**English Language and Composition**

**Reading Time: 15 minutes**

**Suggested Writing Time: 40 minutes**

**Directions:** The following prompt is based on the accompanying ten sources.

This question requires you to integrate a variety of sources into a coherent, well-written essay. *Refer to the sources to support your position; avoid mere paraphrase or summary. Your argument should be central; the sources should support this argument.*

Remember to attribute both direct and indirect citations.

**Introduction**

Standardized testing has been apart of the American education system since 1901. It has a huge impact on the future of all American high school students. There has been some controversy over whether or not these tests are actually a good method of determining how intelligent American students are. Should we get rid of them and develop a new system? Or should we continue the tradition of standardized testing in this country?

**Assignment**

Read the following sources (including any introductory information) carefully. **Then, in an essay that synthesizes at least six of the sources for support, take a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that the use of standardized testing has improved education in America.**

Refer to the sources as Source A, Source B, etc.; titles are included for your convenience.

Source A (Churchill)

Source B (Kohn)

Source C (Mclver)

Source D (Alcocer)

Source E (Popham)

Source F (Columbia University)

Source G (Russo)

Source H (The Glossary of Education Reform)

Source I (Strachan)

Source J (Harris)

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| **Source A**Churchill, Aaron. “Bless the Tests: Three Reasons for Standardized Testing.” *The Thomas B. Fordham Institute*, 18 Mar. 2015, edexcellence.net/articles/bless-the-tests-three-reasons-for-standardized-testing. |

*The following is excerpted from an article written by an author expressing his opinion on standardized testing.*

At their core, standardized exams are designed to be objective measures. They assess students based on a similar set of questions, are given under nearly identical testing conditions, and are graded by a machine or blind reviewer. They are intended to provide an accurate, unfiltered measure of what a student knows.

Now, some have argued that teachers’ grades are sufficient. But the reality is that teacher [grading practices](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb08/vol65/num05/Effective-Grading-Practices.aspx) can be wildly uneven across schools—and even within them. For instance, one math teacher might be an extraordinarily lenient grader, while another might be brutally hard: Getting an A means something very different. Teacher grading can be subjective in other ways, including favoritism towards certain students, and it can find its basis in non-achievement factors like classroom behavior, participation, or attendance.

But when students take a standardized exam, a much clearer view of academic mastery emerges. So while standardized exams are not intended to (and should not) replace the teacher grade book, they do provide an objective, “summative” assessment of student achievement. Standardized assessments of achievement can be used for comparison and accountability purposes, both of which are discussed in turn.

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| **Source B**Kohn, Alfie. “Standardized Testing and Its Victims.” *Alfie Kohn*, 19 Jan. 2015, [www.alfiekohn.org/article/standardized-testing-victims/](http://www.alfiekohn.org/article/standardized-testing-victims/). |

*The following is an excerpt from an article written by an author and educational expert.*

*Many educators are leaving the field because of what is being done to schools in the name of “accountability” and “tougher standards.”* I have no hard numbers here, but there is more than enough anecdotal evidence—corroborated by administrators, teacher-educators, and other observers across the country, and supported by several state surveys that quantify the extent of disenchantment with testing— to warrant classifying this as a fact. Prospective teachers are rethinking whether they want to begin a career in which high test scores matter most, and in which they will be pressured to produce these scores. Similarly, as the *New York Times* reported in its lead story of Sept. 3, 2000, “a growing number of schools are rudderless, struggling to replace a graying corps of principals at a time when the pressure to raise test scores and other new demands have made an already difficult job an increasingly thankless one.” It also seems clear that most of the people who are quitting, or seriously thinking about doing so, are not mediocre performers who are afraid of being held accountable. Rather, they are among the very best educators, frustrated by the difficulty of doing high-quality teaching in the current climate.

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| **Source C**Mclver, Samantha, and Joshua Palackal. “For and against Standardized Tests: Two Student Perspectives : Speak Easy : Education.” *WHYY*, 8 June 2015, whyy.org/articles/for-and-against-standardized-tests-two-student-perpectives/. |

*The following is an excerpt from an essay written by a seventh grader.*

One reason why standardized tests should be kept in schools is because they are a good measure of a student’s achievement. For example, if we did not have standardized tests, policy makers would have to rely on tests that have been made and scored by teachers and individual schools that have favorite students. Also, multiple choice questions on standardized tests are graded by a machine so it is more fair than a test graded by a teacher. This evidence shows that standardized tests give more reliable results.

