

Tips For Taking the RTW and Feedback From Past Graders

- Read the article carefully. Make sure you answer all of the questions.
- Be sure to spend no more than 1/3 of your response in summarizing the article; spend the remainder of your response answering the question.
- Be sure to use economic concepts and logic to make your argument.
- Relate economic theory you have learned in ECON 200 and ECON 201 to the main points in the article and your response to the question.
- A good essay will have some kind of introduction and conclusion sentence along with smooth transition between points. The essay should flow logically.
- Style: Be sure to pay attention to your grammar and sentence structure, and write in your own words. Avoid using slang, familiarities, nor contractions. Unless mentioned in the article, spell out any abbreviations into full words.
- Avoid using graphs, tables, or equations.
- Keep the purpose of the RTW exam in mind:
Reading Comprehension: You must demonstrate that you understood what you read.
Analytical Thinking: You must show that you are able to use your understanding of the article to compose a well-argued and logical essay that answers the questions.
Writing Skills: You must be able to put together a congruent and well-written essay.
- The RTW and personal statement serve different purposes. The RTW examines your reading comprehension, critical thinking, and writing abilities. The personal statement is the forum to discuss your interest in the major and any outside issues. Please refer to the personal statement prompt on the application form.
- Manage your time. You will be informed of the time remaining throughout the exam.

Feedback from the graders

1. The prompt

- Students sometimes don't understand the economic significance of the prompt they have read or simply misinterpret it. Hence either they aren't able to produce an explanation for what they have just read or they come up with an explanation that is, simply put, false.
- If there are two parts to a question, many students often answer only one part and then it is hard to judge their essay accurately.

➔ **READ THE PROMPT CAREFULLY - MAKE SURE YOU ANSWER THE ACTUAL QUESTION FROM THE PROMPT – MAKE SURE YOU ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS**

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2. Too much of the essay is devoted to summarizing the article and not enough to answering the prompt

- Students just summarize the article - this is especially visible in macroeconomic essays. Even if sentences are not copied from the essay, they are often merely paraphrased and there are hardly any original thoughts.
- In the end, they conclude by answering the question in 1-2 sentences.
- Sometimes after writing a decent summary of what they have read in the article, students don't have enough time left to provide their own ideas. Hence they submit unfinished pieces.
- Usually (around 70 percent of the students), after summarizing, students would write two to three sentences of their own to answer the questions in the article.

➔ DO NOT DEVOTE ANY MORE THAN A THIRD OF YOUR ESSAY PRESENTING THE MAIN LINES OF THE ARTICLE

3. Grammar, language and sentence structure

- A lot of students have difficulty explaining themselves. Sometimes it is hard to understand what they are trying to put forward either because they are not setting up their sentences right or they aren't using the right words.

➔ MAKE YOUR POINTS VERY CLEAR – USE SHORT SENTENCES

4. Content

- Students do not use economic concepts and logic to make arguments. Mostly, they use discussions and opinions floating around the internet and social media about issues.

➔ DO NOT FILL YOUR ESSAY WITH TRIVIALITIES

5. Some advice concerning the lack of originality in essays

- To help with original idea generation, I would suggest students evaluate the article using relevant economic theories that are related to the article, but sometimes not explicitly mentioned in the text. Or even if the theories are mentioned in the text, rather than simply restating the theory in everyday language, use vocabulary obtained in courses to show that you formally understand the economic theory, and expand on this by comparing the outcome of the event to what economic theory would tell us, or predicting the outcome of the event using the theory.
- Also, when the response questions ask for an opinion, again use economic theory (even if the answer is based on your social or personal preferences.) Many times, students answer emotionally or socially what they feel rather than grounding their response in theory. Although I believe it is fine if their social opinion does not coincide with economic theory, the student should be able to portray their knowledge of economics, and then afterwards, if necessary, state their personal opinion.

➔ RELATE THE MAIN POINTS IN THE ARTICLE AND IN YOUR SUGGESTIONS TO THE ECONOMIC THEORY YOU HAVE LEARNED IN ECON 200 AND 201