

Informative/Explanatory Example Essays

Grades 7-8

Essay scores are produced for the following grade ranges: 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, and 11-12. Thus a seventh grade essay is compared to models for both seventh and eighth grades.

Prompt for Essays 1-3: Explain in a well-written essay how to participate in an activity you enjoy. Use details to ensure your reader can follow the explanation.

Informative/Explanatory Essay 1: Baseball – The Game

Baseball can be hard but also easy. You have a catcher, pitcher, 1st basement, 2nd basement, 3rd basement, and shortstop. Then there is the outfielders – they have left, right and center. You catch the ball and throw it to first base. But if someone is on 3rd base you throw it home so they don't get a run. Then you bat. You have to hit to get on base. But you can get on base if you have four balls. That's a walk. The umpire calls it. If you make it around you have a run and if you have more runs than the other team you win.

Annotation: This essay lacks development and so does not give enough information for the reader to understand the game.

Informative/Explanatory Essay 2: Baseball – The Game

Baseball is a complicated game, but it is easy to learn. There are nine people on the field. The catcher catches the pitches from the pitcher. The first, second, and third basemen catch the throws by each other and guard their bases. There's also a shortstop who fields the ball. The outfielders that play in the grass area outside of the bases. There's a left fielder, right fielder and a centerfielder. They get the ball when it's hit in the outfield. Players catch the ball with their gloves. They catch the ball on the ground or in the air. If they catch the ball on the ground, they throw the ball to one of the players guarding a base. If they catch the ball in the air, then the batter is out. If a player is safe, they stay on the base. If they are out, then they are out and go to the dugout. After three outs, the players who were in the field hit and the players who were hitting go to the field.

When your team is at bat, one person stands at home base and swings at the ball if it is a good pitch, but you don't swing if it is a ball. You get three strikes and four balls, and if you get three strikes, it is a strikeout, and if you get four balls it is called a walk. If there is a walk, then you get to go to first base and stay there. If you strike out, then it is an out and you have to go back to the dugout. If you hit the ball, you can run to first base or you can try to go on to second base but you have to tag first first and before you go to second. That's called a double. When you try to touch first, then second, then third, it is called a triple and when you touch first, second, third and home, it is called a homerun. If you are tagged by someone with the ball, then you are out. If you hit the ball over the fence, then it is a homerun and you can jog around the bases. If you make it all the way home, you get a run. The team with the most runs after six innings wins.

Annotation: While there is more development, this essay still feels confusing, with information included in a somewhat random way. A better organizational structure would improve this essay.

Informative/Explanatory Essay 3: Baseball – The Game

Although baseball is a game full of strategy, it is a simple game to learn. Most people know that baseball is a game in which a hard ball of about 3 inches in diameter is hit by a bat. One team takes turns batting the ball from home base while the other team is in the “field” to catch the ball. They use gloves. The batters try to hit the ball so that the fielders cannot tag them with it while the batters run around the bases. In addition to home, there are first, second and third bases, flat bags made of canvas, placed so that with home base, they form a diamond shape. Everything inside the diamond shape is called the infield. Beyond first, second, and third bases is the outfield. There are either nine innings in major league baseball, but there are only six for our league. In one inning, each team gets a turn to bat and gets three outs. After three outs, the players who were fielding hit and the players who were hitting field.

There are nine people on each team. In the field, there is a catcher, who catches the pitches that are delivered by the pitcher. The other seven players have the job of fielding the ball and trying to get the hitter out. When a player fields the ball, they catch it with their glove. They may catch the ball on the ground or in the air. If they catch the ball on the ground, they have to throw the ball to the infield players that are assigned to a base. If they catch the ball in the air, it is called a fly, and then the batter is out. There is an umpire in the field who is like a judge. The umpire decides if a runner is safe or out in the field. If a player is safe, they stay on the base. If they are out, then they go back to the dugout. There is a first baseman who catches the throws from the infielders. The team in the field tries hard to get batters out at first, so the first baseman is very busy. Then there are the second baseman and a third baseman who field the ball and guard their bases. The shortstop, who plays between second and third base, also fields the ball and backs up the second and third basemen when they need it. There are three outfielders who play in the grass area of the field. There is a left fielder, right fielder and a centerfielder. They are responsible for fielding the ball when it is hit in the outfield.

