy doing more important things. Even if somebody’s not looking for a specific item, they may see something in an ad that interests them, and may otherwise not know about it. Ads are the only ways for hundreds of millions of people to find out about something.

Kalle Lasn is right that ads are everywhere and play a significant role in our lives. Probably most of the ads we see won’t be beneficial to us, but the concept of advertising is essential in our world for keeping people informed and for helping the economy.

Paper #3 received a score of **4,4,4,4,4**. A discussion of the score for each category follows.

Critical Response to the Text: 4

The essay includes some integration of ideas from the text with the writer’s ideas, especially in the second paragraph. The response reflects an understanding of the main ideas in the text by acknowledging that advertising is pervasive; however, the argument beginning in the third paragraph that advertising can be useful to people is not specifically relevant to the main idea in the reading passage because it is based on the content of ads, not the pervasiveness of advertising.

Development of Ideas: 4

Some summary of the main ideas in the passage is present, but the evaluation of ideas is limited by the writer’s shift in focus between the pervasiveness of advertising to its content. Development is somewhat repetitious (e.g., the third paragraph adds little to what was said in the previous

paragraph) and, while there are some specific details and examples from the writer's experience, most discussion is general.

Structure of the Response: 4

An overall structure is apparent, but the focus of the response shifts somewhat in places. For example, in the second paragraph, where the main focus seems initially to be on the pervasiveness of advertising, the discussion shifts between details supporting that idea to discussion of what the writer is learning about "new gadgets," then back to the idea of pervasiveness; then, it returns again to the usefulness of advertising in the third paragraph. The response uses some transitions to convey relationships, but coherence is somewhat flawed by the shifting focus of the response.

Sentences and Word Choice: 4

The response shows competence in the writer's choice to use complex sentence structures to show relationships among ideas within a sentence. Word choice is appropriate and usually clear.

Grammar, Usage and Mechanics: 4

There are a few errors, but in general, the response shows competent command of language.

Paper #4

The excerpted from Kalle Lasn clearly illustrates over use of advertisements and how people are mesmerized by the items being sold. She mentions advertisements are being brainwashed into everyone's brains and no one has come to acknowledge that the commercials being played or visualized are taking over people's lives. It is safe to say that advertisements are a person's guideline in life. After the Industrial Revolution almost everyone wants to transfigure into a modernized individual. As ads are exposed many individuals will purchase the item which it brings a sense of accomplishment towards the American way of thinking. Kalle Lasn provides several examples to portray why advertisements are mesmerizing those into buying items which is not necessary and are posted or shown rapidly during our daily life.

Advertisements are easily accessible walking a block or any block provides us with useless advertisements that "pollute our minds". For example ages from 10 to 50 upgrade their cellphones just satisfy their idea of modernizing. A cellphone was created for convenience of communication. Although many of us want to purchase the latest i-phone or blackberry. Advertisements are advising people how to live their lives.

The media itself sends us thousands of marketing messages per day. The media explores on the issue of obesity America is suffering with but in the next minutes a fast food restaurant commercial is acknowledged. Followed by video game commercials leading into a weight loss commercial. Advertisements doesn't have a valid message because its advocating to eat while playing video games or watching TV. Although on the contrary it is advised to lose weight because the previous commercials could cause medical problems. The vast amount of advertisements shown are implying on how we should live are lives and most of the population is agreeing with this pathetic lifestyle.

Kalle Lasn clarifies to Americans that advertisements are vastly shown in everyplace we commute to; this action leads our brains to analyze what our actions are based on such as getting the new Blackberry because it is a modernized item which leads to a person being a high acceptance in society because of other commercials "polluting their minds."

Paper #4 received a score of **3,3,3,3,3**. A discussion of the score for each category follows.

Critical Response to the Text: 3

The response includes some integration of ideas from the passage with the writer's own ideas and shows some understanding of the main idea that advertising is pervasive by quoting the idea that advertising is "polluting our minds." However, the response does not convey a clear understanding of why Lasn claims that advertising is harmful ("toxic").

