

Section II, Part A2— Presentational Writing: Persuasive Essay

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In contrast to Interpersonal Writing, Presentational Writing is designed for you to showcase how well you can think and express yourself in Spanish. You will need to use virtually all of the skill areas—listening, reading, and writing—to respond to a question. Critical-thinking skills used in analyzing and synthesizing information from the sources are imperative in the formal essay. Instead of a task with specific elements spelled out for you, in presentational writing task, you will have to discuss a general question. The skill areas are integrated into the task, so you have to depend on reading and listening to obtain the information you need. You will want to organize your thoughts into paragraphs and have a proper introduction and conclusion. As in the interpersonal writing tasks, you will want to observe all the conventions of proper language, reveal a rich vocabulary, use correct grammar, observe all the conventions of orthography, and make accurate and relevant social and cultural references, with the difference that this time you will deal with an extended format.

Before you begin your practice, it would be useful to review the rubrics for evaluating the essay so that you can internalize them and stop worrying about whether you did everything required for the highest score. The rubrics require that you address the topic and respond to all parts of the task. With a general question to discuss, you have a lot of latitude in the development of your response. However, sometimes such a lack of specificity in the question makes the development more problematic, because you must make all the decisions about the best way to address the topic and the development of the essay.

There is no minimum word requirement for the persuasive essay, but you should expect to write no less than 200 words. However, it is better to write a shorter essay that is well organized and cohesive and addresses the question, than one that is longer but somewhat redundant and/or confusing.

DESCRIPTION OF THE EXAM

The Presentational Writing part of the examination requires you to read two printed sources and listen to one audio source for information related to a question that is the topic of your composition. You will have 6 minutes to read the print sources, and around 8 minutes to listen to the audio source, which will be played twice. You will then have 40 minutes to plan and write your essay. However, you should try and write your essay in 35 minutes and leave yourself 5 minutes to proofread what you wrote.

PREPARING TO WRITE YOUR PERSUASIVE ESSAY

The following pages provide suggestions for writing the Presentational Writing essay. There is a section with some strategies on how to interpret and synthesize information from print and audio sources, a section on how to organize your thoughts and to make an outline or flowchart of ideas, and a series of practice questions. Anticipating possible questions is a valuable part of preparation, because if you have thought about a topic before you see it on the exam, you will probably respond better to it. In the months before the exam, you should learn vocabulary associated with the topic, but you can also extract necessary vocabulary from the reading and listening sources that might be beneficial to use on your essay. Finally, you should learn transitional phrases to help make your essay flow smoothly from one point to another. You should select a few phrases and learn them well so that you can recall them easily when writing your essay.

STRATEGIES FOR READING SOURCE MATERIAL AND LISTENING TO AUDIO FILES

Six minutes is not a lot of time to assimilate all the information you will find in the printed source material. When you work with the practice questions included in this book, select a few strategies for testing and see if they work for you, so you can use them on the actual exam. Some of these things may seem obvious, but when you are in a hurry, you can sometimes forget them.

Print Sources

- Read the curricular theme to give you a frame of reference.
- Read the introduction to the first source.
 - Read the title of the article.
 - Identify the topic sentence in each paragraph.
 - As you read, underline key words or phrases that you want to find again quickly. Remember to focus on words that lead to specific ideas you can use.
 - Focus on words you do know. Do not spend time on words you do not know. You can also use context clues to approximate their meaning if needed.
 - Make sure that you do not take a phrase or word out of context. You will be scored on the accuracy of the information you synthesize from the source.
 - When finished reading, try to summarize the article in no more than 3 to 4 sentences using mostly your own words. This will help you focus on the main ideas that were presented. You should also try and react to the information that you have read: do you agree or disagree with the point of view presented? Why? Would you do things differently? Why or why not?
- Read the introduction to the second source.
 - Make notes of key elements found in the chart or table. This will help you keep organized when answering questions.
 - Analyze the information gathered from the graph, table, or image. Ask yourself what conclusions you can base from these and how they relate to the article seen beforehand.

TIP

Your reaction to an idea is a great way to use the subjunctive, because you probably will be expressing some type of emotion, hope, or negation. However, remember that the subjunctive is not used when expressing belief.

- Look for different points of view of the two printed passages.
- Identify at least one idea from each source, although, the more ideas you integrate correctly will only help your score.

Audio File

- Take notes on what you hear. Write down key words or phrases that will lead to ideas. Avoid writing complete sentences.
- Evaluate the information being presented.
- Follow the thread of the conversation.
- Visualize, if you can.
- Take notes of key words that lead to ideas.
- Focus on what you understand and don't get hung up on what you don't understand. Use contextual clues to help you understand unfamiliar words or phrases.
- Remember that you will hear the audio source twice. Listen the first time for general ideas that relate to the topic. Then, use the second listening to extract specific details.

