

2026



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# AP<sup>®</sup> English Language and Composition

## Free-Response Questions

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION**  
**SECTION II**  
**TIME – 2 HOURS AND 15 MINUTES**

**Directions:**

Section II has 3 free-response questions and lasts 2 hours and 15 minutes.

This section of the exam requires answers in essay form. Each essay will be judged on its clarity and effectiveness in dealing with the assigned topic and on the quality of the writing.

You may pace yourself as you answer the questions in this section, or you may use these optional timing recommendations:

- Question 1 (Synthesis): approximately 15 minutes reading the question, analyzing and evaluating the sources, and planning your answer, and 40 minutes writing your answer
- Question 2 (Rhetorical Analysis): approximately 40 minutes writing your answer
- Question 3 (Argument): approximately 40 minutes writing your answer

You may use scratch paper for notes and planning, but credit will only be given for responses entered in this application. Text you enter as an annotation will **not** be included as part of your answer. You can go back and forth between questions in this section until time expires. The clock will turn red when 5 minutes remain—**the proctor will not give you any time updates or warnings.**

Note: This exam was originally administered digitally. It is presented here in a format optimized for teacher and student use in the classroom.

1. Napping, or getting brief intervals of sleep during the day, is practiced by many people who are unable to get the recommended number of hours of sleep per night. In some countries, stores and restaurants customarily close during midday hours to allow citizens to take a nap. Some argue that napping encourages productivity and provides health benefits. However, others argue that naps might actually limit productivity or leave individuals still feeling sleep-deprived.

Carefully read the following six sources, including the introductory information for each source. Write an essay that synthesizes material from at least three of the sources and develops your position on the value, if any, of napping.

Source A (Guy article)

Source B (graph from Sommer)

Source C (Basu article)

Source D (Michigan State University article)

Source E (Cassidy article)

Source F (Tullo photo)

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
- Select and use evidence from at least three of the provided sources to support your line of reasoning. Indicate clearly the sources used through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. Sources may be cited as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the description in parentheses.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

**Source A**

Guy, Jack. "Daytime Naps May Be Good for Our Brains, Study Says." *CNN Health*, 20 June 2023, [www.cnn.com/2023/06/20/health/daytime-naps-brain-health-scli-intl-wellness](http://www.cnn.com/2023/06/20/health/daytime-naps-brain-health-scli-intl-wellness).

*The following is excerpted from an online article published by an American national media outlet.*

Taking daytime naps may help maintain brain health as we age, according to a new study. However, prior research has shown that excess napping can also be harmful.

Habitual napping was linked with larger total brain volume, which is associated with a lower risk of **dementia** and other diseases, according to researchers from University College London (UCL) and the University of the Republic of Uruguay.

On average, the difference in brain volume between nappers and non-nappers was equivalent to 2.5 to 6.5 years of aging, researchers said.

"Our findings suggest that, for some people, short daytime naps may be a part of the puzzle that could help preserve the health of the brain as we get older," said senior author Victoria Garfield, a senior research fellow at UCL, in a statement.

While the study was "well-conducted," limitations include the fact that napping habits were self-reported, said Tara Spire-Jones, president of the British Neuroscience Association and deputy director of the Centre for Discovery Brain Sciences at the University of Edinburgh, who was not involved in the study.

The results show "a small but significant increase in brain volume in people who have a **genetic signature** associated with taking daytime naps," she told the Science Media Centre.

"Even with those limitations, this study is interesting because it adds to the data indicating that sleep is important for brain health," she said...

Meanwhile, previous research has shown that frequent napping or regularly napping for extended periods during the day may be a sign of early dementia in older adults.

Elderly adults who napped at least once a day or more than an hour a day were 40% more likely to develop **Alzheimer's** than those who did not nap daily or napped less than an hour a day, according to a study published in *Alzheimer's and Dementia: The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association*, in March 2022.

And in July 2022, a study found that people who often nap have a greater chance of developing high blood pressure and having a stroke....

"This may be because, although taking a nap itself is not harmful, many people who take naps may do so because of poor sleep at night. Poor sleep at night is associated with poorer health, and naps are not enough to make up for that," said clinical psychologist Michael Grandner in a statement at the time.

From *CNN.com*. © 2023 Cable News Network. A Warner Bros. Discovery Company. All rights reserved. Used under license.

