
AP[®] English Language and Composition

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 1

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Free-Response Question 3

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Argument Essay

6 points

In a 2022 interview with *People* magazine promoting her program to empower young girls through sport, professional tennis player and mental health advocate Naomi Osaka said: “For me, the biggest lesson I’ve learned is to try to be present in each moment. It’s easy to lose sight of how far you’ve come, but I’ve been prioritizing trying to live in the moment and enjoy the journey.”

Write an essay that argues your position on the extent to which Osaka’s claim about embracing the present moment is valid.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
- Provide evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row A Thesis (0–1 points)	0 points For any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no defensible thesis. The intended thesis only restates the prompt. The intended thesis provides a summary of the issue with no apparent or coherent claim. There is a thesis, but it does not respond to the prompt. 	1 point Responds to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only restate the prompt. Do not take a position, or the position is vague or must be inferred. State an obvious fact rather than making a claim that requires a defense. Examples that do not earn this point: Do not take a position <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Living in the moment means ‘being’ in the moment.”</i> Address the topic of the prompt but are not defensible—it is an obvious fact stated as a claim <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Life is a journey with many moments for someone to experience.”</i> 	Responses that earn this point: Respond to the prompt by taking a position on the extent to which Osaka’s claim about embracing the present moment is valid, rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt. Clearly take a position rather than just stating that there are pros/cons. Examples that earn this point: Present a defensible position that responds to the prompt. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“It is more important that we make long-term plans, so we can reach our goals and so we can enjoy our achievements.”</i> <i>“Osaka is correct. If one doesn’t actively try to ‘live in the moment’ they might struggle to see how much they have grown.”</i> <i>“While living in the moment is good, if one focuses too much on the present, they will be unable to develop the traits and practice the skills needed for future success.”</i>
	Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The thesis may be more than one sentence, provided the sentences are in close proximity. The thesis may be anywhere within the response. The thesis <i>may</i> establish a line of reasoning that structures the essay, but it needn’t do so to earn the thesis point. A thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning. 	

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria				
Row B Evidence AND Commentary (0–4 points)	0 points Simply restates thesis (if present), repeats provided information, or offers information irrelevant to the prompt.	1 point EVIDENCE: Provides evidence that is mostly general. AND COMMENTARY: Summarizes the evidence but does not explain how the evidence supports the argument.	2 points EVIDENCE: Provides some specific, relevant evidence. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence relates to the student’s argument, but no line of reasoning is established, or the line of reasoning is faulty.	3 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning.	4 points EVIDENCE: Provides specific evidence to support all claims in a line of reasoning. AND COMMENTARY: Consistently explains how the evidence supports a line of reasoning.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes				
	Typical responses that earn 0 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are incoherent or do not address the prompt. May be just opinion with no evidence or evidence that is irrelevant. 	Typical responses that earn 1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tend to focus on summary of evidence rather than specific details. 	Typical responses that earn 2 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consist of a mix of specific evidence and broad generalities. May contain some simplistic, inaccurate, or repetitive explanations that don’t strengthen the argument. May make one point well but either do not make multiple supporting claims or do not adequately support more than one claim. Do not explain the connections or progression between the student’s claims, so a line of reasoning is not clearly established. 	Typical responses that earn 3 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific details to build an argument. Organize an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims. Commentary may fail to integrate some evidence or fail to support a key claim. 	Typical responses that earn 4 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uniformly offer evidence to support claims. Focus on the importance of specific details to build an argument. Organize and support an argument as a line of reasoning composed of multiple supporting claims, each with adequate evidence that is clearly explained.
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing that suffers from grammatical and/or mechanical errors that interfere with communication cannot earn the fourth point in this row. 					

