

## GMAT Quick Tips Top Essay Tips

1. Be sure to include brief introductory and concluding paragraphs, which are consistent with each other and with the paragraphs in the body of your essay.
2. Your essay must at least appear to be well organized. Use transition words and phrases to help the reader follow the flow of your discussion. For ideas, check out the transitional devices I've used in my sample Issue essays and sample Argument essays.
3. Compose your introductory paragraph last after you've completed the rest of your essay. Why? Because your essay might evolve somewhat from your initial plan; if you've composed your introduction first, you might need to rewrite it.
4. For every point you make in a GMAT essay, always provide a reason and/or an example to support that point!
5. Pay close attention to writing mechanics, grammar, sentence construction, word usage and diction (whether you've used the right word for the right job). It doesn't matter if your essay contains brilliant ideas if you can't express them. In short: It's form over substance!!
6. It's okay to refer to yourself in your essays at your option. Just don't overdo it. Phrases such as "I think," "it is my opinion that" and "in my view" are superfluous and a waste of your typing time.
7. Don't try to impress the reader with your vocabulary. There's nothing wrong with demonstrating a strong vocabulary. Just don't overdo it; otherwise the readers will suspect that you're using big words as a smokescreen for poor content.

## GMAT QuickTips ..Analysis of an Issue

Spend at least 3-4 minutes jotting down some points both for and against the statement. In support of every point try to think of at least one reason or example.

Go for breadth, not depth. Try to cover both polar sides of the issue, and various arguments on both sides. Don't dwell on one point! (This is the #1 essay blunder committed by GMAT test-takers.) But don't try to cover everything either; otherwise, you might not have time to develop each of your ideas--with reasons and examples.

Begin your Issue essay by acknowledging the complexity of the issue and by adopting a position on it.

Do NOT begin your Issue essay by restating or paraphrasing the statement. (This blunder will wave a "red flag" to the GMAT readers who will assume from the outset that you lack ideas of your own.)

Don't waste time thinking about what position on the issue you should adopt or what position a GMAT reader would want you to adopt. The readers don't care about your opinions; what they do care about is how persuasively you support your position with relevant reasons and examples, and how effectively you communicate your ideas.

Your final paragraph should contain no more than two sentences, and should recapitulate (sum up) your argument reiterating where you stand on the issue "in the final analysis," and why. Don't introduce any new examples, reasons, or ideas in your summary paragraph.

## Analysis of an Issue (1 Question--30 Minutes)

"The media today place too much emphasis on provocative images, and not enough emphasis on the ideas

and events behind those images."

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the foregoing statement? Use reasons and/or examples from your experience, observation, and/or reading to explain your viewpoint.

Below is a sample response to this question. As you read the response, keep in mind: This response meets all the official criteria for a score of 6 (the highest possible score). This response is by no means the correct one. (As the official directions state: "There is no correct response.") So don't worry if, in your response, you adopted an entirely different position on the issue, or if you used entirely different examples and reasons to support that position.

I didn't compose this response under timed conditions, so don't worry if yours isn't as lengthy or as polished. Take comfort: You can attain a top score of 6 with a briefer and less-polished essay.

#### Sample Response (540 Words)

Upon first glance at today's media--whether broadcast or print--it would appear that the speaker is correct. However, in my view the media's emphasis on image is largely justifiable. Moreover, the speaker understates the extent to which the media also covers the substance behind those images, as discussed below. I concede that the media today do place considerable emphasis on image. Advertisements are increasingly resorting to fast-moving, sexy, images. In fact, advertisements which provide no product information whatsoever--not even about what the product looks like or how it is to be used--are becoming increasingly common. Also, while tabloid magazines and television programs abound, intelligent discourse can be found sparingly only on public television and a few other arts and education channels, and among the stacks of scholarly journals at our libraries and at obscure websites. And, despite television's tremendous potential for airing the vital political issues of the day, the brief sound bites from our self-conscious politicians today hardly meet that potential.

Whether this emphasis on image is justifiable, it is certainly understandable--at least with respect to advertising--for two reasons. First, products are becoming more and more fungible these days; consider automobiles, for instance. Since they vary little from one make to another today, marketers are forced to resort to image for product differentiation. The second reason has to do with the fact that we are becoming an increasingly busy society. In the U.S., for instance, the average work week is now over 65 hours, compared to 40 a generation ago. Meanwhile, the number of goods and services competing for our attention seems to grow exponentially. Thus, how can the growing number of businesses compete for our limited time except by resorting to attention-grabbing images?

However understandable this focus on image, is it nevertheless unjustifiable, as the speaker implies? Media critics point out that undue focus on appearances and images amounts to an appeal to our emotions and our baser, prurient instincts--rather than to our intellect and reason. Taken to an extreme, argue the critics, such focus facilitates irrationality, and even sanctions demagoguery. The result is that we dissuade ourselves as a society from engaging in the sort of informed debate needed for any democracy to survive, let alone thrive. I might be convinced by the critics were the media to withhold the substance underlying the images; but they do not. Behind most newspaper headlines, magazine cover stories, and reputable Internet home pages is a wealth of substantive content; we simply need to look for it.

In sum, although I wholeheartedly agree that the media should not sacrifice substance merely to get our attention, the speaker overlooks that the substance is in fact there. Besides, without substance the products, services, politicians, artists, authors, and others behind all those provocative images eventual wither. Sexy cars that are proven unsafe are redesigned or discontinued; politicians who don't follow through on promises are soon defeated; musicians who lack artistry and originality fade into oblivion; and authors without important ideas eventually lose an audience. In the final analysis, it is not the media's job to wave ideas and events in front of us; rather, it is up to us to look for them behind the hoopla and the headlines.