**dementia:** condition that can impair certain cognitive functions

**genetic signature:** characteristics of a single gene or group of genes

**Alzheimer's:** degenerative brain condition that results in memory loss and impaired thinking

**Source B**

Sommer, Constance. “Who’s Napping, How Long, and What Does It Mean for Our Health?” *Sleep News*, The Sleep Foundation, 3 Oct. 2022, [www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-news/who-is-napping-and-how-long-are-naps](http://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-news/who-is-napping-and-how-long-are-naps).

*The following excerpt and graph are from an online article published by a nonprofit organization that provides evidence-based, medically reviewed sleep health information and in-depth product testing.*

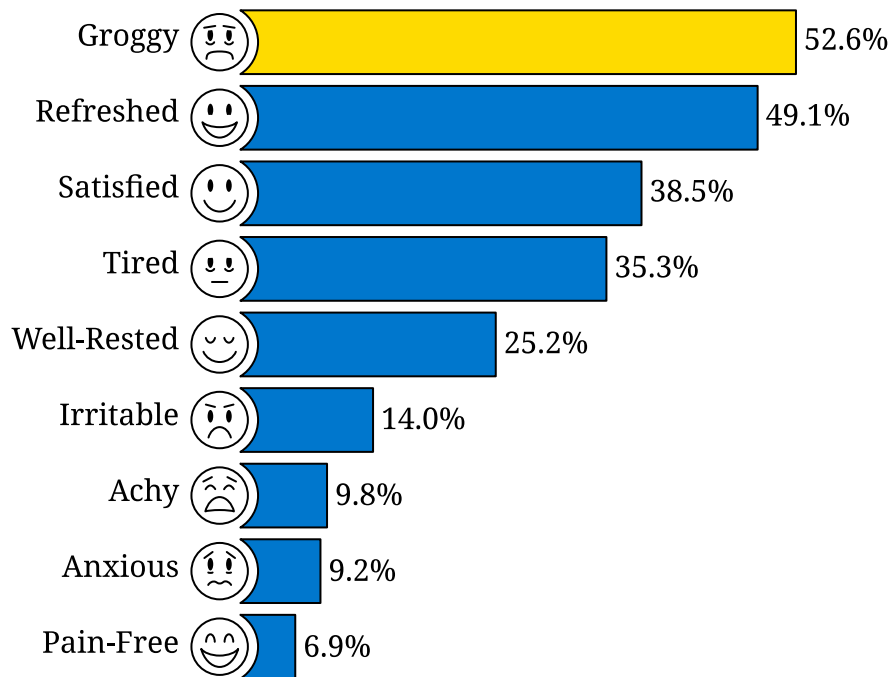
We take naps to feel refreshed. But only 49.1% of nappers say they feel that way, compared to 52.6% who feel **groggy**. Meanwhile, 38.5% feel satisfied and 25.2% say they’re well-rested after a nap.

Why aren’t those numbers higher? With the average nap clocking in at 60.2 minutes, some people could be waking up during slow-wave sleep, a stage of deep sleep that occurs about an hour after falling asleep, resulting in drowsiness.

To avoid this dazed post-waking state, which is called sleep inertia, experts say either nap much shorter—or sleep longer.

“Twenty to 30 minutes is probably the sweet spot,” says Dr. Abhinav Singh, medical director of the Indiana Sleep Center in Greenwood, Indiana, and a SleepFoundation.org medical-review panel member.

**How Do We Feel After a Nap?**



Source: The Sleep Foundation

**groggy:** weak and unable to think clearly or walk correctly

**Source C**

Basu, Tanya. “Are Naps Actually Good for Economic Productivity?” *The Cut*, 6 Apr. 2016, [www.thecut.com/2016/04/are-naps-actually-good-for-economic-productivity.html](http://www.thecut.com/2016/04/are-naps-actually-good-for-economic-productivity.html).

*The following article is excerpted from a website dedicated to politics, work, money, relationships, style, and parenting.*

For most employed Americans, a typical weekday starts around 9 a.m., punctuated by a quick, harried trip to grab something to eat at one’s desk, maybe some afternoon coffee to beat the post-lunch doldrums and power through until around 6 p.m., when it is, mercifully, time to go home.