WRITING THE ESSAY

When writing your essay, you should imagine that you are writing to someone who may not be familiar with the topic. How you organize your essay is important to good development and cohesion. Remember that you are presenting your point of view on the topic, and you should use the information provided in the sources as evidence to support your ideas. Do not simply summarize information found in the sources, as that will not help your score. Below is a general outline of your essay.

- **INTRODUCTION.** Present the topic and why it is worth discussing. Briefly present contrasting points of view on the topic (if possible). Clearly state your opinion and entice the reader to keep reading your essay.
- **BODY PARAGRAPHS.** Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence that supports your point of view. Use information from one or more sources to support your argument. Make sure these are relevant and specific toward supporting your argument. Do not lapse into summary. Finish your paragraph with closing remarks relating the evidence to the topic sentence.
- **CONCLUSION.** Restate your thesis clearly and sum up the evidence to prove your thesis. Make a final remark to call for action or point out a solution. This is a great place to include an *if-then* statement using the imperfect subjunctive and conditional moods. You want to give a sense of closure and ending. Do not introduce new ideas in your conclusion.

Here are some more helpful hints to keep in mind when practicing your persuasive essay:

- Use a blue or black pen.
- Make sure you refer to all three sources.
- Avoid simply dedicating one paragraph to each source.
- In the introduction to your essay, give some indication of how you are going to develop the essay.
- Include a topic sentence in each paragraph.
- In each paragraph, support your ideas with information from the sources.
- In your conclusion, arrive at a final statement that does not simply repeat what you said in the introduction.
- Do not bother erasing or using correction fluid to delete words you want to change. Simply cross them out.
- Make a mental note of grammatical structures you might want to include, such as
 - a compound sentence;
 - an *if-then* statement;
 - an adverbial clause using a conjunction, such as *con tal que*, *para que*, *sin que*, or *a fin de que*;
 - a verb to introduce a dependent noun clause in which you can use the subjunctive, such as *Es imprescindible que...*, or *Vale que...*;
 - use a *como si* + the subjunctive structure.
- When you want to insert another sentence or paragraph into what you have already written, mark it clearly so your reader can easily see where it goes.

USEFUL VOCABULARY FOR WRITING THE PERSUASIVE ESSAY

Including a few words and expressions from the following glossary of terms in your essay will result in a clearly organized and polished final essay. Select a few words or transitional phrases from the following list. You can use them to talk about any topic, and you should practice using them so you will remember them easily on the exam.

Expressions for Introductions

<i>al principio</i>	at the beginning
<i>todavía</i>	still
<i>conviene</i>	it is fitting
<i>en cuanto a</i>	with regard to
<i>tratar con</i>	to deal with
<i>a continuación</i>	below, following
<i>ya</i>	already
<i>a partir de</i>	from the time that
<i>con respecto a</i>	with respect to
<i>en lo tocante a</i>	with regard to
<i>tener que ver con</i>	to have to do with

Defining Concepts

<i>ejemplificar</i>	to serve as an example
<i>constar de</i>	to be composed of

<i>significar</i>	to signify
<i>servir para</i>	to serve to
<i>consistir en</i>	to consist of
<i>caracterizarse por</i>	to be characterized by
<i>querer decir</i>	to mean
<i>sugerir (ie, i)</i>	to suggest

Developing and Relating Ideas

<i>de hecho</i>	in fact
<i>de verdad</i>	really
<i>en realidad</i>	really
<i>a lo mejor</i>	perhaps, maybe
<i>del punto de vista de</i>	from the perspective of
<i>de la perspectiva de</i>	from the perspective of
<i>de veras</i>	really
<i>mejor dicho</i>	more exactly, rather

Making Comparisons

<i>no obstante</i>	nevertheless
<i>en cambio</i>	on the other hand
<i>tanto mejor</i>	so much the better
<i>por la mayor parte</i>	for the most part, mostly
<i>sin embargo</i>	however
<i>al contrario</i>	on the contrary
<i>según</i>	according to

Showing Logic or Reasoning

<i>a causa de</i>	because of
<i>por eso</i>	for that reason
<i>como consecuencia</i>	as a consequence
<i>por consiguiente</i>	therefore
<i>bien pensado</i>	well thought-out
<i>por lo tanto</i>	therefore

Drawing Conclusions

<i>en breve</i>	in short
<i>al final</i>	finally
<i>por último</i>	lastly
<i>en todo</i>	all in all
<i>en resumen</i>	in conclusion
<i>de lo anterior...se ve que...</i>	from the above...one sees that...
<i>al fin y al cabo</i>	in the final analysis
<i>por fin</i>	finally
<i>después de todo</i>	after all
<i>en conclusión</i>	in conclusion