

WRITTEN COMPOSITION

Rubrics and Sample Responses

Write an essay explaining the value of the small, everyday events of life.

The information in the box below will help you remember what you should think about when you write your composition.

REMEMBER—YOU SHOULD

- ☐ write about the assigned topic
- ☐ make your writing thoughtful and interesting
- ☐ make sure that each sentence you write contributes to your composition as a whole
- ☐ make sure that your ideas are clear and easy for the reader to follow
- ☐ write about your ideas in depth so that the reader is able to develop a good understanding of what you are saying
- ☐ proofread your writing to correct errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure

The names of individuals mentioned in the compositions have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the students whose responses appear in this guide.

SCORE POINT 1

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS AN INEFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- ☐ Individual paragraphs and/or the composition as a whole are not focused. The writer may shift abruptly from idea to idea, making it difficult for the reader to understand how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- ☐ The composition as a whole has little, or no, sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion, if present, may be perfunctory.
- ☐ A substantial amount of writing may be extraneous because it does not contribute to the development or quality of the composition. In some cases, the composition overall may be only weakly connected to the prompt.

Organization

- ☐ The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and/or paragraph to paragraph is not logical. Sometimes weak progression results from an absence of transitions or from the use of transitions that do not make sense. At other times, the progression of thought is simply not evident, even if appropriate transitions are included.
- ☐ An organizational strategy is not evident. The writer may present ideas in a random or haphazard way, making the composition difficult to follow.
- ☐ Wordiness and/or repetition may stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

- ☐ The writer presents one or more ideas but provides little or no development of those ideas.
- ☐ The writer presents one or more ideas and attempts to develop them. However, this development is so general or vague that it prevents the reader from understanding the writer's ideas.
- ☐ The writer presents only a plot summary of a published piece of writing, a movie, or a television show.
- ☐ The writer omits information, which creates significant gaps between ideas. These gaps prevent the reader from clearly understanding those ideas.

Voice

- ☐ The writer does not engage the reader, therefore failing to establish a connection.
- ☐ There may be little or no sense of the writer's individual voice. The composition does not sound authentic or original. The writer is unable to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- ☐ There is little or no evidence in the composition that the writer can correctly apply the conventions of the English language. Severe and/or frequent errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure may cause the writing to be unclear or difficult to read. These errors weaken the composition by causing an overall lack of fluency.
- ☐ The writer may misuse or omit words and phrases and may frequently write awkward sentences. These weaknesses interfere with the effective communication of ideas.

Everywhere you go, you hear people say, "Don't take life for granted." The value of the small everyday events in life are important, even though you might not realize it.

Everyday events are essential to who you are. If you make good grades in school, and have your work completed and turned in on time, it shows that you're a responsible person. If you go home and play video games instead of doing homework, then that shows you're not responsible. So what you do everyday can show what type of person you are, and what kind of life you live.

Some countries aren't able to do the everyday things we do due to poverty or their type of government. If you're poor, you may not get to go to the movies every weekend, or go shopping. Also, spending time with your family everyday is valuable. Many people have either lost a loved one, or been split apart from their family.

So as you can see the value of small, everyday events is as important as needing an education. So don't take it for granted.

Score Point: 1

After a perfunctory introduction, the writer discusses three different ways that small everyday events are important (they are essential to who you are; the government or poverty can prevent certain everyday activities; spending time with family is valuable). Although there is a weak attempt to tie these ideas together in the final sentence (so don't take it for granted), abrupt shifts and the absence of connections between these ideas cause the response to lack coherence. The lack of development of ideas gives the reader only a vague understanding of what the writer is trying to say.

Have you ever wondered what do I need that for or why do I need to do that? I know I have. This is usually the very small events in your life that you don't think is important, but really it could be the most important event of your life.

When you wake up in the morning you should value that. There are many people who don't get to. If you apply for a job that could be one of the most important values of your life. It is those small things in everyday life that we take for granted that could be the the most important thing or even a life changing experience. Adults usually tell kids to live their life to the fullest because you never know when something is going to happen. This could be doing a small thing everyday.

Just helping someone on the street could be a small value that later on in life might be the best thing you could have

done.