When it is your team’s turn to hit, one player stands in the batter’s box, which is the area beside home base, and swings at the ball if looks like it is a good pitch. Behind the batter is the catcher from the other team, and behind the catcher is the umpire. This umpire decides whether a pitch is a strike or ball and whether a runner is safe or out at home base. A strike goes over home base between your knees and your shoulders, and that is the best kind of pitch to swing at. You shouldn’t swing if it is a ball. A ball is any pitch that is too high, too low, or not over the plate, or home base. You get three strikes and four balls. If the player gets three strikes, it is a strikeout, and one of the team’s three allowed outs for that inning. You have to go back to the dugout and you are finished batting until it is your turn again. If you get four balls it is called a walk. If there is a walk, the batter then gets to go to first base and stay there. If the batter hits the ball, depending on where it is, they can run to first base or they can try to advance to second base, but they must tag first base first and then go to second. That is called a double, because the batter went to two bases on one hit. When a player makes it all the way to third, it is called a triple, and when a player touches first, second, third and home, it is called a homerun. When a batter gets on base, they can run to more bases when another batter hits the ball. If they make it all the way to home base, they get a run. If they are tagged while they are running by a fielder with the ball, then the batter is out. If they hit the ball over the fence, then it is a homerun and they can jog around the bases. The team with the most runs at the end of the game wins!

Annotation: This essay is much clearer, with a good organizational structure and support for the main points. This explanation would be understandable to almost any reader, whether familiar with the game or not.

Prompt for Essays 4-6: Write an essay in which you explain the water cycle through the eyes of a water droplet. Use the information we have gathered in our recent study to inform your writing.

Informative/Explanatory Essay 4: Journey Through the Water Cycle

There are properties for water and polarity is when there is more hydrogen and adhesion and cohesion means sticking to something. Capillary action is when the tree roots get water and it goes through the tree and density is when ice floats and water is heavier and universal solvent means everything dissolves. Water goes through a cycle and starts in the cloud and that is water vapor but when it rains and goes in the lake and gets absorbed in the air and goes into a cloud and then start it over again.

Annotation: This essay does not address the prompt. It also does not have a clear organizational structure nor enough development to make the information clear to the reader.

Informative/Explanatory Essay 5: Journey Through the Water Cycle

Hello! My name is Walter Waters. You can also call me H₂O, like some of my other fellow droplets and I am here to teach you about the water cycle. I'm a water droplet, and we take up 73 % of the Earth's area. Polarity is one of the properties that we droplets have. Polarity means that we are unbalanced. because oxygen attracts more than hydrogen does because oxygen has more of a negative charge. Another property of water is adhesion and cohesion. Adhesion is when water sticks to other things and cohesion is when water sticks to water. Then there is density. Ice floats because it has less density than water. Another property is being the universal solvent because it can dissolve almost everything!

We also control the climate because the property of specific heat. Specific heat is the amount of energy it takes to raise the temperature of one gram by one degree Celsius. The reason specific heat is so important is because means water releases heat slowly, so it can control the climate.

Water droplets travel through the water cycle. I start in the clouds then I drop into mountains and become runoff. I can water a tree or I can go into a stream. If I go into the stream I will end up at a lake, which enters the ocean and then I'll evaporate. After I evaporate I go up into the air for condensation and form a cloud. Then the cycle starts over again.

Annotation: The writer of this essay created a water droplet and included some information about the water cycle. However, development and organization are somewhat lacking.

