

General Educational Development Test Service

Scoring Differences Between GEDTS's 6-Point and 4-Point Holistic Scales

The most significant change between the 6-Point and the 4-Point scoring scales is the specificity of the new scale, making it easier for the reader to assign an accurate score based on the guide.

The defining characteristics of each score are more definitive and consistent for each score point. In other words, each score is based upon the overall impression gathered from the five criteria:

- Response to the prompt
- Organization
- Development and Details
- Conventions of EAE (Same as SWE)
- Word Choice

The new scale also addresses the standard for writing i.e. that individuals write for a variety of audiences and purposes. The overall impression of Effective, Adequate, Marginal, and Inadequate are based on the reader's identifying, following, and understanding the writer's ideas. The scoring points in the 6-Point scale do not address the reader nor do they address the response to the prompt.

6-Point Scale

6-Score

- Sophisticated ideas within an organized framework that is clear and appropriate for the topic.
- The supporting statements are particularly effective because of their substance, specificity, or illustrative quality.
- The writing is vivid and precise, although it may contain an occasional error in the conventions of SWE.

5-Score

- Clearly organized with effective support for each of the writer's major points.
- While the writing offers substantive ideas it lacks the fluency found in the 6 paper.
- Although there are some errors, the conventions of SWE are consistently under control.

4-Point Scale

4-Score

- Reader understands and easily follows the writer's expression of ideas.
- Presents a clearly focused main idea that addresses the prompt.
- Establishes a clear and logical organization.
- Achieves coherent development with specific and relevant details and examples.
- Consistently controls sentence structure and the conventions of Edited American English (EAE).
- Exhibits varied and precise word choice.

According to the 6-Point Scoring Guide, the defining difference between the 5 and 6-Scores is the “lack of fluency.” The 4-Score in the new scale blends the elements of the 5 and 6-Scores so that the possible confusion for the essay reader is removed. Experienced readers have often failed to give a paper a 6 because they said, “I know it’s a 5, but I’m not sure that it’s a 6 . With the new scale the distinctions are not compressed but defined.

<u>6-Point Scale</u>
<p>4-Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper shows evidence of the writer’s organizational plan. • Support, though <u>adequate</u> [Note the label for the 3-Score on the new scale.], tends to be less extensive or effective than that found in the 5 paper. • The writer generally observes the conventions of SWE. • The errors that are present are not severe enough to interfere significantly with the writer’s main purpose.

<u>4-Point Scale</u>
<p>3-Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reader understands the writer’s ideas. • Uses the writing prompt to establish a main idea. • Has focused but occasionally uneven development; incorporates some specific detail. • Generally controls sentence structure and the conventions of EAE. • Exhibits appropriate word choice.

The scoring points for a 3-Score on the 4-Point Scale go further in defining what elements of writing make the paper adequate. The 4-Point scale also presents the elements of composition in the sequence that contributes to the overall impression: focus, organization, and development.

<u>6-Point Scale</u>
<p>3-Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper usually shows some evidence of planning, although the development is insufficient. • The supporting statements may be limited to a listing or a repetition of ideas. • The paper often demonstrates repeated weaknesses in the conventions of SWE <p>2-Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characterized by a marked lack of organization or inadequate support for ideas. • The development is usually superficial or unfocused. • Errors in the conventions of SWE may seriously interfere with the overall effectiveness of the paper

<u>4-Point Scale</u>
<p>2-Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader occasionally has difficulty understanding or following the writer’s ideas. • Addresses the prompt, though the focus may shift. • Shows some evidence of an organizational plan. • Has some development but lacks specific details; may be limited to a listing, repetitions, or generalizations. • May demonstrate inconsistent control of sentence structure and the conventions of EAE. • Exhibits a narrow range of word choice, often including inappropriate selections.

The 2-Score for a marginal paper using the 4-Point Scale, specifically addresses the 2 and 3 Scores from the 6-Point Scale comments on the development. This is the departure point between 3 and 4 papers (Effective and Adequate) and the Marginal 2-Paper—the development is weak or isn't present. Just as the 2 and 3 papers on the 6-Point Scale, there is some trace of a focus and a plan for development, but the writer does not provide the development (relevant details, examples, and explanations); consequently, the reader “has difficulty understanding or following the writer’s ideas.”

<u>6-Point Scale</u>	<u>4-Point Scale</u>
<p>1-Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper lacks purpose or development. • The dominant feature is the absence of control of structures or the conventions of SWE. • The deficiencies are so severe that the writer’s ideas are difficult or impossible to understand. 	<p>1-Score</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader has difficulty identifying or following the writer’s ideas. • Attempts to address the prompt but with little or no success in establishing a focus. • Fails to organize ideas. • Demonstrates little or no development; usually lacks details or examples or presents irrelevant information. • May exhibit minimal or no control of sentence structure and the conventions of EAE. • Exhibits weak and/or inappropriate words.

A score of 1 on both scales reflects a fundamental weakness of papers that have little or no focus, no plan for developing the paper, and no development (details, examples, explanation). Control of language in these papers is moot because if those three fundamental points are absent, the paper communicates little—an impressive vocabulary means nothing if the order and arrangement is absent..

The 4-Point Scoring Guide addresses those specific outcomes for an essay: focus, organization, development, and language. It clearly evaluates the papers based on the standards for writing. The scale also makes the reader’s task less complicated and ensures that the examinee receives the score he/she merits. Each scoring point provides the essay reader with clear and sufficient guidelines for applying the GEDTS scale fairly and accurately. Readers will see, however, a range within each score point—there are those papers that just meet the criteria and there are those papers that fully comply.