Development of Ideas: 3

In general, the response is reliant on the ideas and language in the passage, making it difficult to discern the writer's own response. In the first paragraph, for example, it is difficult to distinguish between summary and evaluation of the ideas in the passage. Development is uneven. Though general for the most part, the writer adds some detail in places (e.g., in the description of conflicting messages provided at the beginning of the third paragraph). Relationships between claims and support are not always clear and the reader may be confused by the frequency of movement from one idea to another.

Structure of the Response: 3

The response has a beginning-middle-ending but lacks a clear central focus, so coherence is weak. Some transitions are used, and sometimes effectively, as in the description of the ads with contrasting messages in paragraph 3.

Sentences and Word Choice: 3

A number of sentences are not well-constructed and distract the reader: e.g., "The media explores on the issue of obesity America is suffering with but in the next minutes a fast food restaurant commercial is acknowledged" (paragraph 3). Word choice is often not appropriate and unclear: e.g., "As ads are exposed..." (paragraph 1).

Grammar, Usage and Mechanics: 3

Grammar, usage and mechanics are often correct, but a number of errors are distracting and make understanding difficult, particularly in the last paragraph.

Paper #5

Dear Sonia maasik and Jack Solomon:

I have read your opinions about how are advertisements forming part of human life. I think that your point of view is reflecting Advertisements like the most horrible thing that the company executive can do. However, I do not agree with you because from one way or another it helps companies to make more successful their duties and a busy society to be informed about what are companies offering?

First, all companies have something to offer specially if people are needing this. For instance, In the last month I knew two companies which had to close their services because they were lack of knowledge about Advertisements. They had many things that people need, but nobody could buy anything because those people did not know about what they were offering. For this reason I believe that advertisements are very need in our everyday.

Secondly, I know that if someone wants information about something he or she has to be looking for, but US is a country which has everyone too busy for that noone has time to be looking for. Now, everyone has the time to see those advertisements in usual places: buses, billboards and stadiums because people are interacting with those places everyday in their lives. For instance, people who use the bus to go to their jobs and come back home can see Advertisements on the Bus. Before I was coming to register at my Community College I saw an advertisement on the bus which took all my attention. It said that my college has the Best programs for Nursing since I saw that information I came to the college and registered for the next semester. For this reason I consider advertisements like something necessary for companies and our society.

Finally, I hope that you understand my opinions and ideas about why advertisements are very important for me and How this can help our society. It was a pleasure to share my opinios with you.

Paper #5 received a score of **2,2,3,2,2**. A discussion of the score for each category follows.

Critical Response to the Text: 2

The response demonstrates a weak understanding of the text. It shows an understanding that the text is saying advertising is harmful, but it does not reflect an understanding of the claims in the passage about the pervasiveness and invasiveness of advertising. Acknowledgment of the reading passage is minimal (“I have read your opinions...” and “I do not agree with you...” in paragraph 1). You will also note that the response uses the format of the current test, which is inappropriate to this new writing assignment.

Development of Ideas: 2

The response presents a very brief summary of the passage in the first paragraph, but it quickly switches to the writer’s reason(s) for disagreeing and does not make any further reference to the passage. Development is limited to statements about the usefulness of advertising illustrated by a description of how an ad on a bus influenced the writer’s choice of a college.

Structure of the Response: 3

The response has a clear beginning-middle-ending. The writer’s main focus of not agreeing with the passage is maintained although the presentation of ideas is sometimes confusing. Simple transitions are used (“First,” “Secondly”).

Sentences and Word Choice: 2

Control of sentences is weak: e.g., “Secondly, I know that if someone wants information about something he or she has to be look for, but US is a country which has everyone too busy for that no one has time to be looking for” (paragraph 4). Word choice is simple (everyday spoken English) but usually clear.