In parts of Spain, however, the workday is a little different: There’s a chunk of time midday when workers linger over lunch and sneak in a nap—about a three-hour break in total—before returning to work till about 8 p.m....

This time-honored Spanish tradition is being threatened. *The Independent* reports that Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy wants to slash the siesta, get Spain back in line with Western culture, and have its citizens work something closer to a 9-to-6 day....

The move is being presented as a way to boost Spain’s sagging productivity—Spaniards work longer hours than Germans do but are less productive, the article points out.... But will it work?...

Now, among health researchers and psychologists, the benefits of sleep more broadly have been repeatedly established: clock in seven to eight hours a night and you should be refreshed enough to power through your day with a revitalized memory and attention span. Naps aren’t as well studied, but there are some signs they are beneficial, with some recent evidence suggesting midday naps are linked to lower coronary death rates, and that they may be the ultimate secret to peak productivity.

Among economists, however—the group most concerned with productivity—there’s a surprising dearth of research on sleep, with just a few papers published on the topic. That’s because economists aren’t sure how to classify sleep as part of our day when they’re crunching numbers on productivity....

Luckily for us, a pair of economists, Matthew Gibson and Jeffrey Shrader, took a hard look at the economics of sleep in a paper published last fall, “Time Use and Productivity: The Wage Returns to Sleep.” The two looked at data provided by the American Time Use Survey, where Americans account for how many hours per day they eat, work, do chores, spend time on leisure activities, and—importantly for us here—sleep. What Gibson and Shrader found was that sleep has a definite effect on productivity, which in turn might affect worker wages (the more productive you are at work, the more likely you either score a raise or get compensated with tips): Just one extra hour of sleep a week increased short-run wages by 1.5 percent (defined as over the course of a season here) and long-run wages by 4.9 percent (over the course of a few years, or the time it takes for a house to change value).... Here’s the thing, though: Gibson’s and Shrader’s study didn’t directly address naps, and it was focused on Americans, who tend to be a unique breed of worker in that they are usually working more hours compared to others around the world.

“Are Naps Actually Good for Economic Productivity?” by Tanya Basu. From *The Cut*. Used with Permission of Vox Media, LLC.

**Source D**

Michigan State University. “Scrap the Nap: Study Shows Short Naps Don’t Relieve Sleep Deprivation.” *ScienceDaily*, 12 Aug. 2021, [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/08/210812123122.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/08/210812123122.htm).

*The following is excerpted from an article from a website that features breaking news about discoveries in science and health from leading universities and scientific journals.*

A nap during the day won’t restore a sleepless night, says the latest study from Michigan State University’s Sleep and Learning Lab.

“We are interested in understanding cognitive deficits associated with sleep deprivation. In this study, we wanted to know if a short nap during the **deprivation period** would mitigate these deficits,” said Kimberly Fenn, associate professor of MSU, study author and director of MSU’s Sleep and Learning Lab. “We found that short naps of 30 or 60 minutes did not show any measurable effects.”

The study was published in the journal *Sleep* and is among the first to measure the effectiveness of shorter naps—which are often all people have time to fit into their busy schedules.

“While short naps didn’t show measurable effects on relieving the effects of sleep deprivation, we found that the amount of slow-wave sleep that participants obtained during the nap was related to reduced impairments associated with sleep deprivation,” Fenn said.

Slow-wave sleep, or SWS, is the deepest and most restorative stage of sleep. It is marked by high amplitude, low frequency brain waves and is the sleep stage when your body is most relaxed; your muscles are at ease, and your heart rate and respiration are at their slowest.

“SWS is the most important stage of sleep,” Fenn said. “When someone goes without sleep for a period of time, even just during the day, they build up a need for sleep; in particular, they build up a need for SWS. When individuals go to sleep each night, they will soon enter into SWS and spend a substantial amount of time in this stage.”

Fenn’s research team—including MSU colleague Erik Altmann, professor of psychology, and Michelle Stepan, a recent MSU alumna currently working at the University of Pittsburgh—recruited 275 college-aged participants for the study.

The participants completed cognitive tasks when arriving at MSU’s Sleep and Learning Lab in the evening and were then randomly assigned to three groups: The first was sent home to sleep; the second stayed at the lab overnight and had the opportunity to take either a 30 or a 60 minute nap; and the third did not nap at all in the deprivation condition.

