

Screen Directions and Sample Topics from the Argument Pool

This is the set of directions above the topic.

Discuss how well reasoned you find this argument.

Sample Argument Topic

Hospital statistics regarding people who go to the emergency room after rollerskating accidents indicate the need for more protective equipment. Within this group of people, 75 percent of those who had accidents in streets or parking lots were not wearing any protective clothing (helmets, knee pads, etc.) or any light-reflecting material (clip-on lights, glow-in-the-dark wrist pads, etc.). Clearly, these statistics indicate that by investing in high-quality protective gear and reflective equipment, rollerskaters will greatly reduce their risk of being severely injured in an accident.

Please note: All of these sample essays are reproduced as written, although reformatted for this document. Misspellings, typos, grammatical errors, etc. have been retained from the originals.

Benchmark 6 -- Outstanding

The notion that protective gear reduces the injuries suffered in accidents seems at first glance to be an obvious conclusion. After all, it is the intent of these products to either prevent accidents from occurring in the first place or to reduce the injuries suffered by the wearer should an accident occur. However, the conclusion that investing in high quality protective gear greatly reduces the risk of being severely injured in an accident may mask other (and potentially more significant) causes of injuries and may inspire people to over invest financially and psychologically in protective gear.

First of all, as mentioned in the argument, there are two distinct kinds of gear -- preventative gear (such as light reflecting material) and protective gear (such as helmets). Preventative gear is intended to warn others, presumably for the most part motorists, of the presence of the roller skater. It works only if the "other" is a responsible and caring individual who will afford the skater the necessary space and attention. Protective gear is intended to reduce the effect of any accident, whether it is caused by an other, the skater or some force of nature. Protective gear does little, if anything, to prevent accidents but is presumed to reduce the injuries that occur in an accident. The statistics on injuries suffered by skaters would be more interesting if the skaters were grouped into those wearing no gear at all, those wearing protective gear only, those wearing preventative gear only and those wearing both. These statistics could provide skaters with a clearer understanding of which kinds of gear are more beneficial.

The argument above is weakened by the fact that it does not take into account the inherent differences between skaters who wear gear and those who do not. It is at least likely that those who wear gear may be generally more responsible and/or safety conscious individuals. The skaters who wear gear may be less likely to cause accidents through careless or dangerous behavior. It may, in fact, be their natural caution and responsibility that keeps them out of the emergency room rather than the gear itself. Also, the statistic above is based entirely on those who are skating in streets and parking lots which are relatively dangerous places to skate in the first place. People who are generally more safety conscious (and therefore more likely to wear gear) may choose to skate in safer areas such as parks or back yards.

The statistic also does not differentiate between severity of injuries. The conclusion that safety gear prevents severe injuries suggests that it is presumed that people come to the emergency room only with severe injuries. This is certainly not the case. Also, given that skating is a recreational activity that may be primarily engaged in during evenings and weekends (when doctors' offices are closed), skater with less severe injuries may be especially likely to come to the emergency room for treatment.

Finally, there is absolutely no evidence provided that high quality (and presumably more expensive) gear is any more beneficial than other kinds of gear. For example, a simple white t-shirt may provide the same preventative benefit as a higher quality, more expensive, shirt designed only for skating. Before skaters are encouraged to invest heavily in gear, a more complete understanding of the benefit provided by individual pieces of gear would be helpful.

The argument for safety gear based on emergency room statistics could provide important information and potentially saves lives. Before conclusions about the amount and kinds of investments that should be made in gear are reached, however, a more complete understanding of the benefits are needed. After all, a false confidence in ineffective gear could be just as dangerous as no gear at all.

Reader Comment on 6

This outstanding response demonstrates the writer's insightful analytical skills.

The introduction, which notes that adopting the prompt's fallacious reasoning could "...inspire people to over invest financially and psychologically in protective gear," is followed by a comprehensive examination of each of the argument's root flaws. Specifically, the writer exposes several points that undermine the argument:

- that preventive and protective gear are not the same
- that skaters who wear gear may be less prone to accidents because they are, by nature, more responsible and cautious
- that the statistics do not differentiate by the severity of the injuries

- that gear may not need to be high-quality to be beneficial

The discussion is smoothly and logically organized, and each point is thoroughly and cogently developed. In addition, the writing is succinct, economical and error-free. Sentences are varied and complex, and diction is expressive and precise.