So when you wake up or even
go to sleep think of all the
small values and it might just
change you.

Score Point: 1

In a weak introduction the writer states that a very small event in your life that you do not think is important could be the most important event of your life. The writer attempts to develop this idea, but the development is general and vague (when you wake up in the morning you should value that; even a life changing experience; just helping someone on the street). In addition, the random presentation of ideas makes the composition difficult to follow, further weakening the response.

I think that everybody should take advantage in life because we don't know when we are going to die or pass away. That why I think that everybody should take advantage in life. It is like the to stories that in the story "The Shores of Eld" that her father was getting old and had to be in a wheelchair. He could walk but not for a long time because he would get tired and had to be in his wheelchair. And when he went to walk that he would spend walk with his daughter along the Beach. And in the other story "Living in Admendorous" that she had a multiple sclerosis and she said that the nature of her adventures would have to change. And that you should be grateful when you get out of bed because some people do not wake everyday and the people that do wake up should be grateful that you wake up. That why you should take advantage of life.

Score Point: 1

The writer of this ineffective response attempts to use the reading selections to support the idea that everybody should take advantage of life because they do not know when they might die. However, there is little development of the writer's own ideas. Ineffective transitions between thoughts and wordiness throughout weaken the progression of ideas. In addition, a variety and density of conventions errors cause an overall lack of fluency.

There are many events in life that occur everyday. For them to be valuable, we must first acknowledge them. To some, life is just a road that you can't turn around in, but only go to a dead end. I do not believe this, because I think that decisions are the turning points in everyday life. I also believe that a person's decisions leads to everyday events. These events are not of any value to anyone if someone does not learn from them. There are events, such as tragic events, and even those events can be learned from. But a lot of people take the small events for granted. Not learning from them, not changing from them, and most importantly, not becoming a better person.

Score Point: 1

The writer attempts to discuss the importance of learning from everyday events. However, the development overall is general and vague (There are events, such as tragic events, and even those events can be learned from). Although the conventions are mostly appropriate and there is some focus, this overall lack of development makes the composition ineffective.

SCORE POINT 2

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- ☐ Individual paragraphs and/or the composition as a whole are somewhat focused. The writer may shift quickly from idea to idea, but the reader has no difficulty understanding how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- ☐ The composition as a whole has some sense of completeness. The writer includes an introduction and conclusion, but they may be superficial.
- ☐ Some of the writing may be extraneous because it does not contribute to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

- ☐ The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and/or paragraph to paragraph may not always be smooth or completely logical. Sometimes the writer needs to strengthen the progression by including more meaningful transitions; at other times the writer simply needs to establish a clearer link between ideas.
- ☐ The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses do not enable the writer to present ideas effectively.
- ☐ Some wordiness and/or repetition may be evident, but these weaknesses do not completely stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

- ☐ The writer attempts to develop the composition by listing ideas or briefly explaining them. In both of these cases, the development remains superficial, limiting the reader's understanding and appreciation of the writer's ideas.
- ☐ The writer presents one or more ideas and attempts to develop them. However, there is little evidence of depth of thinking because this development may be somewhat general, inconsistent, or contrived.
- ☐ The writer may omit small pieces of information that create minor gaps between ideas. However, these gaps do not prevent the reader from understanding those ideas.

Voice

- ☐ There may be moments when the writer engages the reader but fails to sustain the connection.
- ☐ Individual paragraphs or sections of the composition may sound authentic or original, but the writer has difficulty expressing his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- ☐ Errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure throughout the composition may indicate a limited control of conventions. Although these errors do not cause the writing to be unclear, they weaken the overall fluency of the composition.
- ☐ The writer may include some simple or inaccurate words and phrases and may write some awkward sentences. These weaknesses limit the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

I think that the minute details of our lives that we often deem as boring or insignificant, are what actually shape the people we become. Things like listening to music, going to church or school, and eating dinner with your folks all take part in developing your attitude and personality. Sure, it's difficult to see that when you get so caught up in the day to day grind, but it still happens. When you've just mowed two acres of grass, and you see you're dad walking out to meet you with a glass of ice water, or when after church the whole family piles into the car and heads to a restaurant to eat together, you are experiencing small things that overtime sculpt you.