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| **Source D**Alcocer, Paulina. “History of Standardized Testing in the United States.” *NEA*, [www.nea.org/home/66139.htm](http://www.nea.org/home/66139.htm). |

*The following is an excerpt from a timeline published by the National Education Association.*

* **1838** American educators begin articulating ideas that would soon be translated into the formal assessment of student achievement.
* **1840 to 1875** establishes several main currents in the history of American educational testing including formal written testing begins to replace oral examinations administered by teachers and schools at roughly the same time as schools changed their mission from servicing the elite to educating the masses
* **Pre Civil War**, schools use externally mandated written examinations to assess student progress in specific curricular areas and to aid in a variety of administrative and policy decisions.
* **1875 to the end of World War I**, the development and administration of a range of new testing instruments from measuring mental ability to attempting to assess how well students were prepared for college brought to the forefront several critical issues related not only to testing but to the broader goals of American education
* **1890** Harvard President Charles William Eliot proposes a cooperative system of common entrance examinations that would be acceptable to colleges and professional schools throughout the country, in lieu of the separate examinations given by each school.
* **1900** College Entrance Examination Board is established and in 1901, the first examinations were administered around the country in nine subjects.

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| ***Source E***Popham, James. “Why Standardized Tests Don't Measure Educational Quality.” *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*, [www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar99/vol56/num06/Why-Standardized-Tests-Don%27t-Measure-Educational-Quality.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar99/vol56/num06/Why-Standardized-Tests-Don%27t-Measure-Educational-Quality.aspx). |

*The following is an excerpt from an article published on the website of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.*

In view of the nation's substantial curricular diversity, test developers are obliged to create a series of one-size-fits-all assessments. But, as most of us know from attempting to wear one-size-fits-all garments, sometimes one size really can't fit all.

The designers of these tests do the best job they can in selecting test items that are likely to measure all of a content area's knowledge and skills that the nation's educators regard as important. But the test developers can't really pull it off. Thus, standardized achievement tests will always contain many items that are not aligned with what's emphasized instructionally in a particular setting.

To illustrate the seriousness of the mismatch that can occur between what's taught locally and what's tested through standardized achievement tests, educators ought to know about an important study at Michigan State University reported in 1983 by Freeman and his colleagues. These researchers selected five nationally standardized achievement tests in mathematics and studied their content for grades 4–6. Then, operating on the very reasonable assumption that what goes on instructionally in classrooms is often influenced by what's contained in the textbooks that children use, they also studied four widely used textbooks for grades 4-6.

Employing rigorous review procedures, the researchers identified the items in the standardized achievement test that had not received meaningful instructional attention in the textbooks. They concluded that between 50 and 80 percent of what was measured on the tests was not suitably addressed in the textbooks. As the Michigan State researchers put it, "The proportion of topics presented on a standardized test that received more than cursory treatment in each textbook was never higher than 50 percent" (p. 509).

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| **Source F**“Pros and Cons of Standardized Testing.” *Columbia University*, 2013, [worklife.columbia.edu/files\_worklife/public/Pros\_and\_Cons\_of\_Standardized\_Testing\_1.pdf](http://worklife.columbia.edu/files_worklife/public/Pros_and_Cons_of_Standardized_Testing_1.pdf). |

*The following is excerpted from a paper published by Columbia University.*

Standardized testing evaluates a student’s performance on one particular day and does not take into account external factors. There are many people who simply do not perform well on tests. Many of these students are smart and understand the content, but it doesn’t show on the test. Many students also develop test anxiety which hinders performance. Finally, there are so many external factors that play into test performance. If a student has an argument with their parents the morning of the test, chances are their focus isn’t going to be where it should be.

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| **Source G**Russo, Alexander. “Cartoons: ‘Climb That Tree.’” *This Week In Education*, 24 Aug. 2012, scholasticadministrator.typepad.com/thisweekineducation/2012/08/cartoons-climb-that-tree.html#.WoWBB0t97rc. |

*The following is a cartoon from an article written by Alexander Russo.*



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| **Source H**“Standardized Test Definition.” *The Glossary of Education Reform*, 12 Nov. 2015, [www.edglossary.org/standardized-test/](http://www.edglossary.org/standardized-test/). |

*The following is a description of standardized testing from The Glossary of Education Reform.*

A **standardized test** is any form of test that (1) requires all test takers to answer the same questions, or a selection of questions from common bank of questions, in the same way, and that (2) is scored in a “standard” or consistent manner, which makes it possible to compare the relative performance of individual students or groups of students. While different types of tests and [**assessments**](https://www.edglossary.org/assessment/) may be “standardized” in this way, the term is primarily associated with large-scale tests administered to large populations of students, such as a multiple-choice test given to all the eighth-grade public-school students in a particular state, for example.

