

Sample Directed Self-Placement Analytic Rubric

The Directed Self-Placement for Writing for First-Year Students (DSP) gives incoming students a chance to learn about the types of academic writing most often assigned and valued at the University of Michigan. It asks students to read an article, write an evidence-based argument in response to the article, and answer ten questions about their experiences as writers. For instructors, the DSP provides an introduction to their students' writing, a diagnostic tool to help them assess student learning needs, prioritize topics for classroom instruction, and collaboratively set goals for students' writing development. The prompt below includes the instructions incoming students in 2014 received. The rubric follows.

DSP Prompt, 2014:

Article the prompt engages: "[The Case Against High School Sports](#)" from the *Atlantic*

In her 2013 article "The Case against High School Sports," Amanda Ripley puts forth a provocative argument about the place of high school sports in American education. Ripley offers *evidence from a variety of sources to support* her position, and she *acknowledges and addresses counterarguments as well*. **Write a 4-5 page, double-spaced essay (1200-1500 words) in which you take a position on Ripley's argument.** You may agree with Ripley, disagree with Ripley, or formulate a third perspective. While you may draw on your own experience and observations in establishing your position, *your argument should respond directly to the claims and evidence that Ripley presents.*

Your instructor for your first writing course will read this essay in order to learn about your writing, and to help you progress as a writer in college.

Most of the writing you will do at the University of Michigan will ask you to develop a clear position and to support that position using specific evidence. In writing this essay, it will be helpful to keep the following guidelines in mind.

- **Focus:** Your essay should be developed around a clear central thesis or argument, drawing on evidence from the article to illustrate or support your argument. Consider developing your focus from the parts of the article you responded to most strongly.
- **Structure:** Your essay should be clearly organized in a way that elaborates on and supports your own central thesis. Individual paragraphs should be cohesive, and your reader should be able to follow the logical progression of your ideas from one paragraph to the next.
- **Evidence/Analysis:** Make sure that you support your claims with well-chosen examples from the article and that you explain clearly how each example supports your points.

	Basic	Developing	Accomplished	Exemplary
Focus	Writer's position is mostly, if not wholly, missing or unclear; makes no attempt to directly or indirectly engage the claims and evidence offered in the article—perhaps the essay is a seemingly stand-alone opinion about the topic in general	Writer's position, while stated in some way, lacks clarity—perhaps the thesis is less developed, or the writer only vaguely engages the claims and evidence offered in the article	Writer takes a clear position in response to the article's argument (for, against, or some third perspective); directly engages the claims and evidence offered in the article	Writer takes a clear position in response to the article's argument (for, against, or some third perspective); directly engages the claims and evidence offered in the article; makes clear (and fair) distinctions between the article's positions and their own personal stances/investments
Structure	Essay demonstrates virtually no visible organizational structure; it may be one or two giant paragraphs; paragraphs may not exist at all or may be full of clusters of ideas	Essay is loosely organized—may, for instance, stray from the position or logic stated in the thesis; individual paragraphs may contain multiple ideas or lack topic sentences, transitions, or other elements that would otherwise guide the reader logically through a progression of ideas	Essay is clearly organized in a way that elaborates on and supports writer's central thesis; individual paragraphs are cohesive, the organization guides readers through a logical progression of ideas from one paragraph to the next	Essay is clearly organized around their own ideas, rather than relying on a chronological (point-by-point) response to the claims in the article, in a way that elaborates on and supports writer's central thesis; individual paragraphs are cohesive, the organization guides readers through a logical progression of ideas from one paragraph to the next
Evidence / Analysis	Writer offers either little, if any support by way of examples from the article or so fills the essay with quotations, paraphrases, and summaries that the writer's thought process and/or ideas are wholly indiscernible	Writer supports claims with examples from the article, but may not always analyze the examples they include, thus making it difficult to distinguish their own thought processes; writer may occasionally overuse examples from the article, such that their own voice is overshadowed by the article's	Writer supports claims with well-chosen examples from the article, as well as anecdotes or observations from own experience; explains clearly how each example/anecdote/piece of evidence supports claims	Writer supports claims with well-chosen examples from the article, as well as anecdotes or observations from own experience; explains clearly how each example/anecdote/piece of evidence supports claims; demonstrates a thorough understanding of the article's use of the evidence while also offering their own (perhaps differing, but fair) interpretations of the same data when appropriate