For many people, these day to day experiences are harsh or painful, and can take a toll on their spirit. To those people I can only say that I am sorry things are like ^{that} for you, but do your best to overcome the circumstances that you have been given. I am grateful for being blessed with the family I have, and I believe that the small things that are a part of my daily routine are going to make me a better person later in life.

Score Point: 2

The writer provides a philosophical but superficial discussion on how the minute details of our lives actually shape the people that we become. The composition stays somewhat focused, and the conventions are generally appropriate. Although the writer uses some specific imagery (when you've just mowed two acres of grass and you see your dad walking out to meet you with a glass of ice water), the composition lacks the depth of development for a higher score.

Life is filled with many momentous events in life, but we have to look back on the small events that shape who we are today. Some events may seem minute and not really thought of such as a smile, hug, or a friend coming by to chat but if we cut out these small events, lives could be changed forever.

The small gestures we receive everyday may not get the amount of recognition deserved. You feel a sudden warmth when a stranger walks by you and smiles, or when in the grocery store checkout line, with one item, and the person in front of you graciously lets you ahead with their two buggies full. These small thoughtful gestures help the United States to stay strong with the bond that Americans unite in each other by lending a hand.

Secondly, without friends there would not be as many events in our life. Friends are there for every small event we may encounter. For me being a teenager I have many small awkward moments that I couldn't have laughed through without those closest to me. Also, a friend stopping by to chat is not a memorable

moment but a small uplifting moment that makes the day go by a little smoother.

I believe that friends make up most of the small everyday events we encounter.

Thirdly, a small everyday event can also be important to that person. My mother has always shown my father how much she appreciates his small gestures. Love gestures are a very valued small event of life. Such as asking how was your day or waking up with breakfast already cooked. Although these are small they are well appreciated. I know these small events are what has made my parents marriage so strong.

In conclusion, we should also look back on the small events just not the big important ones. A small gesture can go a long way and really brighten up the rest of their day. Without these life would not be the same.

Score Point: 2

Between a superficial introduction and conclusion, the writer presents three types of everyday events (small gestures from strangers, chats with friends, small gestures of love) that are important. This formulaic approach weakens the focus and coherence of the composition because the writer shifts quickly from paragraph to paragraph without connecting the information with meaningful transitions. Although the writer attempts to develop each paragraph, the development is somewhat general and superficial.

Everyday, I wake up with a smile on my face. Grateful to have my big sister and mom, they are everything for me. I usually wake up around 7:00 a.m. each morning to get ready to go to school. While I'm getting ready I sometimes stop and think about how lucky I am to be alive and have a family beside me. Even though daddy is not here but he keeps in touch. Also thanks to my mom I have what I need, I have a roof over my head, a bed to sleep on each night.

Food is always on the table and the two most important values a caring mother and health. My mother is very caring and thanks to her again I am who I am. I value everything that surrounds me each day. My home is one of them, it's not the best but it's comfortable and my parents both worked hard to buy it. School is valuable to me because school provides me with education that I'll need to use for the rest of my life.

My real close friends I also value because there always there to support me. My job that I have right now, I value because it helps me out, I can help mom. I value everything

that helps me keep a smile on my face,
but especially health is what keeps me
going each day.

Score Point: 2

In this somewhat effective composition, the writer explains all the daily events that she values in her personal life (grateful to have my big sister and my mom; I have a roof over my head, a bed to sleep on each night; I value everything that surrounds me each day). The response is focused, and the voice is consistent. However, the overall development of ideas remains superficial, preventing the writer from achieving any depth of thought. In addition, awkward sentences and minor conventions errors limit the overall effectiveness of the response.

My Papa BELL brought me flowers one year for my piano recital. It was in a small, quaint church on a rocky road in the grassy country. Most would say, "No big deal - they're just flowers." But they were more than that. My best friend would constantly smile. Every day her face would glow with that perfect, precious smile. No matter what might be going on around her, she could always manage a smile. Most people thought it to be annoying. These are small, trivial occurrences in my life that have touched me. I hold them of great value, although they mean nothing to most. Perhaps it is because they are both gone forever. My Papa BELL and best friend will never return from that last journey. It was a one-way walk to heaven. But never will I forget Papa BELL'S bouquet of flowers at my piano recital, or AUDREY'S beautiful smile. Neither of them know how much value I placed on their small, everyday acts in life.