Grammar, Usage and Mechanics: 2

Errors are frequent and show weak control of language. There are many problems with word forms, subject-verb agreement, vague pronoun references and incorrect pronoun-antecedent agreement, punctuation, and so on. These errors are distracting and sometimes impede understanding.

Paper #6

The main point the author was making was that now and days Advertisements are every were you go. Halle Lasn was explening that she is seeing Advertisements every place she will go. She also sad that there is nobody that is going to be exempt from seeing Advertisement in there lifes.

This has become true in our life. ever place we go we will se anu Advertisement placed some were. You will see advertisement in bus you will see them on taxes, tran, billboards and stadium. Even when we are home we will se some advertisement if we are playing some games we will se the advertisement on the game. Whe we ar waching some tv we see advertisement also in the internet will see them there also.

Now why do we see all this advertisement every where is because they are paying for it to be there. So when we are waching a show and we see the advertisement that is now the show is getting pay. Also on the radio they say it on the radio that they need to go on commercial to get pay.

So to finishe we are seeing Advertisements every where because the company is getting pay for allowing them to put it there. So of this is because of the money they are paying them but the company is getting notes because of this. So it works good on bost side.

Paper #6 received a score of **1,1,1,1,1**. A discussion of the score for each category follows.

Critical Response to the Text: 1

The response presents a minimal understanding of the text. The first paragraph shows that the writer understands Lasn’s idea that advertising is pervasive. However, the response does not show an understanding of Lasn’s claim that the pervasiveness of advertising is harmful.

Development of Ideas: 1

There is a little development of the idea that advertising is pervasive, though development is heavily dependent on the reading passage for details. The response does offer an explanation of why advertising is pervasive, but the presentation of this idea is general and repetitious.

Structure of the Response: 1

The response has a rudimentary beginning-middle-ending, but the main focus of the response is unclear. The writer makes simple transitions from one paragraph to the next, but because each paragraph is under-developed, the progression seems abrupt.

Sentences and Word Choice: 1

Control of sentences is very weak. Several sentences repeat the structure of the sentence before, especially in the second paragraph. Word choice is heavily dependent on the reading passage.

Grammar, Usage and Mechanics: 1

Problems with syntax, verbs, pronouns, spelling, capitalization and punctuation are frequent, and they interfere with understanding.

Practice Exercises for Students

How to Understand the Reading and Get Started

Before you start to write your response, we recommend you spend 20 minutes reading and underlining significant ideas and 10 minutes planning and prewriting. The more time you spend understanding the reading and getting ideas before you write, the easier it will be to write.

1. Below is a practice reading, “How to Do One Thing at a Time.” Read it and underline significant ideas. Make notes of how you plan to organize your response.

How to Do One Thing at a Time

By now, we all know that multi-tasking can be a losing proposition. Talking on the phone while driving? Dumb idea. Texting while driving? *Really* dumb idea. But even seemingly harmless multi-tasking—like chatting with a friend while sending out an office e-mail—isn’t as harmless or efficient as we’d like to believe. A recent article published in the science journal *NeuroImage* revealed that when we attempt demanding tasks simultaneously, we end up doing neither as well as we should because our brains have cognitive limits.

What’s more, we’re also less efficient *after* we’ve shut down e-mail and turned off our phones. In a recent experiment at Stanford University, a group of students was asked to spend 30 minutes simultaneously compiling a music playlist, chatting, and writing a short essay. A second group focused on each task individually for 10 minutes each. Afterward, they were given a memory test. The single-taskers did significantly better than their multi-tasking peers.

“A tremendous amount of evidence shows that the brain does better when it’s performing tasks in sequence rather than all at once,” says Clifford Nass, Ph.D., a professor of communication at Stanford University. “We still don’t know the long-term effects of chronic multi-tasking, but there’s no question we’re bad at it, and it’s bad for us.”