In sum, this essay exemplifies the very top of the "6" range described in the scoring guide. If the writer had been less eloquent or provided fewer reasons to refute the argument, the essay could still have been scored "6."

Benchmark 5 -- Strong

The argument presented is limited but useful. It indicates a possible relationship between a high percentage of accidents and a lack of protective equipment. The statistics cited compel a further investigation of the usefulness of protective gear in preventing or mitigating roller-skating related injuries. However, the conclusion that protective gear and reflective equipment would "greatly reduce...risk of being severely injured" is premature. Data is lacking with reference to the total population of skaters and the relative levels of experience, skill and physical coordination of that population. It is entirely possible that further research would indicate that most serious injury is averted by the skater's ability to react quickly and skillfully in emergency situations.

Another area of investigation necessary before conclusions can be reached is identification of the types of injuries that occur and the various causes of those injuries. The article fails to identify the most prevalent types of roller-skating related injuries. It also fails to correlate the absence of protective gear and reflective equipment to those injuries. For example, if the majority of injuries are skin abrasions and closed-head injuries, then a case can be made for the usefulness of protective clothing mentioned. Likewise, if injuries are caused by collision with vehicles (e.g. bicycles, cars) or pedestrians, then light-reflective equipment might mitigate the occurrences. However, if the primary types of injuries are soft-tissue injuries such as torn ligaments and muscles, back injuries and the like, then a greater case could be made for training and experience as preventative measures.

Reader Comment on 5

This strong response gets right to the work of critiquing the argument, observing that it "indicates a possible relationship" but that its conclusion "is premature." It raises three central questions that, if answered, might undermine the soundness of the argument:

- What are the characteristics of the total population of skaters?
- What is the usefulness of protective or reflective gear in preventing or

mitigating rollerskating-related injuries?

- What are the types of injuries sustained and their causes?

The writer develops each of these questions by considering possible answers that would either strengthen or weaken the argument. The paper does not analyze the argument as insightfully or develop the critique as fully as the typical "6" paper, but the clear organization, strong control of language, and substantial degree of development warrant more than a score of "4."

Benchmark 4 -- Adequate

Although the argument stated above discusses the importance of safety equipment as significant part of avoiding injury, the statistics quoted are vague and inconclusive. Simply because 75 percent of the people involved in roller-skating accidents are not wearing the stated equipment does not automatically implicate the lack of equipment as the cause of injury. The term "accidents" may imply a great variety of injuries. The types of injuries one could incur by not wearing the types of equipment stated above are minor head injuries; skin abrasions or possibly bone fracture of a select few areas such as knees, elbows, hands, etc. (which are in fact most vulnerable to this sport); and/or injuries due to practising the sport during low light times of the day. During any physically demanding activity or sport people are subjected to a wide variety of injuries which cannot be avoided with protective clothing or light-reflective materials. These injuries include inner trauma (e.g., heart-attack); exhaustion; strained muscles, ligaments, or tendons; etc. Perhaps the numbers and percentages of people injured during roller-skating, even without protective equipment, would decrease greatly if people participating in the sport had proper training, good physical health, warm-up properly before beginning (stretching), as well as take other measures to prevent possible injury, such as common-sense, by refraining from performing the activity after proper lighting has ceased and knowing your personal limitations as an individual and athlete. The statistics used in the above reasoning are lacking in proper direction considering their assertions and therefore must be further examined and modified so that proper conclusions can be reached.

Reader Comment on 4

This adequate response targets the argument's vague and inconclusive "statistics." The essay identifies and critiques the illogical reasoning that results from the misguided use of the argument's statistics:

- that non-use of equipment may be "automatically" assumed to be the cause of injury
- that "accidents" may refer to minor injuries

- that injuries may result from other causes - skating in the dark, failure to train or warm-up properly, failure to recognize one's physical limitations

The writer competently grasps the weaknesses of the argument. The ideas are clear and connected, but the essay lacks transitional phrases. Development, too, is only adequate. Control of language is better than adequate. The writer achieves both control and clarity and ably conforms to the conventions of written English. Overall, though, this "4" essay lacks the more thorough development of a typical "5" response.