These miniscule, almost insignificant acts mean nothing at all to anyone but me. My Papa BELL probably never thought twice after giving me those bright, brave flowers that Sunday evening. To him, they were a congratulatory gift. In my mind, though, Papa BELL had shown me his love in a new and surprising way. Never before had I received flowers - it was my first time. My spirits soared through the universe! They climbed the highest mountain and skimmed the largest sea. This small gift that I had

reviewed had achieved such a high value in my life. It will forever be etched in my mind, and locked away in my heart.

Her smile could illuminate the darkest room known to man. She could find the smallest glint of happiness in the most terrible situations. It was a natural talent, one of which most were annoyed. The smile hardly ever escaped her beautiful face. Every day would be just a little more pleasant because AUDREY smiled. She never knew how valued her happiness was to me. It was just a small action, but it uplifted my spirits a little every day.

These petite actions are nothing to be praised or worshiped. They mean nothing to anyone but me. They hold a high place in my heart, and always will. Through Papa BELL and AUDREY'S tiny acts, they brought happiness to my life. They showed their love to me through small, everyday events that will stay with me forever. They are my memories, and my memories only - and will be forever.

Score Point: 2

The writer of this response reflects on how the actions of her best friend and grandfather showed their love through small everyday actions. For the most part, the composition is focused and sounds authentic as the writer describes getting flowers from her grandfather and constant smiles from her best friend. However, there is some wordiness (they are both gone forever; will never return from that last journey; it was a one-way walk to heaven), and the development throughout remains superficial. Overall this response can be considered a somewhat effective composition.

SCORE POINT 3

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A GENERALLY EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- ☐ Individual paragraphs and the composition as a whole are, for the most part, focused. The writer generally shows the clear relationship between ideas, making few sudden shifts from one idea to the next.
- ☐ The composition as a whole has a sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion add some depth to the composition.
- ☐ Most of the writing contributes to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

- ☐ The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph is generally smooth and controlled. For the most part, transitions are meaningful, and the links between ideas are logical.
- ☐ The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses are generally effective.
- ☐ Wordiness and/or repetition, if present, are minor problems that do not stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

- ☐ The writer attempts to develop all the ideas included in the composition. Although some ideas may be developed more thoroughly and specifically than others, the development overall reflects some depth of thought, enabling the reader to generally understand and appreciate the writer's ideas.
- ☐ The writer's presentation of some ideas may be thoughtful. There may be little evidence that the writer has been willing to take compositional risks when developing the topic.

Voice

- ☐ The writer engages the reader and sustains that connection throughout most of the composition.
- ☐ For the most part, the composition sounds authentic and original. The writer is generally able to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- ☐ The writer generally demonstrates a good command of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. Although the writer may make minor errors, they create few disruptions in the fluency of the composition.
- ☐ The words, phrases, and sentence structures the writer uses are generally appropriate and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

Score Point 3 Guide Papers

WG-9a

Some people may say "don't sweat the small stuff," but I believe recognizing and acknowledging the "small stuff" in life is a vital key in the development of the growth of a person.

People are realizing more and more each day that tomorrow is not promised to anyone and neither is good health or peace of mind. With terrorist attacks every other week and unexpected tsunamis people are dying by the dozen, not even mentioning the people who die because of health issues. I think more people are starting to slow down their busy days to stop and take in the little things like the smell of flowers, the look in their loved one's eyes, or the rose growing from the crack in the concrete. These things are always overshadowed by the big things in life but without the little things the big picture wouldn't be as beautiful. Small things are what people always cherish the most. After you lose something it's the little things that brought you joy that you remember. Not because the big things didn't matter but the small things added up to make you appreciate the big things.

Once you've learned how to "sweat the small stuff" in life I believe you'll appreciate life more

and be able to accept challenges and hardships as they come.