Many experts believe, however, that it’s possible to repair your power of concentration. Through solutions such as yoga and acupuncture, experts believe we can break our multi-tasking habit and sharpen our focus.

Adapted from Women’s Health Magazine, May 2010

2. Below is an example of how a student annotated the reading and planned a response. Compare your annotations with the example. Did you underline the same sentences? Notice how this student made a T-chart to organize the ideas.

How to Do One Thing at a Time

By now, we all know that multi-tasking can be a losing proposition. Talking on the phone while driving? Dumb idea. Texting while driving? Really dumb idea. But even seemingly harmless multi-tasking—like chatting with a friend while sending out an office e-mail—isn't as harmless or efficient as we'd like to believe. A recent article published in the science journal ^{nerves} NeuroImage revealed that when we attempt demanding tasks simultaneously, we end up doing neither as well as we should because our brains have cognitive limits.

a) can't do 2 things
b) brain limited

What's more, we're also less efficient after we've shut down e-mail and turned off our phones. In a recent experiment at Stanford University, a group of students was asked to spend 30 minutes simultaneously compiling a music playlist, ^{on line} chatting, and writing a short essay. A second group focused on each task individually for 10 minutes each. Afterward, they were given a memory test. The single-taskers did significantly better than their multi-tasking peers.

what kind of test?

"A tremendous amount of evidence shows that the brain does better when it's performing tasks in sequence rather than all at once," says Clifford Nass, Ph.D., a professor of communication at Stanford University. "We still don't know the long-term effects of chronic multi-tasking, but there's no question we're bad at it, and it's bad for us."

habitual

is this true?

Many experts believe, however, that it's possible to repair your power of concentration. Through solutions such as yoga and acupuncture, experts believe we can break our multi-tasking habit and sharpen our focus.

Adapted from Women's Health Magazine, May 2010

Notes

	Text/Sum	Development
1)	2 things at once Brain limits	open door, hold coffee cup worry about memory loss permanent damage?
2)	less effective	brother - reads a lot - what kind of memory test?
3)	concentrate	like climbing a mountain
4)	sequence	exercise - clears mind
5)	solutions	

How to Develop Your Response

In the Writing Directions for the CATW assignment, you are asked to “develop your essay by identifying one idea” and explaining its significance. You are also told to support your ideas with evidence or examples from “what you have read, learned in school, and/or personally experienced.” Below is a portion of a response to the passage, “How to Do One Thing at a Time.”

1. Read the partial response below and identify the idea the writer has chosen to focus on. How does the writer develop the idea? Does the writer use examples and details from his/her reading, previous school learning, or personal experience? Notice also what the writer does in the first paragraph.

Sample Response

The article says we're less efficient even after we stop emailing and get off the phone. This conclusion was based on an experiment where students were asked to do three things at once for 30 minutes—create a playlist of music, chat on email, and write an essay. A second group was asked to do the same three things but one at a time, for ten minutes each. At the end, students in the second group performed better on a memory test than those who tried to multitask.

I am not surprised the second group performed better. I can imagine chatting on email at the same time I'm fooling around with an iPod, but I certainly couldn't write an essay as well. Writing an essay takes (me) a lot of time and concentration. I once had a teacher who made us practice writing 10-minute essays so we would be ready for a timed test. We did it every class for a couple of weeks before the test, and it was effective for training the class to concentrate and write fast enough to do a 50 minute test. He called it "special case" writing, something to do for a timed test to get ideas down quickly. He never said it was the way to really write. Writing an essay involves reading, thinking, and revising, not while doing other things. That's why we have libraries and quiet study areas. I envy the person who can write an essay while doing other things—but only if the person gets an A on the essay. Otherwise, I'll stick to my slow, single-minded approach.

Students who think they can multitask are in for a big surprise when they get to difficult subjects and demanding assignments. This carries beyond school to many activities in life, driving, parenting, getting promoted for doing a job well....

[**Note:** This response is not finished. It needs further development and an ending.]

