

# Standardized tests and their effects on students



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## **Standardized Scaries: The Problem with Standardized Tests**

A cold room. #2 pencils. A silence pierced only by the nervous shuffling of feet. You're mentally kicking yourself for not having anything written on your paper. Your mind is screaming to write something down but you can't, for the life of you, think of a response to the essay prompt. You've written (and erased) four opening sentences, but the eraser shavings are suddenly a thousand times more interesting than what feels like your academic demise. I hope making you recall your days as a standardized test taker didn't cause you too much trauma. Just writing that description gave me chills, like the ones you get when you hear really scary ghost stories. But that's all they are now: ghost stories. Standardized tests will definitely haunt you, but if you bathe yourself in salt, you'll be safe from these ghostly tests for a few years. In the mean time, it is important to realize that standardized tests set the need for the relearning of the writing process, because writing that essay would have been easier if there had been time to outline and draft. In beginning to become aware of the places for improvement, it's imperative to recognize the change in circumstances, start fresh, and experiment.

Stressing over essay-writing is commonplace, but it's completely avoidable when you remember the change in your circumstances. The most obvious change is the time limit. As a college student, you're no longer expected to write a perfect essay in an hour or less, instead you're given days to complete a writing assignment. You're also not restricted to only your knowledge, it's perfectly okay to use other resources (such as writing centers or even the professor) to help improve upon your writing. Because of these more agreeable conditions, your approach must be altered accordingly. You

<https://assignbuster.com/standardized-tests-and-their-effects-on-students/>

no longer need to stress about an incomplete essay if you understand the change in circumstances.

Old habits die hard, and preconceived notions of the writing process are no different. Shaking off negative feelings toward the writing process takes time, but it's nothing to be afraid of. The writing process (as evident in its name) is actually a series of steps that can be built upon with practice. It's important to remember that standardized tests "are mainly concerned with measurable misdeeds," so don't let these tests dictate your view of the writing process (Dinan 54). The process includes "planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing," though students are usually most familiar and comfortable with drafting and editing (Schuster 375). During a timed essay—including those involved in standardized tests—most students bypass planning, and simultaneously draft and edit in order to finish on time. I'm certainly guilty of this, but even if it seems like an effective strategy, I (and everyone who does this) may be missing out on better, more thought-out ideas.

Though starting fresh and relearning the writing process is the most obvious step toward utilizing the entire writing process, you can't forget about staying open to suggestions. Experimenting with different parts of the writing process will help you find what works while also gaining a deeper understanding of what writing actually is. Trial and error is the best way to find techniques that work for you, and it helps weed out the ones that don't. Don't be intimidated by the internet's plethora of outlining techniques, just dive write in. Multiple studies, including the one conducted by R. T Kellogg, have shown that outlining can "significantly improve the overall quality of

<https://assignbuster.com/standardized-tests-and-their-effects-on-students/>

[a] document,” (327). Because drafting is also a weak point in almost everyone’s writing process, it’s important that you practice drafting as well. Starting fresh sounds scary, and thinking about your mangled writing process ravaged by the sharp teeth of the standardized test (Standardizilis testus is this horrid animal’s scientific name) is less than comforting. Standardized tests have the likes of Goliath; even if it strikes great fear in you, I know you can overcome it.

Over the years, we’ve lost our command of the writing process, adopting instead a rushed, short-term solution to standardized testing (and the essays they inevitably entail). Ridding your mind of the toxicity of such short-term solutions is highly important, especially if you’re taking classes at a university. Such a mindset won’t help in college, and I say this from experience, you must understand that your circumstances have changed, strive to start fresh, and stay open-minded about the writing process. Your skills will become your proverbial stones, and you yourself will be the David to bring down the Goliath of writing. Changing your perception about something so deeply rooted in your character is difficult, but it’s an important change that comes with the transition into the college life.