In addition to the familiar multiple-choice format, standardized tests can include true-false questions, short-answer questions, essay questions, or a mix of question types. While standardized tests were traditionally presented on paper and completed using pencils, and many still are, they are increasingly being administered on computers connected to online programs (for a related discussion, see [**computer-adaptive test**](https://www.edglossary.org/computer-adaptive-test/)). While standardized tests may come in a variety of forms, multiple-choice and true-false formats are widely used for large-scale testing situations because computers can score them quickly, consistently, and inexpensively. In contrast, open-ended essay questions need to be scored by humans using a common set of guidelines or [**rubrics**](https://www.edglossary.org/rubric/) to promote consistent evaluations from essay to essay—a less efficient and more time-intensive and costly option that is also considered to be more subjective. (Computerized systems designed to replace human scoring are currently being developed by a variety of companies; while these systems are still in their infancy, they are nevertheless becoming the object of growing national debate.)

While standardized tests are a major source of debate in the United States, many test experts and educators consider them to be a fair and objective method of assessing the academic achievement of students, mainly because the standardized format, coupled with computerized scoring, reduces the potential for favoritism, bias, or subjective evaluations.

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| **Source I**Strachan, Maxwell. “The Maddening Truth About SAT Scores.” *The Huffington Post*, 6 Mar. 2014, [www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/06/raising-sat-score\_n\_4907444.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/06/raising-sat-score_n_4907444.html). |

*The following is a graph summarizing data collected by the College Board.*



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| **Source J**Harris, Phillip, et al. "Standardized Tests Do Not Effectively Measure Student Achievement." *Standardized Testing*, edited by Dedria Bryfonski, Greenhaven Press, 2012. At Issue. *Opposing Viewpoints in Context*,link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/EJ3010478218/OVIC?u=lom\_fordson&xid=1643c028. Accessed 18 Feb. 2018. Originally published as "Chapter 3: The Tests Don't Measure Achievement Adequately," *The Myths of Standardized Tests: Why They Don't Tell You What You Think They Do*, 2011, pp. 33-45. |

*The following is an excerpt from a book on standardized testing.*

As psychometrician Daniel Koretz puts it, scores on a standardized test "usually do not provide a direct and complete measure of educational achievement." He cites two reasons why this is so, and both are related to our earlier discussion of sampling. First, tests can measure only a portion of the *goals* of education, which are necessarily broader and more inclusive than the test could possibly be.... Here is Gerald Bracey's list of some of the biggies that we generally don't even try to use standardized tests to measure:

creativity

critical thinking

resilience

motivation

persistence

curiosity

endurance

reliability

enthusiasm

empathy

self-awareness

self-discipline

leadership

civic-mindedness

courage

compassion

resourcefulness

sense of beauty

sense of wonder

honesty

integrity

Surely these are attributes we all want our children to acquire in some degree. And while not all [learning](http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/ovic/ViewpointsDetailsPage/ViewpointsDetailsWindow?disableHighlighting=&displayGroupName=Viewpoints&docIndex=&source=&prodId=OVIC&mode=view&limiter=&display-query=&contentModules=&action=e&sortBy=&windowstate=normal&currPage=&dviSelectedPage=&scanId=&query=&search_within_results=&p=OVIC&catId=&u=lom_fordson&displayGroups=&documentId=GALE%7CEJ3010478218&activityType=DocumentWithCommentary&failOverType=&commentary=true) takes place in classrooms, these are real and valuable "achievements." Shouldn't schools pursue goals such as these for their students, along with the usual academic goals? Of course, a teacher can't really teach all of these things from a textbook. But, as Bracey points out, she can model them or talk with students about people who exemplify them. But she has to have enough time left over to do so after getting the kids ready for the standardized test of "achievement."

Annotated Bibliography

Churchill, Aaron. “Bless the Tests: Three Reasons for Standardized Testing.” *The Thomas B. Fordham Institute*, 18 Mar. 2015, edexcellence.net/articles/bless-the-tests-three-reasons-for-standardized-testing.

