



Are you ready to write Touchstone 2.2?

The informative essay below provides an example of a proficient level composition for prompt B: Extended Definition. As you read through the informative essay, notice the techniques that the author used to examine the definition in an interesting and novel way. This sample informative essay is generally focused and well organized, with support for the essay’s thesis, but does include room for improvement. The answers to the reflection questions that follow the informative essay show that the author has thoughtfully examined his own writing. Color-coding has been used to indicate key components of the essay, according to the dictates of the assignment.

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English Composition I

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Intelligence: A Re-Definition

Margarita and Walter live in the same small town. Margarita is a high school math teacher and Walter is an auto mechanic. Whom is more intelligent, Margarita or Walter? Merriam Webster’s online dictionary defines the word *intelligence* variously as “the skilled use of reason,” and “the ability to apply knowledge to manipulate one’s environment or to think abstractly as measured by objective criteria (such as tests).” Most people in Margarita and Walter’s small town would consider Margarita to be more intelligent than Walter because she has graduated from college while Walter has simply

Comment [SL1]: Change to “who”

Comment [SL2]: Nice choice to include the traditional definition in the introductory paragraph. This will help the reader see exactly how your re-definition will differ from the original.

been interested in cars and how they work for all of his life. I believe the definition of “intelligent” should be broadened to include physical actions as well as intellectual actions.

Limiting intelligence to that which can be measured by “objective criteria” ignores the fact that human beings think and learn in different ways. Margarita may be intelligent

in a logical, mathematical sense – she can easily grasp abstractions, reasoning, and numbers – but Walter is intelligent in a more physical sense – he has fine motor skills and expresses his intelligence through manipulating and skillfully handling objects.

Margarita may be able to diagnose a student’s difficulty with learning the multiplication tables, but Walter can diagnose an engine knock as a problem with the car’s spark plugs. Margarita and Walter both possess a type of intelligence and one is not superior to the other. Margarita is not “more” intelligent than Walter; she is merely intelligent in a different way.

Other types of intelligence are sometimes referred to as “talents” or “special abilities.” Take a professional athlete, for example, a person like Michael Jordan becomes famous for his agility and physical prowess, rising above other most other competitors in his field. Is Michael Jordan more intellectually “intelligent” than other athletes, or does he possess a physical superiority that can be translated into a different type of “intelligence”? His control over his own body movements and his innate understanding of physical timing and personal effort demonstrate a broader definition of the term. This type of “physical intelligence” is found in many professions. Think of actors who delve deeply into a character by physically becoming homeless if they are to

Comment [SL3]: This is a good thesis statement; it’s clearly focused and is neither too broad nor too narrow. Just refrain from using first-person statements, as informative writing should maintain an objective tone.

Comment [SL4]: You remembered to color code your thesis and topic sentences, which is great.

Comment [SL5]: Multiple sentences in this paragraph begin with “Margarita.” Some of these could be revised for sentence variety.

Comment [SL6]: To avoid a comma splice, change this comma to either a period or a colon.

portray a homeless person on screen, for example, or who ride along with police officers as they do their job in real life so they can faithfully represent the life of a police officer in film. Professional dancers endure punishing physical routines to express themselves, and people who build houses or buildings are physically engaged in the process. These are all examples of people who may possess a greater physical intelligence than the intellectual intelligence most often accepted as the true definition of the word “intelligent.”

(EDIT for punctuation – replace comma with a colon or period.)

For many years, an IQ test has been society’s measure of intelligence. An “intelligence quotient” (IQ) is a total score arrived at through a series of standardized tests that have been developed to measure and assess human intelligence. Dividing a person’s mental age (derived from test scores) by his chronological age and multiplying by 100 has long been the standard of arriving at a number to reflect one’s IQ. The average IQ is often stated as being between 90 and 110, with a certain proportion being lower and a proportion being higher.

I have an uncle who has never had musical training in his life, yet he can hear a song and sit down at the piano and reproduce that song note for note. Is this a type of “intelligence”? If not, how can one explain it? Why do some people simply have this musical ability and others do not? Another relative of mine is known as the “navigator” because she can easily visualize spatial settings – that is, when we’re traveling in an unknown territory, she unerringly gets us to the place we’re going without the use of maps or other outside sources. As someone who is quickly disoriented in unfamiliar

Comment [SL7]: Great examples! They really help illustrate your point.

Comment [SL8]: Since this paragraph introduces the topic of IQ tests, it should come before the second-to-last paragraph, which elaborates on this topic.

Comment [SL9]: Remember to keep your language objective; “I” statements shouldn’t be used in informative writing. You also may want to consider revising this topic sentence to more accurately convey the main idea of the paragraph.

Comment [SL10]: Revise for non-objective language.

settings, this sure sense of direction and place is something to admire as a form of intelligence.

At best, however, IQ scores are mere estimations of human intelligence. What of the person, perhaps a person like Walter, who does not perform well on a written test? Is an IQ score based on these tests truly reflective of his level of intelligence? What of my uncle who can play a tune on a guitar with no training but who may stumble to answer a question based on logic or reasoning? Because the word “intelligent” has so many possible interpretations and so many possible ways of manifesting itself in the physical world, I reject the idea that it can be accurately measured by a series of written tests designed by some supposedly intelligent professors in a laboratory. People who consider only intellectual prowess as a sign of intelligence are not very intelligent themselves.