Benchmark 3 -- Limited

The argument is well presented and supported, but not completely well reasoned. It is clear and concisely written. The content is logically and smoothly presented. Statistics cited are used to develop support for the recommendation, that roller skaters who invest in protective gear and reflective equipment can reduce their risk of severe, accidental injuries. Examples of the types of protective equipment are described for the reader. Unfortunately, the author of the argument fails to note that merely by purchasing gear and reflective equipment that the skater will be protected. This is, of course, fallacious if the skater fails to use the equipment, or uses it incorrectly or inappropriately. It is also an unnecessary assumption that a skater need purchase high-quality gear for the same degree of effectiveness to be achieved. The argument could be improved by taking these issues into consideration, and making recommendations for education and safety awareness to skaters.

Reader Comment on 3

The first half of this generally well-written but limited response merely describes the argument. The second half of the paper identifies two assumptions of the argument:

- that people who purchase protective gear will use the gear
- that high-quality gear is more effective than other gear

Neither of these analytic points is developed adequately; together, however, they are sufficient to constitute "some analysis" and thus warrant a score of "3."

Benchmark 2 -- Seriously Flawed

To reduce the accidents from roller skating we should consider about it causes and effects concurrently to find the best solution. Basically the roller-skating players are children, they had less experiences to protect themselves from any kind of dangerous. Therefore, it should be a responsible of adult to take care them. Adult should recommend their child to wear any protective clothing, set the rules and look after

them while they are playing.

In the past roller-skating is limited in the skate yard but when it became popular people normally play it on the street way) Therefore the number of accidents from roller-skating is increased. The skate manufacturer should have a responsibility in producing a protective clothing. They should promote and sell them together with skates. The government or state should set the regulation of playing skate on the street way like they did with the bicycle.

To prevent this kind of accident is the best solution but it needs a cooperation among us to have a conscious mind to beware and realize its dangerous.

Reader Comment on 2

This seriously flawed response, rather than critiquing the argument, suggests ways for adults and skate manufacturers to ensure that children wear protective clothing. In essence, the writer is uncritically accepting the argument.

The response exhibits serious and frequent problems in sentence structure and language use. Errors -- word choice, verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, punctuation -- are numerous and sometimes interfere with meaning:

"...it needs a cooperation among us to have a conscious mind to beware and realize its dangerous."

This essay earns a score of "2" because it demonstrates both serious linguistic weaknesses and failure to construct a critique based on logical analysis.

Benchmark 1 -- Fundamentally Deficient

the protective equipment do help to reduce the risk of being severely injured in an accident since there are 75% Of those who had accidents in streets or parking lots were not wearing any protectivel clothing. such as hemlets, kenn pads, etc. or any light-reflecting materials such as clip-on lights, glow-in-the-dark wrist pads ets. if they do have protective eqipment that only a quarter accident may happen, also that can greatly reduce their risk ofbeing severely injured in an accident, that can save some lives and a lot of energy and money for the treatment. the protective equipment do help to reduce the risk of being severely injured in an accident since there are 75% Of those who had accidents in streets or parking lots were not wearing any protectivel clothing. such as hemlets, kenn pads, etc. or any light-reflecting materials such as clip-on lights, glow-in-the-dark wrist pads ets. if they do have protective eqipment that only a quarter accident may happen, also that can greatly reduce their risk ofbeing severely injured in an accident, that can save some lives and a lot of energy and money for the treatment. the protective equipment do help to reduce the risk of being severely injured in an accident since there are 75% Of those who had

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Reader Comment on 1

This fundamentally deficient response uncritically accepts the reasoning of the prompt: "the protective equipment do help to reduce the risk of being severely injured in an accident..." There is no evidence, though, that the writer is able to understand or analyze the argument; what follows, except for a few additional words, merely copies the prompt. This two-sentence response is repeated - verbatim - over and over.

Language and usage are equally problematic. The few words that have been added, in combination with the words of the prompt, result in incoherence. In sum, this essay fits all of the scoring guide descriptors for a score of "1."