Sample Essay Exam Prompts

In general, essays have a beginning (the **introduction**), a middle (the **body**), and an end (the **conclusion**). They also tend to have a single, unifying **focus**, which is usually expressed in a **thesis statement** near the end of the introduction.

**Argumentative:**
Take a clear position, and defend it with logical arguments and appropriate examples.

- Standardized testing is often used as a tool for evaluating students’ skills and placing them into courses at an appropriate level. Students are sometimes shocked by the results. Does standardized testing reflect ability?
- Write a letter to a school board in which you argue either for lengthening the school day or for offering elective courses during the summer. Explain why you think your proposal will be beneficial to students.
- Write a formal essay in which you take a position on whether participation in organized school athletics should be required.
- Write a letter to your local newspaper explaining your position on the issue of mandatory community service.
- Recently, there has been a lot of debate about government health care. Explain your position on this issue and why you do or do not support it.
- The local public school board is debating about whether to require school uniforms. Write them a letter stating your position on this issue.

**Compare and Contrast:**
Subjects may be introduced and described one at a time or compared and contrasted point by point.

- Many colleges now offer courses online as well as in a traditional classroom setting. Name a few similarities and some differences between online classes and traditional classes.
- Compare and contrast two different courses that you have taken.

**Descriptive:**
Include plenty of adjectives and vivid sensory details where appropriate.

- What makes a good teacher?
- Write a letter to a friend in a foreign country about your everyday experiences.