Informative/Explanatory Essay 6: Journey Through the Water Cycle

Hello, my name is Walter Waters and I am here to teach you about my kind. I am called a water droplet, just like you are called humans. We droplets take up most of the earth, yes more than you silly humans. We take up approximately 73 percent of the Earth's area. That is about 326 billion trillion gallons of water! 98 percent of this water is salt water and the rest of the two percent is fresh water.

Now, you're probably wondering how I was made, I went through the process of hydrogen bonding. Hydrogen bonding is when my mom, Hydrogen Two Waters bonded with my dad, Oxygen One Waters to make me, Walter Polarity Waters. Or you can call me H₂O, like some of my other fellow droplets.

My parents made Polarity my middle name because polarity is one of the unique properties that we droplets have. Polarity means that we are unbalanced. This happens because oxygen attracts more than hydrogen does, because oxygen has more of a negative charge. Another thing Polarity does is that it makes us more attracted to other polar substances like you humans or glass and other droplets. This brings us to another property of water, adhesion and cohesion. Adhesion is when water sticks to other things like glass and plastic. Whereas, cohesion is when water sticks to water like inside this glass or on wax paper. Now, if you can use your noggin, you would see that inside this glass are ice cubes and as you may know ice is the solid state of water, but it still floats on water. This is because of water's density. The density of water in its liquid state is denser than ice. This is because when ice's molecules align it forms a pattern where it leaves more space between molecules making it less dense, allowing it to float on water.

One of the cool things about water is its property of capillary action. Capillary action is when water is able to climb up narrow spaces with adhesion and cohesion. Like when water is able to climb up a straw when you put it in some water. Capillary action also allows us droplets to be able to climb up a tree's roots and water it!

Back to this glass of water, if I wanted to put this sugar in this water to make sugar water, the sugar would have to dissolve in the water. This process of the solute, the sugar, dissolving in the solvent, the water, is called solubility. Which is another amazing property of water called the Universal Solvent. Water is the universal solvent because it can dissolve almost everything!

You might have heard of this bug called the water strider, it claims that it can walk on water, but the real truth behind this little bug is that we are doing all the work! It is because of our property of surface tension that makes this even possible. I mean who do they think they are? Saying that they are able to walk on water, we are the hard workers, and we are the ones that hold these little devils up above water . . . ugh! Sorry, I got a little carried away there . . . back to teaching you about surface tension!

Surface tension is when water appears to have an elastic film wrapped over it; this is due to the bonds holding the water molecules together. But, if I put this straw into the water, it breaks the surface tension.

Not only do we do all of these phenomenal things, but we also control Earth's climate. Yes, Earth's climate. The reason we can control Earth's climate is because of our property of specific heat. Specific heat is the amount of energy needed to raise the temperature of one gram of a substance by one degree Celsius. The reason water's specific heat is so important is because it releases heat and absorbs heat very slowly, which is why it can control the climate.

This brings us to what I consider the coolest thing about water. This is the way it travels. Yes, you travel in things called automobiles or vehicles, but we travel through the water cycle. So if I started in the clouds and precipitation occurred I would drop onto land and start to go down the mountains, in runoff. From here I can go one of two ways, I can water a tree through capillary action, or I can go into a stream, if I go into the stream I will then enter a lake, which enters the ocean and I will then evaporate. After I evaporate I go up into the air where condensation occurs, to form a cloud, where the cycle starts over again. If I choose to water the tree, then I will transpire as water vapor, condensation will occur, and I will form a cloud again.

So, I hope you had as much fun as I did on our journey through the life of, well, me!

Annotation: Throughout, this essay sustains the idea of the water droplet traveling through the water cycle. Development is even and organization is clear. The style of the essay is engaging and the reader can easily follow the explanation. A more fully developed conclusion would improve the essay even more.

*For more examples of student essays, see the Common Core State Standards Initiative site, which includes samples of actual student essays for all three writing genres and for all grades. Each essay includes helpful notes and explanations. The first set of essays is from an on-demand writing assignment. The second set shows a range of writing, usually with one or more short essays and one or more longer ones.
Link: <http://achievethecore.org/page/505/common-core-narrative-writing>*