.Here are some QuickTips for tackling the GMAT "Argument" writing task:

Spend 4-5 minutes brainstorming and jotting down the logical problems you intend to identify and

discuss in your essay. Then number these problems from most serious to least serious. Present them in that order in your essay.

Each argument in the official test bank contains 2-4 major logical fallacies or other logical problems. (That's how the test-makers design them.) To score high you must identify and discuss each major logical problem. Here are the ones that appear most frequently among the arguments in the official test bank:

- Generalizing from particulars (relying on a small number of particular cases too small to reach a reliable general conclusion)
- Confusing chronology with causation (because one event occurs after another, the earlier event caused the later event)
- Drawing an unfair analogy (ignoring relevant dissimilarities between two things when comparing them)

Go for breadth, not depth. Try to cover every major logical problem with the argument. Don't dwell on one point! (This is the #1 essay blunder committed by GMAT test-takers.) As a rule of thumb you shouldn't devote more than 3 or 4 sentences to discussing any one point of your critique.

Avoid Intro-itis. Do NOT begin your essay by rehashing the argument that you intend to critique. A brief introduction in which you indicate the thrust of the argument and that it is problematic for several reasons will suffice. Your time is far better spent delving directly into your critique of the argument. (Just as with the Issue essay, intro-itis will wave a "red flag" to the GMAT readers who will assume from the outset that you lack ideas of your own.)

In addition to identifying each major logical problem with the argument, always discuss

- what additional information is needed to better evaluate the argument, and/or
- what additional evidence (facts) would serve to strengthen the argument.

Include these points in your essay's final paragraph.

Analysis of an Argument

(1 Question--30 Minutes)

The following appeared in a recent report by the Fern County planning commission:

"In light of the increasing percentage of our nation's population turning to the Internet as a source of reference material, Fern County should close the ancillary branch of its public library, and convert that facility into a computer training center for use by county residents. The converted facility would fill what is certain to be a growing need among Fern residents for computer training. At the same time, since the county library's main branch already contains more volumes per resident than any other county library in the state, it will adequately serve the needs of Fern County residents. Moreover, Fern residents are sure to support this plan; after all, in nearby Mesa County only a few residents have objected to that county's plan to close all but one of its public libraries in the near future."

Discuss how logically convincing you find this argument. In your discussion, you should analyze the argument's line of reasoning and use of evidence. It may be appropriate in your critique to call into question certain assumptions underlying the argument and/or to indicate what evidence might weaken or strengthen the argument. It may also be appropriate to discuss how you would alter the argument to make it more convincing and/or discuss what additional evidence, if any, would aid in evaluating the argument.

Below is a sample response to this Argument. As you read the response, keep in mind : This response meets all the official criteria for a score of 6 (the highest possible score). I didn't compose this response under timed conditions, so don't worry if yours isn't as lengthy or as polished. Take comfort: You can attain a top score of 6 with a briefer and less-polished essay.

Sample Response (550 Words)

In this argument the Fern County planning commission recommends converting a library into a computer-

training facility. However, the committee's recommendation rests on numerous unproven, and dubious, assumptions--about the impact of Internet access on libraries, about Fern County residents, about the adequacy of the main library, and about Mesa County and its residents. As a result, the committee's argument is unconvincing at best, as discussed below.

To begin with, the committee's argument rests on two unsubstantiated assumptions involving the cited national trend in Internet usage. One such assumption is that increasing use of the Internet as a reference source will necessarily result in decreased use, or demand, for public libraries. While this might be the case, the commission must provide firm evidence to substantiate this assumption; otherwise, it is equally plausible that the cited trend will actually enhance the popularity of libraries by stimulating intellectual and cultural interest. A second such assumption is that Fern residents reflect the national trend. The committee provides no substantiating evidence for this crucial assumption; lacking such evidence, it is entirely possible that Fern residents have little interest--for whatever reason--in using the Internet for this purpose, and therefore that the proposed plan is not in their best interests.

Another problem with the argument involves the report's assertion that that there is certain to be a growing need in Fern County for computer training. In context, this claim appears to be based on the national trend in Internet usage. Yet even assuming Fern residents reflect this trend, it is entirely possible that Fern residents as a group are already highly proficient in using computers and the Internet. If so, Fern residents might very well prefer the status quo, and would not support the proposed plan.

Yet another problem with the argument involves the fact that Fern County's main library boasts a large number of books per resident. This fact alone is scant evidence that the main branch is adequate to service county residents. The committee overlooks the possibility of a future influx of county residents. The committee also ignores that the library's value lies not just in the quantity of its books but also in the quality of its books. Thus without reliable demographic projections and detailed information about the main library's inventory vis-a-vis the needs of Fern's residents, the committee cannot convince me that the main branch alone would serve the needs of county residents.

A final problem involves Mesa's plan to close all but one library. We are not informed whether Mesa residents are yet aware of the County's plan. Even if the plan has been made public, the fact that it has met little opposition does not necessarily mean that residents as a whole support the plan. Perhaps Mesa residents as a group are not inclined to voice their opinions. Or perhaps as a group they are far less concerned about library access--for whatever reason--than Fern residents are.

In sum, the argument is unconvincing as it stands. To strengthen it, rather than relying on a dubious analogy between Fern and Mesa counties, the commission should provide better evidence--perhaps by way of a countywide survey--that Fern residents will increasingly use the Internet as a substitute for the ancillary library branch, and that they would benefit from a new computer-training center.