The next morning, participants reconvened in the lab to repeat the cognitive tasks, which measured attention and placekeeping, or the ability to complete a series of steps in a specific order without skipping or repeating them—even after being interrupted.

“The group that stayed overnight and took short naps still suffered from the effects of sleep deprivation and made significantly more errors on the tasks than their counterparts who went home and obtained a full night of sleep,” Fenn said.

Used with permission

**deprivation period:** time when an individual is not sleeping

**Source E**

Cassidy, Anne. “Clocking Off: The Companies Introducing Nap Time to the Workplace.” *The Guardian*, 4 Dec. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/business-to-business/2017/dec/04/clocking-off-the-companies-introducing-nap-time-to-the-workplace](http://www.theguardian.com/business-to-business/2017/dec/04/clocking-off-the-companies-introducing-nap-time-to-the-workplace).

*The following is excerpted from an article published in an international online newspaper known for its coverage of politics, the environment, science, sports, and culture.*

Employers are starting to recognise the importance of sleep. Google has installed sleep pods in its offices for staff requiring a nap. The high-tech beds, which look like the **hibernation chambers** in *Alien* crossed with **Pac-Man**, include a built-in sound system for those who like to drift off to relaxing music.

An afternoon nap can help improve performance without interfering with night-time sleep, according to Rita Aouad, psychiatrist and sleep specialist at Ohio State University. “Lots of research shows that a nap of about 20 minutes in the afternoon has a positive effect on attention, vigilance, mood and alertness,” she says.

Nike’s headquarters in Portland, Oregon has rooms where employees can sleep or meditate. The company is among those offering flexible work times to employees to suit their chronotype—the internal clock that programmes your ideal sleep time and dictates whether you are a morning person or a night owl. “Morning types are celebrated and deemed more worthy because they are in the office earlier,” says **Walker**. “Evening types are usually penalised because they come in late, but they could work late. Companies are starting to understand that it’s nobody’s fault—it’s genetic.”

Procter & Gamble has lighting systems in its offices that regulate melatonin, the sleep hormone, to help employees switch off in the evenings. Ben & Jerry’s was an early adopter of this understanding approach to the need for rest and relaxation, and has had a nap room at its headquarters for over a decade. The company’s HR director Jane Goetschius says that along with other perks, such as yoga classes and an on-site gym, the nap room is part of a wider strategy to show employees they’re appreciated. “We want you to bring your whole self [to work]. It builds more productivity,” she says.

It’s not just the big corporations that are investing in a well-rested workforce. Shai Aharony, founder of London-based online marketing agency Reboot, encourages staff to take a nap in a dedicated quiet room in the office if they’re feeling drowsy, and tries to prevent work emails after hours. “We send an automated response to clients who email after work hours saying the email won’t be dealt with unless it is urgent and re-sent marked urgent,” he says. “The vast majority of the time the client will just leave it because it makes them think. It has made a huge difference.”

But will efforts like these have much of an impact? “I’m broadly in favour of nap pods, even if they just signal some degree of recognition of sleep’s importance in the workplace by people in senior positions,” says Walker.

Organisational, societal and structural change is what’s required, he says, adding that moves like the French government’s decision to impose a law that gives workers the right to disconnect from emails out of hours should be encouraged.

“Sleep has an image problem. In this modern day and age we have not only abandoned a full night’s sleep, we don’t celebrate it anymore,” he says. “We have to return to this mentality that sleep is OK.”

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**hibernation chambers:** fictional sleep pods used in space travel

***Alien*:** popular science-fiction film released in 1979

**Pac-Man:** popular video game released in 1980

**Walker:** Matthew Walker, a neuroscientist who studies sleep

**Source F**

Tullo, Vincent. "An Employee Sleeps in the Nap Room at Thrive Global, Arianna Huffington's Wellness Website, in New York, Mar. 26, 2018." *Redux Stock*, Redux Pictures, 26 Mar. 2018, [archive.reduxpictures.com/id/15067181](https://archive.reduxpictures.com/id/15067181).