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row C Sophistication (0–1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Demonstrates sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempt to contextualize their argument, but such attempts consist predominantly of sweeping generalizations (<i>“In a world where ...”</i> OR <i>“Since the beginning of time ...”</i>). Only hint at or suggest other arguments (<i>“While some may argue that ...”</i> OR <i>“Some people say ...”</i>). Use complicated or complex sentences or language that is ineffective because it does not enhance the argument. 	Responses that earn this point may demonstrate sophistication of thought and/or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation by doing any of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Crafting a nuanced argument by consistently identifying and exploring complexities or tensions. Articulating the implications or limitations of an argument (either the student’s argument or an argument related to the prompt) by situating it within a broader context. Making effective rhetorical choices that consistently strengthen the force and impact of the student’s argument. Employing a style that is consistently vivid and persuasive.
	Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This point should be awarded only if the sophistication of thought or complex understanding is part of the student’s argument, not merely a phrase or reference. 	

Sample 3A (1 of 2)

Society, as we know it today, is one filled with quick paced lifestyles. Students must learn content quickly, adults must complete work quickly, bus drivers must get people places quickly. With how fast-paced society has become, it becomes more and more difficult for us as humans to place value on experiencing the niceties of life, or to "smell the roses". This has perpetuated a culture so deeply unrooted from reality that most find more value in artificial things like social status, popularity, or the zeros in their bank account, instead of focusing on real things like people, relationships, new experiences, and new cultures. It is important that people re-evaluate how important those artificial experiences are, and how important real and meaningful experiences are. Although it can be challenging to ignore the important things in life, like doing good in school to get into good colleges, people can get too wrapped up in academic success and can become too worried about artificial things like social media. Therefore, Osaka's claim about embracing the moment is somewhat valid.

I myself am no exception to the addiction to cellphones. My screen time has experienced a slow increase each year, with my current cellphone usage a day being sometimes as high as 13 hours. Spending this much time on my phone has led to real challenges in life, such as connecting with others and developing or enriching meaningful relationships with others. This problem not only affects me, but most if not all of the youth generation. Because we are so attached to our phones, we forget to spend time with other people. Since we spend less time with other people, we end up not being able to form new relationships, and the relationships we did have wither like an unwatered plant. Real relationships require time and effort, something that is hard to give when you spend countless hours, like the 13 daily hours for me, on your phone. Furthering this phone addiction is the obsession with social media. While I don't engage in social media too much myself, I know people who obsess over social media, followers, and likes. This obsession leads to the misappropriation of importance, with importance being placed on views, followers, and likes than new experiences, new cultures, or new people. Because they worry so much about what they look like, they are afraid to try new clothes. Because they are afraid to appear "weird" or not "normal", a ridiculous feeling by the way, they are afraid to engage with new cultures. Furthermore, because they are so encapsulated by their internet persona, they forget to go and search for new people to build relationships with. In all, people addicted to their phones and social media who *don't* prioritize embracing the moment become zombies, losing their personalities, their goals, and eventually, the people they love.

School is also a major distractor from the important things. Students become bewitched by the possibility of success, devoting their lives to climb the ladder to a life that results in nothing but disappointment and loneliness. Students are taught from a young age that social success is vitally important, and if they don't break free from this narrative, they become so focused on getting A's and 100's that they forget to focus on meaningful things like friendships and experiences. The movie Ferris Bueller's Day Off perfectly highlights the struggle between academic expectations and the attempt to live in the moment. In the film, a highschool student named Ferris Bueller fakes sick to skip school. On his day off, he experiences great things, like going to a fancy restaurant, going to a baseball game, and hanging out with his best friend Cameron. He also asserts in the movie that in a fast paced life, you must stop every now and then to experience it. The goals of Bueller perfectly highlight the intricacies of life, and the challenges of prioritizing academic success while also

Sample 3A (2 of 2)

trying to experience life. The film serves as an inspiration for many to try and, as Osaka also claims, prioritize living in the moment.

Although it can be fruitful trying to focus more on living in the moment, it has its limits. One example is with academics. Although, like mentioned earlier, it can be dangerous to your relationships to focus too much on school, it is also very important in our society to be somewhat focused and somewhat successful in school. Focusing too much on living in the moment can have negative consequences on your future. In the workplace, this also applies. Focusing too much on experiencing new things, traveling to new places, and attempting to experience life, can all lead to an unsuccessful career. Such highlights the complex relationship between focusing on experiencing life and focusing on being successful. While having a beautiful balance between the two can create a rich and rewarding life, focusing too much on one or the other can result in detrimental effects.

