

The Writing test

- ✓ **100 minutes in three timed sections:** 40 selected-response questions in 40 minutes, then two 30-minute essays
- ✓ Four kinds of selected-response question:
 - **Usage:** find the error — or choose *No error*
 - **Sentence correction:** the best way to restate a phrase; the original may be best
 - **Revision in context:** strengthen a passage — development, organization, word choice, style, tone
 - **Research skills:** strategies, the parts of a citation, relevant information, credible sources
- ✓ No grammar terms needed: recognize what is right and what is wrong
- ✓ Each essay is scored **1–6, holistically**, by a trained reader, with ETS's e-rater engine alongside

Content categories

Category	Share	Questions
Text Types, Purposes, and Production	60%	Both essays and 6–12 selected-response
Language and Research Skills for Writing	40%	28–34 selected-response

Selected-response tactics

- ✓ *No error, (As it is now)* and a first choice that repeats the original are real answers — don't fix what isn't broken
- ✓ Read the whole sentence: the error can be anywhere in it
- ✓ The clearest, most direct choice usually wins, not the fanciest

The 5-20-5 plan, for each 30-minute essay

Minutes	Do	Remember
5	Outline, on paper	An outline needs only a thesis and the reasons for your body paragraphs
20	Write	Stick to the outline; don't second-guess it because you feel nervous
5	Revise	Unfinished at 25 minutes? Finish instead. No spellcheck: a stray misspelling won't cost you; repeated errors in structure, grammar and punctuation will

Argumentative essay

- ✓ Agree or disagree with a statement, using **examples, facts and details from your experience, reading and observation**
- ✓ **T-chart** the reasons on both sides, choose a side, and keep the two or three strongest
- ✓ **Thesis paragraph:** your position and, briefly, its reasons
- ✓ **Body paragraph:** a topic sentence naming one reason, a transition from the last paragraph, then a few sentences of evidence
- ✓ **Counterargument** (optional): state an opposing reason and show why it fails — it can replace a body paragraph
- ✓ **Conclusion:** restate the thesis in new words, then say why it matters or call for action

Source-based essay

- ✓ ETS calls it the **Informative/Explanatory** essay: two short sources on one issue
- ✓ Read the assignment — the topic and why people disagree, then the directions — and sum up each source's main point and stance
- ✓ Task: **identify the most important concerns** about the issue **and explain why they matter**
- ✓ Must have a clear thesis and information from **both** sources, quoted or paraphrased — cited **every time**, by the prompt's label: (Source 1)
- ✓ Four or five paragraphs: short thesis, first source, second source, short conclusion. Your own experience may add to them

What scores a 6

- ✓ A strong, clearly stated thesis
- ✓ Well organized and fully developed, with smooth transitions
- ✓ Specific, well-chosen reasons and examples — in the source essay, ideas from both sources, connected and accurately cited
- ✓ A wide variety of sentence structures, and very few errors, if any
- ✓ A 3 or below: a weak thesis or support, one source or missing citations, recurring errors

Essay style

- ✓ **Formal diction:** no contractions, slang, texting language, abbreviations, emojis, lists or bullets
- ✓ Use *I* only for your own experience, and never *you*; cut *I think* and *in my opinion*
- ✓ Turn rhetorical questions into statements; cut *obviously*, *very*, *really* and *completely* — nothing is *very unique*
- ✓ Name an author in full, then by last name — never by first name alone
- ✓ Spell out numbers of one or two words (*seven*, *three thousand*); use numerals beyond (*101*; *3,001*)