Comment [SL11]: Revise these sentences to remove non-objective language.

In conclusion, I believe the definition of the word “intelligent” should be expanded to include the many different types of intelligence that human beings possess. Someone may be “book smart,” but someone else may be “street smart,” and I don’t believe that one is more intelligent than the other.

Comment [SL12]: You have a good start to the conclusion, but you will want to expand more on the main idea of the essay, as well as remove the instances of non-objective language.

Think About Your Writing:

1. What is the significance of your essay? Why should your reader care about what you have written? (2-3 sentences)

I think readers will care about the essay because it can affect the way we think about who we consider to be “intelligent” and who we consider to be less than “intelligent.” I’ve experienced this in my own life as I was a bartender for many years before I attended college. Working in the service industry, I had grown accustomed to being considered less intelligent than my professional and college-educated customers. No matter that I successfully managed a business, worked efficiently to provide quality service, and consistently increased profits, I was merely the “bartender.” I think it’s important to recognize that intelligence has a larger definition and far greater implications than a number from an outdated intelligence test.

2. What areas of your draft do you think will benefit most from revision? (2-3 sentences)

I’m a bit unsure about the organization of my draft. I am not sure I have achieved a good flow of ideas because I struggled a bit with linking my ideas together to make a cohesive piece of writing. I’m also not sure if I retained focus in each paragraph and sufficiently supported each topic sentence. In general, I’m satisfied with my first draft, but I know the essay can be improved in content, focus, and relooking at my “big ideas.”

3. Consider the strengths and weaknesses of your writing. How can you capitalize on your strengths and improve on your weaknesses in future essays? (3-4 sentences)

It’s fairly easy for me to draft an essay. I think of my main points and write a paragraph about each of them, and I try to make the introduction interesting and to sum up my main points in the conclusion. My weakness, I think, is that I’d like to be finished after my first draft, but I’m learning that revision and producing multiple drafts is what turns an OK piece of writing into a solidly academic piece of writing. For future essays, I will take this into consideration as I write and know that I what I produce the first time doesn’t have to be perfect and that it is during revision and editing that I can polish my work and say what I want to say in the most effective way possible.

SCORING APPEARS ON THE NEXT PAGE

SCORING for Sample Touchstone 2.2

The sample essay was evaluated according to the Touchstone 2.2 Rubric, which includes either the Image Analysis OR Expanded Definition Essay. This particular essay was written using the expanded definition approach. The rubric evaluates the expanded definition, the working thesis statement, organization, style and tone, focus, conventions, and responses to the “Think About Your Writing” questions. Each rubric area is evaluated according to the performance level.

Expanded Definition

The writer has met the criteria established for writing an extended definition. The writer has chosen a meaningful word and used critical thinking and logical reasoning to expand its meaning. With insight, thoughtful discussion, and real-life examples, the writer has created a strong rationale for expanding the definition of the word “intelligence.”

Area Score: Advanced

Working Thesis

The essay has a clear and focused thesis: “I believe the definition of “intelligent” should be broadened to include physical actions as well as intellectual actions.” The thesis is appropriately narrowed and states the central claim of the essay. However, it should be revised to use more objective language by removing the phrase “I believe.”

Area Score: Proficient

Organization

The essay has an introduction with a thesis, an adequate number of body paragraphs, and a conclusion.

Body paragraphs contain a topic sentence and supporting details. The writer generally uses transitions effectively within paragraphs, but the order of a few body paragraphs could be revised to improve flow and some topic sentences can be improved to better reflect the information in the body paragraph.

Area Score: Acceptable

Style and Tone

Generally the writer does use effective style and word choices. However there exist multiple instances in which the writer uses repetitive sentence types, a non-objective tone, or includes personal observations which are not effective for informative writing. The writer uses logic and examples to support the thesis and purpose.

Area Score: Needs Improvement

Focus

Overall, the writer does a good job including relevant details and making connections between the working thesis statement and supporting details. However, there are a few sentences which include personal detail, as noted in the annotations. While they support the thesis, they detract from the focus of the essay and should be edited.

Area Score: Proficient

Conventions

The writer has made few spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, or mechanics. The errors made were minor and did not detract from the essay

Area Score: Advanced

“Think About Your Writing” Questions

The answers to the questions are thoughtful and insightful. The answers effectively address the question and either adhere to or exceed the length guidelines. Additionally, the writer appropriately color coded his thesis and topic sentences.

Area Score: Advanced

TOTAL SCORE: 32/40

On the whole, this informative essay does a nice job of exploring an alternate definition for a meaningful term. The exploration of the term is detailed and well thought out. The writer uses an primarily informative style while maintaining a clear focus on the topic. Development of the core ideas could be improved, edits could be made to make the tone more objective and to vary sentence style in a few paragraphs, and the rearrangement of a few paragraphs would improve the flow and clarify connections between ideas. Overall, the composition meets the requirements of the prompt and offers a compelling discussion of the definition of a term.