2. Below is the sample response showing its development. Refer to the code below.

Development of “Sample Response”

¹The article says we’re less efficient even after we stop emailing and get off the phone. This conclusion was based on an experiment where students were asked to do three things at once for 30 minutes—create a playlist of music, chat on email, and write an essay. A second group was asked to do the same three things but one at a time, for ten minutes each. At the end, students in the second group performed better on a memory test than those who tried to multitask.

²I am not surprised the second group performed better. ³I can imagine chatting on email at the same time I’m fooling around with an iPod, but I certainly couldn’t write an essay as well. Writing an essay takes (me) a lot of time and concentration. ⁴I once had a teacher who made us practice writing 10-minute essays so we would be ready for a timed test. We did it every class for a couple of weeks before the test, and it was effective for training the class to concentrate and write fast enough to do a 50 minute test. He called it “special case” writing, something to do for a timed test to get ideas down quickly. He never said it was the way to really write. Writing an essay involves reading, thinking, and revising, not while doing other things. That’s why we have libraries and quiet study areas. ⁵I envy the person who can write an essay while doing other things—but only if the person gets an A on the essay. Otherwise, I’ll stick to my slow, single-minded approach.

⁶Students who think they can multitask are in for a big surprise when they get to difficult subjects and demanding assignments. This carries beyond school to many activities in life, driving, parenting, getting promoted for doing a job well....

Code:

¹Summary of passage

²Personal response overall to summary

³One idea writer wants to develop

⁴Personal experience that develops idea

⁵Conclusion/lesson of personal experience

⁶Continuing development

Critical Thinking Exercises

The CATW requires you to “develop your essay by identifying one idea in the passage that you feel is especially significant and explain its significance. Developing an idea means that you use critical thinking, supporting details and examples to write your explanation. Below are two examples of “significant ideas” from the readings in this handbook. Answer the questions following the excerpts to practice expanding your ideas using critical thinking.

1. From “Hype”: **“Advertisements are the most prevalent and toxic of the mental pollutants.”**

What does “prevalent” mean? What does “toxic” mean?

Do you agree with the statement? Why do you think advertising is prevalent and toxic?

Do you disagree with the statement? Why don’t you think that advertising is prevalent and toxic?

Describe an ad that you can think of that demonstrates the above statement.

Have you had a personal experience with advertising that demonstrates either its advantages or disadvantages? Explain your example.

2. From “How to do One Thing at a Time”: **“A tremendous amount of evidence shows that the brain does better when it’s performing tasks in sequence rather than all at once.”**

What does “in sequence” mean?

Why do you think that we do better when we do one thing at a time as opposed to trying to do several tasks at once?

Do you agree with the statement? If so, explain why.

Do you disagree with the statement? Explain why you disagree.

Have you had a specific experience with multitasking as opposed to working on tasks in sequence? Explain your experience in detail.

How to Demonstrate Connections Between Ideas

In the CATW analytic scoring rubric, the category “Structure of the Response” looks at how well you organize your response and “demonstrate connections between ideas.” In other words, it is important that your sentences and paragraphs connect one to the next, so the reader can follow your thinking. You don’t want the reader to fall into a hole between sentences or paragraphs.

As an example, here are two sets of sentences: A and B. In which set are the two connected? Explain your answer.

- A. ¹It is safe to say that advertisements are a person’s guideline in life. ²After the Industrial Revolution almost everyone wants to transfigure into a modernized individual.
- B. ¹Although it may be irritating to see an ad come on in the middle of your favorite show, the information supplied by that ad may not be available to you anywhere else. ²Corporations create ads to keep us updated on what is new.

Answer: The sentences in B are connected. The second sentence provides a specific detail/example as a restatement of the first. It “opens up” the first sentence. In contrast, the sentences in A seem unconnected. You cannot be sure of the connection, and the meaning is not clear.