In all, despite the existing challenge of ignoring the important things in life, like spending time on work to reach success, people can be too concerned with success and can become too worried about artificial things like social media. Therefore, Osaka's claim about embracing the moment is somewhat valid. Osaka's claim highlights an important topic. Many people in today's society can become too encapsulated with things like success or popularity. However, people can also become too wrapped up with trying to live in the moment and become distracted from some of life's requirements. Such is the sort of sick beauty of life, and shows that the best things in life can come from creating a balance, like the balance between success and living in the moment.

Sample 3B (1 of 1)

In our current time, we fixate on doing things quickly and moving on to the next. Whether this is through scrolling on social media or from advertisements telling you to "Buy Now!". Osaka argues against this mentality as she believes it is better to live in the present moment. This is true as we rely heavily on social media and we could miss out on very important moments in our lives.

Social Media has given us the idea that we need to do things quickly or we will fall behind. Social Media takes up a large portion of people's time as it is used for both entertainment and connecting with friends. The entertainment portion of it is more dangerous as it has been progressively leaning towards quick hits of dopamine over anything else. This is most completely seen with the rise of scrolling whether it is through Youtube shorts, Tik Tok, or Instagram Reels, the primary way for entertainment has become quick short videos. These videos change our brain to crave the quick hits of dopamine that it provides as if you don't find a video funny you could easily just scroll to the next video and watch it. However, These quick hits of dopamine don't exist in the real world as you need to work for the dopamine which makes people want to do things faster so they can feel the dopamine. The prevalence of the short and quick entertainment makes it so this is not just a single person's issue but cultural one.

By only caring about doing things quick, you will lose the most important moments of your life. There are many times in life when something takes time to happen. It takes quite a long time for us to be able to walk or speak and when we finally do they are important moments for both you and your parents. These moments can be missed if you only care about doing things quick as they are moments that require a lot of build up and dedication but are truly rewarding at the end. There are many things that require you to actively pursue to gain. Whether its getting physically fit, working on your education, or writing your book, they all require a lot of time. Yet, when you finish them you are greatly happy as you conquered the challenge but you would never get it if you just focused on the next hit of dopamine. You would need to live in the present moment to feel it, to see your accomplishments and feel glad at what you have done.

You should not rely on Social Media for entertainment or dopamine as you could lose many opportunities and moments. It is best to live in the present moment and enjoy what you have achieved.

Sample 3C (1 of 1)

To the extent of Naomi Osaka's interview with People magazine, I ultimately agree with Osaka's claim on embracing the present moment. With this claim from Osaka, she believes that living in the moment and enjoying the journey no matter what comes your way life, is the right way to go about things. This is a great point coming from such a major athlete, also mental health advocate Osaka, because of her path and what she has gone through as an athlete.

This claim about embracing the present moment is one that many may not agree with because of how hard it is to do. With many being left stuck on remembering bad moments in the past, whether it be in sports or life in general, it is hard to overcome a mental setback of that caliber. With this, the validation throughout Osaka's entire claim is completely true. Osaka also explains how you can lose sight of how far you have come because of these mental obstacles. People often fall victim to this with many setting goals and working hard to reach them, but when they accomplish what they want in the future, they feel like they have done nothing. They feel they have gotten nowhere, even though where they are now is somewhere they would have only dreamed of being at back then.

Osaka concludes her interview by stating that you need to enjoy the journey, something that she has been prioritizing. Enjoying the journey is something that everyone struggles with because you can have things go both good and bad, but no matter what happens, you should always enjoy what you are doing and often think about how far you have come and where you are now. These examples of mental encouragement from Osaka are a big reason the position on her claim is completely valid throughout her interview.

Question 3

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Overview

NEW for 2025: The question overviews can be found in the *Chief Reader Report on Student Responses on AP Central*.