Score Point: 3

The writer of this concise, philosophical composition explores how people should learn to “sweat the small stuff” in life. The progression of thought is smooth and controlled as the writer discusses how tomorrow is not promised to anyone and how the little things in life are ultimately the most significant. The reflective tone throughout adds depth and voice to the composition. In addition, the writer generally demonstrates good control of conventions.

"On the beach, in Tahiti, getting a swedish massage, what could be any..." "Get up, your gonna be late!" My mom woke me up frantically. "Oh no here we go again," I thought out loud. Every morning I wake up, I have a list of chores that run through my head: "Clean my room, make my bed, make me breakfast, make my sack lunch, and it's Thursday, drag our trash to the curb, along with getting myself ready for school." Today feels different. I began to wonder what life would be like if I wasn't able to do all these simple, little chores.

At the age of 16, I am pretty much totally independent. I get ready for school myself, drive myself; after school I go to work ^(6 days a week), and I pay for just about everything. Between my busy schedule, I have to find time to do my laundry eat.

My whole family is rather wealthy, so they were used to just giving their children money daily, then letting them do their own thing. My uncle was very happy; he just got married, and his wife was pregnant. Well, nine months passed and every thing was fine, until his whole company shut down. The next day DAWN, his wife explained she wasn't happy, and served him with divorce papers. During their argument he water broke. They had a boy, named NEIL. Today he is 10 yrs. old, but he is totally dependant. He is considered

to be autistic. He lives with his mom, who took my Uncle's money, all of it. She receives child payments every month, but she doesn't buy ^{NEIL} anything, she gets a babysitter. She is hardly ever home, and ^{NEIL} needs her ^{because} he is totally incapable of doing anything himself. He doesn't talk and can't hear, so he can not communicate with any body. After spending a day with him, you would be so thankful for being able to do those simple chores that you hate doing, like unloading the dishwasher, or taking out the trash.

Even though I may not be able to depend on anyone for anything, I am thankful I don't have to. The little things I do every day might seem like a pain, but it's a privilege; and I should be so happy that I have the ability to do them.

Score Point: 3

In an effective introduction the writer discusses her daily chores and wonders what life would be like if she were not able to perform them. The writer develops the composition by comparing the life of her wealthy but autistic cousin to her own. Specific details (my mom woke me up frantically; drag our trash to the curb) and a reflective conclusion add some depth and a sense of authenticity to the response. Although transitions could be stronger, the progression of thought is generally smooth.

"Simple Things"

These days, so much emphasis is put on college, high-paying jobs, money, money, and more money. Most Americans are so caught up in themselves that they don't stop and cherish the best things in life—the simple things. Small, everyday things that we seem to take advantage of, things like family.

We should cherish the moments that we'll miss the most once they are gone. Such as a loving wife trying so hard to clean the house and get supper ready before her husband gets home, but everything seems to go wrong. She has burned the cornbread, scorched the peas, and accidentally washed two red blouses in a load of white clothes. Her husband comes home to find his beautiful bride standing in the midst of smoke billowing from the oven. Her hair is a mess, no makeup on, and she looks as if she is about to cry. The husband, amused, runs to her and picks her up to twirl her around the kitchen. He was always able to make her smile, and so he does. She insists that they go out to dinner instead, but after her hard work, he won't have it. They sit down and he forces himself to eat the burned food with a smile. She laughs as he helps her wash the dishes.

Years later, the husband, now old and feeble, stares at a picture of his beloved wife as he straightens his necktie. Today, their son is getting married. Oh, how he wishes his wife could be there, he misses her so. Then, as the memory of the burnt

Supper comes to mind, a chuckle arises under his breath. In the back of the church he tells his son of that memory and reminds him to always cherish the simple things. He can only imagine the fond memories his son and new daughter-in-law will share.

You see, that old man lived life to the fullest with every breath he breathed. If he could go back and change anything there would not be one thing he would change. Had he and his wife been so caught up in their bank account and social status, they would have missed out on the happiest memories anyone could ever want. Cherish, remember, and soak-up the simple things in life.

Score Point: 3

The writer of this engaging response uses a third-person narrative to demonstrate the importance of appreciating the simple things in life. Although the paragraph about the burnt meal is more thoroughly developed (burned the cornbread, scorched the peas; standing in the midst of smoke; she laughs as he helps her wash the dishes) than the paragraph about the son's wedding, there is enough overall development to create some depth of thought. The progression of thought is generally smooth and controlled. The strong sense of voice and good command of conventions add to the effectiveness of the response.