This source supports the argument for standardized testing. It lists three reasons why standardized testing is essential in the American school system. These three reasons are the tests’ objectivity, comparability, and accountability. I chose this opinion piece because it gives the writer a look at the other side of the argument of standardized testing. This is a biased source because it is an opinion piece. Someone responding to the prompt could use this source to argue that standardized tests are necessary. They provide a way to compare students accurately using the same test. Grades are not good measurements of student achievement because different teachers are different graders. Some may be very lenient while others are extremely harsh. Standardized tests provide a way for colleges to see where students stand in comparison to other applicants coming from different schools. If these tests did not exist comparing student achievement would not be possible.

Harris, Phillip, et al. "Standardized Tests Do Not Effectively Measure Student Achievement." *Standardized Testing*, edited by Dedria Bryfonski, Greenhaven Press, 2012. At Issue. *Opposing Viewpoints in Context*,link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/EJ3010478218/OVIC?u=lom\_fordson&xid=1643c028. Accessed 18 Feb. 2018. Originally published as "Chapter 3: The Tests Don't Measure Achievement Adequately," *The Myths of Standardized Tests: Why They Don't Tell You What You Think They Do*, 2011, pp. 33-45.

This source is against the argument for standardized testing. It asserts that standardized tests do not effectively measure student achievement. The author defines what student achievement is and does not limit the definition to academics. He says that student achievement is also made up of their personality and the quality of their character. I chose this source because it could be useful to someone writing for the argument against standardized testing and is reliable. Someone using this source could argue that standardized tests only measure one aspect of a student: academics. Academics are not the only thing that make up a person, it is only one aspect of them. But standardized tests only measure academics and neglect other things a student may be gifted in. Examples could include art, music or sports. Every student is different, they have different strengths, and standardized tests particularly favor students whose strength is academics.

Kohn, Alfie. “Standardized Testing and Its Victims.” *Alfie Kohn*, 19 Jan. 2015, [www.alfiekohn.org/article/standardized-testing-victims/](http://www.alfiekohn.org/article/standardized-testing-victims/).

This source is against the use of standardized testing. It’s purpose is to list the people who standardized tests neglect and discriminate against and describe the reasons why standardized testing is wrong. The author talked about how minorities and low income students do worse on these tests and why we shouldn't use them as a measure of intelligence. The excerpt I used from this source was a paragraph describing the growing number of professionals leaving the field of education because of the field’s increased focus on standardized testing. I chose this source so that students writing for the argument against standardized testing can use it as a piece of evidence in their essay. It is a reliable source because it comes from an author who is a very well known professor. He has written many books on the issue and has received lots of positive feedback. If a student decides to incorporate this source into their essay, they could say that standardized testing has shifted the focus of education in America from the simple pursuit of knowledge to obtaining a single test score. This has made many students and teachers lose their passion for education because it has devalued the need for passion and enthusiasm in the classroom.

Mclver, Samantha, and Joshua Palackal. “For and against Standardized Tests: Two Student Perspectives : Speak Easy : Education.” *WHYY*, 8 June 2015, whyy.org/articles/for-and-against-standardized-tests-two-student-perpectives/.

This source addresses both sides of the argument of standardized testing. The excerpt I used was an essay written by a seventh grader that talked about her perspective on standardized testing. She was very supportive of it. Her main points were that standardized tests are a good measure of student achievement and that they are good preparation for college. I chose this source so that writers responding to the prompt can use it in their argument for standardized testing. This source is very biased and not at all credible because it is an opinion piece written by a seventh grader. Someone responding to the prompt could use this source to make the argument that standardized tests are not biased towards any students. They are graded by a machine that does not have any favorite students and cannot discriminate against minorities or students of any disadvantaged background.

Alcocer, Paulina. “History of Standardized Testing in the United States.” *NEA*, [www.nea.org/home/66139.htm](http://www.nea.org/home/66139.htm).

This source can be used to address the argument for standardized testing in the United States. It is a timeline of the history of standardized testing in the U.S. I chose this source so that students with standardized testing can use the history of standardized testing in their argument. This source is reliable because it is provided by the National Education Association, which is a well known, respected organization. Someone using this source in their argument could argue that because standardized testing has been apart of the American education system for so long, it should not be removed. The American education system is one of the best in the world, and has used standardized testing throughout its history. This serves to show that standardized testing is a good thing that has positively impacted our education system.