Further Examples

1. Look at the Sample Student Paper #1, paragraphs 5 and 6, below. (The complete response is on pp. 12-13.) How does the writer connect each sentence and paragraph to the next one?

I suppose I’ve written all of this to show, as the author points out, how advertising permeates our entire society. There’s a chemical term which I think would apply to this, the Point of Saturation. Basically, when you have mixed so much solute (e.g. sugar) into a solvent (e.g. water) to the point that the solvent can hold no more of the solute (In my example, any further sugar crystals would just drop to the bottom), it had reached its P.O.S. Somehow, I think this aptly describes our minds when it comes to advertising. I wonder if we can take much more without any adverse effects. The author starts to delve into this when they mention how children watch ads in the classroom, and in the last sentence [kid singing the ... song]. Actually, most advertisements target children. They want children to see the ads, desire the product, and then beg their parents to buy it. As an additional bonus, this constant message of consumerism at such a young age will ensure that many children wanting (overspending) all sorts of products into adulthood. To illustrate, one study found that Polish families spend the most family time when shopping together. Maybe facts like this, and the rising number of families in perpetual credit card debt, can be taken as evidence of the adverse effects of advertising.

All things considered, we suffer. We are victims of a malady known as overabundant advertising. Maybe one day, a commission will be formed to limit the amount, and location of advertisements companies can use. But until then, one thing is certain. It is only a matter of time before we all begin hearing that Oscar Meyer song in our heads.

Answer: Paper #1, paragraph 5 begins with a summarizing sentence: “I suppose I’ve written all of this to show, as the author points out, how advertising permeates our entire society.” This sentence connects everything written before, as well as the reading, to this writer’s restatement of the main point. Paper #1, paragraph 6 begins: “All things considered, we suffer.” Once again, the writer reminds us of all that’s been written (“All things considered”) and draws a conclusion.

2. Look at Paper #4, paragraph 3, below, to see if the writer is successful in connecting one sentence to the next. (The complete Paper # 4 response is on p. 17.) Read paragraph 3 and pick out the sentence you think best expresses the main point of the paragraph. Is it the first or the last one? Or is it not

stated? If not stated, write a sentence stating a main point and revise other sentences in the paragraph to fit it.

The media itself sends us thousands of marketing messages per day. The media explores on the issue of obesity America is suffering with but in the next minutes a fast food restaurant commercial is acknowledged. Followed by video game commercials leading into a weight loss commercial. Advertisements doesn't have a valid message because its advocating to eat while playing video games or watching TV. Although on the contrary it is advised to lose weight because the previous commercials could cause medical problems. The vast amount of advertisements shown are implying on how we should live are lives and most of the population is agreeing with this patetic lifestyle.

Answer: Here is a sample revision for Paper #4, Paragraph 3

The media sends thousands of inconsistent and contradictory messages everyday telling us how to live our lives. One minute, the media explores the issue of obesity that many Americans suffer from, but in the next, it shows a commercial about a fast food restaurant. A commercial of a video game is followed by a weight loss commercial. The message appears to advocate eating while playing video games or watching TV. On the contrary, it could be advising us to lose weight because the previous commercials show what causes medical problems. Most of the population that takes in these commercials ends up agreeing with this pathetic lifestyle.

What do you think of this revision? Do the sentences seem connected? What sentence would you say controls the paragraph? As you review your own writing, check to see that your sentences and ideas are connected and lead from one to another.

How to Write a Summary for the CATW Response

In the *Writing Directions* for the CATW response, you are required to “summarize the passage in your own words, stating the author’s most important ideas.” It is important that you do not copy the author’s

ideas directly from the passage when writing your summary. Your goal in this part of the CATW writing task is to demonstrate how well you understand the reading passage, using your own words.

Write the following key ideas from the sample reading, "How to Do One Thing at a Time," in your own words:

1. "When we attempt demanding tasks simultaneously, we end up doing neither as well as we should because our brains have cognitive limits."