Every little thing we do in life is important, but it's easy to overlook their value. For me giving my mom a kiss everyday before I go to school and when I come home symbolizes my connection to her. It says "Thank you" for blessing me with life. It shows how I appreciate her even at six o'clock in the morning and represents that no one leaves our house on bad terms. Just that simple kiss means a lot to her and me. It reminds me that people so often don't cherish the simple things because they're so caught in the future.

Small events don't necessary have to be an action; they can be something physically available to you like my cousin's headscarf. It's this old, long pink thing that ties up, but the value of it is unexplainable. When she died the value went up even more because it stopped being that thing I always asked for and became the thing that gave me a memory of her. This headscarf became my image of her in such a way that it goes everywhere with me. When I go to school it stays in my backpack just because the memory of it is just that strong.

It's funny how just simple values turn into great memories as you get older and realize that everything has a limit. With "In Search of Eels" the narrator cherished the eel because it made her open to a lot of different things. Seeing her father almost willingly letting go of Hope, I think, is when she realized the lesson that the eel taught her was one she was ready to give back to her father.

In "Living an Adventurous life," you see how one exposure to bad news made the author value everything she did. Everything she did showed her hope and struggle to survive without any self-pity. She mentally programmed herself to live accepting all of life. All her little actions, from reading to feeding her fish added value to her life.

Nothing should go unaccounted for. Each task or load given should have some type of value at the end of the day or that day is wasted. Everyone may not value the same things but nevertheless, everyone should hold on to these little things that make each day worthwhile.

Score Point: 3

In this generally effective response, the writer combines personal examples with some analysis of the reading selections to explain how the little things in life make each day worthwhile. The progression of thought is generally smooth as the writer moves from kissing mom to the cousin's headscarf to brief discussions of the reading selections. Thoughtful comments (It shows how I appreciate her even at six o'clock in the morning; became the things that gave me a memory of her; all her little actions, from reading to feeding her fish, added value to her life) add voice and some depth to the response. Stronger connections between the personal examples and the reading selections would be needed for a higher score.

SCORE POINT 4

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- ☐ Individual paragraphs and the composition as a whole are focused. This sustained focus enables the reader to understand and appreciate how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- ☐ The composition as a whole has a sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion are meaningful because they add depth to the composition.
- ☐ Most, if not all, of the writing contributes to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

- ☐ The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph is smooth and controlled. The writer's use of meaningful transitions and the logical movement from idea to idea strengthen this progression.
- ☐ The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses enhance the writer's ability to present ideas clearly and effectively.

Development of Ideas

- ☐ The writer's thorough and specific development of each idea creates depth of thought in the composition, enabling the reader to truly understand and appreciate the writer's ideas.
- ☐ The writer's presentation of ideas is thoughtful or insightful. The writer may approach the topic from an unusual perspective, use his/her unique experiences or view of the world as a basis for writing, or make interesting connections between ideas. In all these cases, the writer's willingness to take compositional risks enhances the quality of the content.

Voice

- ☐ The writer engages the reader and sustains this connection throughout the composition.
- ☐ The composition sounds authentic and original. The writer is able to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- ☐ The overall strength of the conventions contributes to the effectiveness of the composition. The writer demonstrates a consistent command of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. When the writer attempts to communicate complex ideas through sophisticated forms of expression, he/she may make minor errors as a result of these compositional risks. These types of errors do not detract from the overall fluency of the composition.
- ☐ The words, phrases, and sentence structures the writer uses enhance the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