Popham, James. “Why Standardized Tests Don't Measure Educational Quality.” *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*, [www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar99/vol56/num06/Why-Standardized-Tests-Don%27t-Measure-Educational-Quality.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar99/vol56/num06/Why-Standardized-Tests-Don%27t-Measure-Educational-Quality.aspx).

This source addresses the argument against standardized testing. It’s aim is to show that standardized tests do not measure educational quality. This is shown through the citation of a study done by Michigan State University that shows that the topics tested for on standardized tests are not aligned with what is supposed to be taught and emphasized in the classroom. I chose this source because students responding to the prompt can use segments from the text as evidence in their arguments. It is a reliable source because it uses studies to support the argument against standardized testing. Someone responding to the prompt could use this source to come to the conclusion that standardized tests are not for everyone. One test cannot possibly measure the achievement of all American students. Because these students are taught by different teachers, that emphasize different topics.

“Pros and Cons of Standardized Testing.” *Columbia University*, 2013, [worklife.columbia.edu/files\_worklife/public/Pros\_and\_Cons\_of\_Standardized\_Testing\_1.pdf](http://worklife.columbia.edu/files_worklife/public/Pros_and_Cons_of_Standardized_Testing_1.pdf).

This source is addressing both sides standardized testing: the pros and the cons. The author has provided six pros and seven cons. He/she wants the reader to understand both sides of the argument before making a decision as to which side they support. The excerpt I used from this source was one of the cons of standardized testing. I chose this source to help writers arguing against standardized testing. I will only be providing the reader with an excerpt from it showing one of the cons of standardized testing. This source is reliable because it is coming from Columbia University, which is a known and trusted source. The excerpt I used from this article was a paragraph describing the factors that could affect a student’s performance on a test. These factors may include test anxiety, family arguments preceding the exam, or the simple fact that certain students are not good test takers. Standardized tests fail to account for these factors in a test score making the test unreliable because students may do well on certain days with low stress, while on other days something may take place that could impact their performance and negatively impact their scores.

Russo, Alexander. “Cartoons: ‘Climb That Tree.’” *This Week In Education*, 24 Aug. 2012, scholasticadministrator.typepad.com/thisweekineducation/2012/08/cartoons-climb-that-tree.html#.WoWBB0t97rc.

This source is against the argument for standardized testing. It is a cartoon that shows a teacher giving his students a test. He says that in order for the test to be fair, all students must take the same test. The test he has given is to climb up a tree. His students are different animals who are not all capable of climbing the tree. I chose to use this cartoon as a source because it can be used as a piece of evidence for the argument against standardized testing. Someone responding to the prompt could use this source to illustrate that students are not all the same. They all have different strengths and weaknesses that differentiate them from one another. The cartoon emphasizes that fact in order to show that you can not use a single test to measure the intelligence of so many different people. This cartoon is a biased source because it is drawn by someone trying to express their opinion through an illustration.

“Standardized Test Definition.” *The Glossary of Education Reform*, 12 Nov. 2015, [www.edglossary.org/standardized-test/](http://www.edglossary.org/standardized-test/).

This source addresses the side for standardized testing. It defines what standardized testing is and describes the reasons why it is used in the U.S. I chose this article because it can be used as a reliable source for someone to use in their argument for standardized testing. This is a reliable source because it comes from a trusted dictionary. Someone responding to the prompt could use this source to show the reasons as to why we need standardized testing. It serves many functions (as described in the article) that cannot be carried out in any other methods.

Strachan, Maxwell. “The Maddening Truth About SAT Scores.” *The Huffington Post*, 6 Mar. 2014, [www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/06/raising-sat-score\_n\_4907444.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/06/raising-sat-score_n_4907444.html).

This source is against the use of standardized testing. The author summarizes data from the College Board showing that students with wealthy parents have higher scores than kids coming from low income families. The author does this mainly through a graph showing the correlation between SAT scores and family income. I chose this source because it could be useful to someone writing for the argument against standardized testing. It is a reliable source that uses actual statistics collected by the College Board to show the correlation between family income and SAT scores. They could use this source to show that standardized testing is unfair and biased toward wealthier students. It widens the gap between the rich and the poor by giving the wealthier kids the opportunities students with high test scores enjoy. These opportunities include things such as scholarships and admission to prestigious universities. When students from low income families are not getting good SAT scores, that keeps them at the bottom, preventing them from paying for a good education to open doors to a brighter future.