2. "What's more, we're less efficient after we've shut down e-mail and turned off our phones."

3. "The single-taskers did significantly better than their multi-tasking peers."

4. "A tremendous amount of evidence shows that the brain does better when it's performing tasks in sequence rather than all at once."

5. "We still don't know the long-term effects of chronic multi-tasking, but there's no question we're bad at it, and it's bad for us."

6. “Through solutions such as yoga and acupuncture, experts believe we can break our multi-tasking habit and sharpen our focus.”

On the following page you will find examples of how to paraphrase these key ideas in the reading passage. Study them and see how closely your own answers resemble the sample answers.

Answers: Summarizing Key Ideas in a CATW Reading Passage

1. "When we attempt demanding tasks simultaneously, we end up doing neither as well as we should because our brains have cognitive limits."

Sample paraphrase: *The reading passage mentions an article in the journal NeuroImage that says when we try to do too many things at once, we end up not doing any of them well because our brains can't handle it.*

2. "What's more, we're also less efficient after we've shut down e-mail and turned off our phones."

Sample paraphrase: *Furthermore, the reading says that even after we stop multi-tasking, we're not as efficient as we could be.*

3. "The single-taskers did significantly better than their multi-tasking peers."

Sample paraphrase: *In addition, a study showed that students who did one thing at a time did better than students who did many things at once.*

4. "A tremendous amount of evidence shows that the brain does better when it's performing tasks in sequence rather than all at once."

Sample paraphrase: *In the reading, a researcher is quoted as saying that there's a lot of evidence that the brain works better doing one thing at a time.*

5. "We still don't know the long-term effects of chronic multi-tasking, but there's no question we're bad at it, and it's bad for us."

Sample paraphrase: *The reading passage also mentions that even though multi-tasking is bad for us, the long-term effects aren't known.*

6. "Through solutions such as yoga and acupuncture, experts believe we can break our multi-tasking habit and sharpen our focus."

Sample paraphrase: *Experts say that we can use things like yoga and acupuncture to break the habit of multi-tasking and learn to focus better.*

How to Refer to the Reading Passage in Your CATW Response

The first two scoring categories on the CATW scoring rubric evaluate your ability to understand the reading passage, and to use your own ideas and experiences to write about specific ideas in the reading passage. You are required to make specific references to the reading passage in your CATW response. Therefore, it is important that you know how to correctly refer to the text.

There are two ways in which you can refer to the reading passage:

1. Indirect reference, or paraphrase: This is when you take an idea from the reading passage and put it into your own words.

For example, in the sample passage *How to Do One Thing at a Time*, the author writes: “A tremendous amount of evidence shows that the brain does better when it’s performing tasks in sequence rather than all at once.” If you wanted to paraphrase this idea, you could write:

In the reading, Clifford Nass, a professor of communication at Stanford University, is quoted as saying that the brain does better when it handles one task at a time.

2. Direct reference, or direct quotation: This is when you use the author’s words exactly as they are written in the reading passage. You must use quotation marks around the author’s exact words.

For example, if we use the same quote as above, a direct quotation would be written like this:

In the reading, Clifford Nass, a professor of communication at Stanford University, states, “A tremendous amount of evidence shows that the brain does better when it’s performing tasks in sequence rather than all at once.”

Notice that in both cases recognition is given to the author of the idea, regardless of whether direct or indirect reference is used. You must always give credit to the original writer of the idea taken from the reading passage if you decide to use it in your CATW response, and it is important to always make a distinction between your ideas and ideas taken from the reading passage.

How to Proofread and Edit Your CATW Response

The *Writing Directions* instruct you to: “Remember to review your essay and make any changes or corrections that are needed to help your reader follow your thinking.” This means that you should spend about 10 minutes at the end of the exam period looking over your work and correcting errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. You should also read over your entire response to determine if there are any sentences that are unclear or incomplete. Are all of your ideas clearly and fully explained? Have you made specific references to the reading passage throughout your response? Is there a summary of the key points in the reading? Have you used transitions where they are necessary to connect related thoughts and examples?