Sample: 3A

Score: 1-4-1

Thesis (0–1 points): 1

The response offers a defensible position in paragraph 1: “Although it can be challenging to ignore the important things in life, like doing good in school to get into good colleges, people can get too wrapped up in academic success and can become too worried about artificial things like social media. Therefore, Osaka’s claim about embracing the moment is somewhat valid.”

Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 4

The response provides specific evidence to support all claims in its line of reasoning. For example, “My screen time has experienced a slow increase each year, with my current cellphone usage a day being sometimes as high as 13 hours. Spending this much time on my phone has led to real challenges in life, such as connecting with others and developing or enriching meaningful relationships with others.” The response focuses on the importance of specific details to build an argument, such as “going to a fancy restaurant, going to a baseball game, and hanging out with his best friend Cameron” as examples of Ferris Bueller living in the moment.

The commentary consistently and clearly explains how the evidence supports the line of reasoning, such as “This obsession leads to the misappropriation of importance, with importance being placed on views, followers, and likes than new experiences, new cultures, or new people. Because they worry so much about what they look like, they are afraid to try new clothes. Because they are afraid to appear ‘weird’ or not ‘normal’, a ridiculous feeling by the way, they are afraid to engage with new cultures. Furthermore, because they are so encapsulated by their internet persona, they forget to go and search for new people to build relationships with.”

Sophistication (0–1 points): 1

The response demonstrates sophistication of thought by articulating the implications or limitations of the student’s argument by situating it within a broader context. For example, the sophistication is seen in how the response discusses “the challenges of prioritizing academic success while also trying to experience life.”

Question 3 (continued)**Sample: 3B****Score: 1-3-0****Thesis (0–1 points): 1**

The response offers a defensible position in paragraph 1: “Osaka argues against this mentality as she believes it is better to live in the present moment. This is true as we rely to heavily on social media and we could miss out on very important moments in our lives.”

Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 3

The response provides specific evidence to support all claims in its line of reasoning. For example, it discusses “Youtube shorts, Tik Tok, or Instagram Reels” as evidence of the claim, “Social Media has given us the idea that we need to do things quickly or we will fall behind.”

The commentary explains how some of the evidence supports a line of reasoning, such as “These videos change our brain to crave the quick hits of dopamine that it provides as if you don’t find a video funny you could easily just scroll to the next video and watch it. However, These quick hits of dopamine don’t exist in the real world as you need to work for the dopamine which makes people want to do things faster so they can feel the dopamine. The prevalence of the short and quick entertainment makes it so this is not just a single person’s issue but cultural one.”

However, some commentary does not effectively integrate evidence into the argument. In paragraph 3, the response supports the claim, but the commentary provided for the evidence of “getting phsyically fit, working on your education, or writing a book” does not clearly connect to the argument. This is seen when it states “Yet, when you finish them you are greatly happy as you conquered the challenge but you would never get it if you just focused on the next hit of dopamine. You would need to live in the present moment to feel it, to see your accomplishments and feel glad at what you have done.”

Sophistication (0–1 points): 0

The response does not demonstrate sophistication of thought or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation.

Question 3 (continued)**Sample: 3C****Score: 1-1-0****Thesis (0–1 points): 1**

The response offers a defensible position in paragraph 1: “To the extent of Naomi Osaka’s interview with People magazine, I ultimately agree with Osaka’s claim on embracing the present moment. With this claim from Osaka, she believes that living in the moment and enjoying the journey no matter what comes your way life, is the right way to go about things.”

Evidence and Commentary (0–4 points): 1

The response provides general evidence that tends to focus on summary rather than specific details; for example, “With many being left stuck on remembering bad moments in the past, whether it be in sports or life in general, it is hard to overcome a mental setback of that caliber.”

The commentary summarizes the evidence, such as “They feel they have gotten nowhere, even though where they are now is somewhere they would have only dreamed of being at back then,” but it does not explain how the evidence supports the argument.

Sophistication (0–1 points): 0

The response does not demonstrate sophistication of thought or a complex understanding of the rhetorical situation.