For three years I went every summer to the same job. Running back and forth, sweating, and yelling at the children who mistook my leg for a soccer ball were just some of the monotonous burdens that plagued me as a referee for the Youth Soccer League. The smell of grass was smothering to me as I came home from that labor everyday for my entire summer. I hated it. I dreaded it. I could not stand it. I had to do it. Being a sixteen year old guy without a car wasn't a thing to brag about. I took that job for a singular reason that echoed in my mind constantly — I needed a car. So on I would trudge beneath the popular opinions of coaches and over the heads of small children. The repetition of it all gagged my mind with the same habitual actions on a daily basis. On August 1, 2004, I quit that job, ending my grief. On August 1, 2004, I went to Joe's Carlot and took in the first smell of significant change in three years. On August 1, 2004, I bought my first car. Climbing into the leather seated accomplishment was a fulfilling experience. While driving home I thought of the countless hours I spent running back and forth like a train, tooting my whistle and venturing countless times on the tracks of authority as I called foul after foul. Without that countless everyday experience, I would not have been driving that truck on that day. Without that compounded effort over time, I would not have noticed even the slightest that caused me to drive my truck. That repeated struggle

was the reason I was in the driver's seat.

Regardless if we notice it or not, the monotony of life is what drives us. Through everyday occurrences, we find our lives built up to meaningful events. You run everyday to win a race. You go to school so you can know enough to graduate. You have a job to reach a financial goal. Only through small repeated events can we achieve goals for ourselves. Only through small repeated events can we achieve a longing for change in life. Only through small repeated events can the unnoticeable monotony of life lead to events that are major, varied, and noticeable to us.

Score Point: 4

In this highly effective and unique composition, the writer explains how the small, monotonous, everyday events can lead to bigger and more exciting events. The writer tells the story of how his dreaded job as a soccer referee led to the purchase of his first car. Excellent word choice (the children who mistook my leg for a soccer ball; monotonous burdens that plagued me) and personal reflection woven throughout add depth and strong voice to the composition. Purposeful use of varied sentence structure and repetition (On August 1, 2004; Without that; Only through small repeated events) further enhances the effectiveness of this composition.

Whenever I try to remember the past it is never a large space of time that I am able to fully recall. It is the minutiae, those small everyday events of life that I remember best. Sometimes even the slightest memory can help me remember what a certain time was like, a certain day, or even a certain person.

For me, that person is my grandfather. My dad's father, a powerful man standing at a good 6'4". Graduate of an engineering university, who to this day maintains the highest test score for an exit test. A man not only dedicated to his country in a time of battle, but dedicated to his wife of fifty-four years and his seven children. I suppose us grandchildren have softened him up quite a bit because I share some of my fondest memories with him. My favorite is out in the garden. My grandfather could grow the meanest vegetables you would ever see, especially tomatoes. I considered myself his personal assistant. We would always water the garden together and then take our sandals off as we picked, so as to let the warm mud ooze between our toes. We would make a game of who could pick the most and then toss them into the coordinating bucket. Red for tomatoes, white for green beans, and green for lettuce. Of course he would always let me win. Then we would wash our feet off and head back to the house. But no matter what, my grandmother would always find a trail of mud, which she would scold us for later.

But times are different now. My grandfather hardly remembers my name or how old I am. Alzheimer's has slowly gnawed away at his memory. The garden is now shriveled and dying, left unattended for so long. The buckets lay in a heap in the garage along with a few forgotten vegetables. There are no more tracks of mud from the back door for my grandma to find. Everything is different now. My family and I try to help him remember what a wonderful life he has led by making collages of pictures, watching home videos, and even simply talking. The doctor says our attempts are futile, but we know better. It is the simple, minute details in life that help me remember him how he used to be. It is those same details that just might make him remember.

Score Point: 4

The writer of this engaging response combines biography and personal reflection to communicate how it is the minutiae of life that are remembered best. The progression of thought is smooth as the writer moves from describing her grandfather's life to her fondest memories of him to his current battle with Alzheimer's disease. Thorough and specific development allows the reader to truly appreciate the writer's ideas and thoughtful perspective, while the introduction and the very effective conclusion add depth to the composition.

"Harvard researcher discovers life-changing remedy" or "Drowning children are saved by heroic man" are titles that we would expect to see on the cover page of the city newspaper or on the headlines of the News at Nine. Of course these are important events, but what about all the other events that occur all around us. We never see front-page reports like "student works diligently at nursing home" or "Father and son share fishing trip." But that doesn't mean that these small, everyday events of life have little value. In fact, most people underestimate the importance of these small events when in actuality, they may mean more than a new invention or national issue.