Practice Exercise

Below is part of a written response to the reading passage “How to Do One Thing at a Time.” Read the response carefully and identify the grammatical and content errors. Then circle or underline the errors and write the corrections above them. Here’s a hint: There are fifteen grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors in the response.

Now think about what kinds of additional details and/or examples might be added to make the writer’s paragraphs stronger and clearer for a reader. Is there an adequate summary of the key points in the reading? Is it clear which idea from the reading the writer is trying to explain in the response? Is the response well organized, and does the writer use transitions to connect ideas?

¹The article have some good point. ²It talks about why it’s a bad idea to do too many things at one time because we end up doing everything wrong. ³Because our brain has limits. ⁴The author says that when you try to do many things simultaneous, we end up not doing any of them good. ⁵The article also says it better for our brain to do one thing at a time and many researches show this is true.

⁶Like the Stamford University experiment. ⁷The reading says we can repair our multi-tasking through experts and concentration. ⁸I think this is true I go to yoga class every weak. ⁹In conclusion, multi-tasking is bad for you and we should stop doing it.

Now, write a few additional details that would make this writer’s response clearer and more specific:

Answers: Proofreading and Editing Exercise

Sentence 1 has one subject-verb agreement error: “article have” should be “*article has.*”

Sentence 2 is correct.

Sentence 3 is an incomplete sentence. There are two ways to correct this error: Join the incomplete sentence to the sentence before it, using a comma before “because”; OR add what’s missing to the incomplete sentence so that it is a complete sentence, in this case a subject and a verb. For example, it should read: “*This is because our brains have limits.*”

Sentence 4 has three grammatical errors. The adjective “simultaneous” is incorrect; the correct word form is the adverb “*simultaneously*.” Secondly, “good” is the wrong word to use in this case; it should be “*well*.” Finally, there is a pronoun agreement error: The writer uses both “we” and “you” in the sentence but should use one pronoun or the other, not both. So, the correct way to write the sentence is, “*When we try to do too many things simultaneously, we end up not doing any of them as well as we can.*”

Sentence 5 has three grammatical errors. The verb “is” is missing at the beginning of the sentence; “it better” should be “*it is better.*” Also, there is a plural/singular agreement error: “our brain” should be written “*our brains.*” Lastly, “many researches show” is incorrect since “research” is an uncountable noun; therefore, the clause should be written as, “*and research shows this is true.*”

Sentence 6 has three errors. It is an incomplete sentence because it is missing a verb. In addition there are two spelling errors: “Stamford University” should be written “*Stanford University*,” and “exprimment” should be written “*experiment*.” One way to correct the incomplete sentence, or sentence fragment, is to add what is missing, in this case a verb. An example of how the corrected sentence might be written is, “*One experiment was done at Stanford University.*” By adding the verb “was done”, the sentence is now complete and grammatically correct.

Sentence 7 is incorrect because it doesn’t make grammatical sense and the writer’s meaning is unclear. The way to correct this sentence is to write it so that it is clear and grammatically correct. For example, the writer’s original sentence—“The reading says we can repair our multi-tasking through experts and concentration”—could be written to read: “*The reading says that by using experts and increasing our concentration, we can stop multi-tasking.*”

Sentence 8 has two grammatical errors. First, the sentence is a run-on; this is when two or more sentences are written together without the punctuation or use of conjunctions necessary to separate the different ideas they contain. In this case, “This is true I go to yoga class every weak” should instead be written: “*This is true because I go to yoga class every weak.*” Secondly, “weak” is the wrong word to use here; it should be “*week*.”

Sentence 9 has a pronoun agreement error: “multi-tasking is bad for you and we should stop doing it” should be written “*multi-tasking is bad for us and we should stop doing it.*”

So, how did you do?

