Achievable

ACT DUMP SHEET

The Writing essay

The task

- **Optional; one essay in 40 minutes**, after the multiple-choice sections
- The prompt: a **complex issue** and **three perspectives** on it
- **Develop your own perspective:** one of the three, or your own; which you choose does not affect the score
- **Analyze how it relates to at least one other perspective**
- The **planning questions** with the prompt are optional and unscored

Why take it

- Some colleges **require** a Writing score: check yours
- It joins English and Reading in your **ELA score**, their average
- It never changes your section scores or your Composite

Scoring: 2—12

- Four **domains**: two readers each rate **1—6**, **added to 2—12**
- Readers more than **one point apart?** A third reader settles it
- **Online,** an automated engine scores first; essays it isn't sure of go to human readers
- **Writing score** = the **rounded average** of the four domain scores, 2—12
- **A 12 is rare:** don't treat it as the only good score

Pacing

- **Plan first:** read all three perspectives, decide your position, outline
- There is **no time to draft and recopy**: write it once
- Keep **a few minutes** to reread and fix errors

The four domains: what a 6 looks like

Ideas and Analysis	Engages **critically with multiple perspectives**; a thesis with **nuance and precision**; an insightful context; examines **implications, complexities and tensions**, values and assumptions
Development and Support	Reasoning and examples that **deepen insight** and show why the argument matters; **qualifications and complications** (counterarguments) strengthen it
Organization	One **controlling idea** unifies it; ideas **progress logically**; **transitions** within and between paragraphs
Language Use and Conventions	**Precise** words; **varied, clear** sentences; a strategic voice and tone; any errors are minor and never block understanding

Structure: five paragraphs

- Introduction
  - **Hook:** one line that draws the reader into the topic, not the thesis
  - **Relevance link:** 1—3 sentences the reader recognizes from life
  - **Credibility statement** (optional): "I am a daily user of social media"
  - **Thesis:** the last sentence; a clear position, with no mention of the prompt
- **Three body paragraphs**, one per perspective if time allows
  - **Topic sentence:** one line; a transition plus the paragraph's claim
  - **Relevance link:** "Consider the example of …"
  - **Personal narrative:** the most important part; a real story, with names and details
  - **Counterargument:** "While many say X, my experience has taught me otherwise"
- **Conclusion:** nothing new
  - **Restate the thesis** in one sentence
  - **Summarize the main points**, in one sentence with a colon list
  - **Closer:** a final thought; better simple than missing

Write for your reader

- Readers grade stacks of essays: **make them forget they are at work**
- **Tell stories:** 40 minutes allows no research; your own experience is the evidence
- **Use names:** Aunt Kathryn, not "my aunt"; invent them if you like
- Give **enough detail** for the reader to see it

Clarity over sounding smart

- **Short, clear sentences** beat flowery ones
- **Never number the perspectives:** say what each one claims
- **Never write "I agree with …":** give the evidence instead
- **Cut the filler:** "to a certain extent", "as a whole"
- **Swap "good" and "bad"** for precise words
- **Avoid absolutes:** reasonable people can disagree