This past summer, I worked as a volunteer at the _____ Hospital in the _____ Medical System. I was looking for ways to make a difference in people's lives for both selfish and selfless reasons. I felt that ^{by} helping others, I could help myself feel better about myself. Working in a hospital would be the best way to do this. I walked in on my first day thinking that I would be able to become a doctor's assistant in no time. Little did I know that the first job that I was given to do was to make up a bed in an empty room. Then, I had to make coffee, refill water jugs, and carry dirty linen bags. That day I went home defeated and disappointed, thinking to myself, "How am I ever going to make a difference by performing maid duty?" The most contact I ever made with

patients occurred when I brought out their finished lunch trays. The next few days, I went on with the daily routine never doing anything new until that one day when everything changed. At the time, I was bringing in the last few refilled water jugs into the rooms when one of the patients stopped me to say, "I thank you very much. You volunteers are so wonderful. You may not think you're doing ^{much}, but to us, everything you do is truly wonderful. While other kids are out on the street doing who-knows-what, you are giving up your time to help us old, sick ones out and that is something that you should be very proud of." I was speechless. I managed to stammer a "you're welcome" and a smile and then quickly walked out of the room. My cheeks were flushed and I was so surprised. I didn't think that the patients even acknowledged us, but to think that I was doing so much with so very little truly amazed me. The joy that that patient's words filled me with had the ability to do more for my self-esteem than any medical invention or risky adventure. From that day on, I worked with all my heart and with a smile on my face that not even my high-school principal could've taken away.

This experience made me realize ^{how} significant small, everyday events really are. We should not take for granted the little things we do. You never know when your small gestures can lift someone's spirits or when your words can help someone make a better choice in life.

Score Point: 4

In an effective introduction, the writer of this fluent response presents the thesis that most people underestimate the importance of the small events in life. The writer supports this thesis with a personal narrative about volunteering at a local hospital. Self-reflection throughout the response (I was looking for ways to make a difference in people's lives for both selfish and selfless reasons; I went home defeated and disappointed) adds depth and heightens the already strong sense of the writer's individuality. In addition, strong control of conventions enhances the overall response.

Of all the day's occurrences, it seems the most unpleasant is the most required: getting out of bed in the morning. I open my eyes to the blaring of my alarm before the sun has yet peeked over the horizon. Forcing my feet to touch the ground, I stumble to the bathroom, bumping any number of stationary objects that appear to have moved overnight. From the thin pattering of water on the shower curtain to the dumb whir of the hair dryer, I experience the entire process as if surrounded and muffled by a sleepy haze.

Rather than count those dreary moments as the start of my day, I prefer to name a different beginning. After completely readying myself, I take a deep breath and grasp the pull of the blinds covering my bedroom window. With the morning's first anticipation buzzing around me, I yank the sunrise into view. Above the treeline beyond my backyard, the sky is awash in brilliant colors. A streak of vivid orange chases fluffy fuchsia stripes northward, and violet night draws back its forces before the sun's advance. For the first time all day, I breathe in a fresh

beginning. What are those slumber-shrouded moments after the alarm's cry ceases? Nothing by comparison to this fantastic instant. In honor of the sunrise, it is then that I believe myself to be truly awake.

The rising of the sun is an event of pure and obvious beauty. However, it happens every day... never in my memory has the sun failed to make an appearance. Though small and inconsequential, the daily rising of the sun has the power to set my day alight. The joy that such an expectable, everyday event can bring causes me to wonder: what other sights of value go unseen? What people beyond price go unloved, what life-changing adventures go unlived? The value of the simple pleasures in life cannot be measured; it is through them that we may be truly uplifted.

Score Point: 4

Combining a descriptive organizational strategy with reflective commentary, the writer takes a compositional risk to create a response that illustrates how something as ordinary as a daily sunrise has an extraordinary power. The originality and authenticity of the response make it compelling and meaningful. The descriptive language (thin pattering of water on the shower curtain; I yank the sunrise into view; a streak of vivid orange chases fluffy fuchsia stripes northward) and excellent use of rhetorical questions (What other sights of value go unseen? What people beyond price go unloved?) contribute to the effectiveness of the composition.