*The following photograph from a visual media company shows a person in a sleep pod in an office.*



Vincent Tullo/The New York Times/Redux

2. Laura Amy Schlitz is a librarian and author. In 2008 she was the recipient of the Newbery Medal, which is awarded annually by the American Library Association (ALA) for distinguished children’s literature. Upon receiving the award for her book *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!: Voices from a Medieval Village*, she delivered an acceptance speech at the ALA Annual Conference. The following is an excerpt from that speech. Read the passage carefully. Write an essay that analyzes the rhetorical choices Schlitz makes to achieve her purpose of communicating what it is to be a writer.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that analyzes the writer’s rhetorical choices.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical situation.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

- Par.  
1 I have never been able to get a kite in the air. **Lithe**, active people get kites in the air, and if I am present, and if they are kind, they let me hold the string. I love the feeling of a kite, but I’ve never been able to fly one. They won’t go up. I run as fast as I can, but the kite drags behind me like the broken muffler of a car.
- 2 When I turned fifty, I made up my mind that I was going to fly a kite. I went to the kite store and bought a purple and scarlet **parafoil**. The clerk in the kite store assured me that all I needed was a wind; small children, he promised me, could fly this kite. I cross-examined him, flattening him against the cash register. “You really think,” I said sternly, “that I can get this kite in the air?” “Lady,” he said to me, “you’re gonna come back here; you’re gonna be screaming at me because I didn’t let you buy two of ’em.”
- 3 I liked his **panache**. I believed him. But he was wrong, because I couldn’t get the kite up. I tried—twice. Bystanders averted their eyes in pity.
- 4 Two years later, I won the Newbery Medal. I decided to go to the ocean to write my speech. The ocean, I believed, would **help**. So I packed my suitcase: fountain pens, ink, thesaurus, wrist splints.... At the last moment, I tossed in the kite. After all, my life had changed. I was living in a world where anything was possible.
- 5 I worked on Monday. On Tuesday, I awoke to the **keening** of the wind. I hurried through breakfast and headed for the shore with the kite. It was chilly, a gray morning. The ocean was greenish and savage, with the waves breathing hoarsely against the shore. Even the seagulls looked cold. I took the kite out of my pocket. As I unfolded it, the ribbons of the tail began to flutter. I could feel the kite straining to be free. I let go of her, and she soared into the air. Once she was aloft, she ceased to be a kite and became a creature: a nylon falcon, willful and **capricious**.
- 6 It was a miracle. She rose above my head. I gave her a little more string, and she lashed her tail like a tiger. She **pirouetted**, and I unwound the string. I was flying a kite. I stumbled along the shore, bemused, enchanted, disbelieving. She was smaller than a postage stamp—a motley speck in a furrowed sky.
- 7 My hand was cold. I fumbled in my pocket for a glove, and all at once I dropped the spool. It was then that I made a discovery—quite an obvious one, really, but to me it was startling and wondrous. As the spool of string rolled over the sand, the kite faltered and plummeted. Without me, she couldn’t soar. She needed the tension of my hand on the string.

- 8 I am not built for speed. But I clumped over the sand as fast as I could, trying to catch the uncoiling reel. A tuft of dune-grass snagged it, buying me time. I snatched the spool and yanked the string. The kite began to recover. She went on rising until there was no more thread.
- 9 I flew her for an hour before I brought her in. By now I was feeling superstitious about her, and I thought it would be good luck if I could lure her to my glove like a falcon. It was a bit like Tessa,<sup>1</sup> come to think of it—I wanted to catch her before she hit the ground.
- 10 And I did. I pulled her within three feet of me, leaped skyward, and plucked her out of the air.
- 11 Why am I telling you this? Oh, because this story makes sense. First of all, the thrill of getting the kite in the air—of doing what could not be done—was like winning the Newbery. Unclouded joy, soaring disbelief. I was holding the wind in my hands.
- 12 And also, because flying a kite is a bit like being a writer. Most of the time, the words aren't right, and the prose drags on the ground. We don't know how to get the kite into the air. Flying defies gravity. If there are rules and laws that govern this flight, we don't know what they are. We only know that we have to go to the shore with the kite in our hands, in case the wind is there. When the wind comes—those are the extraordinary, the surreal times. They are worth all the other times.

Used with permission by Laura Amy Schlitz

1: Tessa refers to a child who was mentioned earlier in the speech. Laura Amy Schlitz caught her after Tessa had fallen off a roof.

**Lithe:** graceful and athletic

**parafoil:** frameless kite that is known to be easy for one to fly without needing to run

**panache:** carefree, flamboyant style

**keening:** loud crying

**capricious:** unpredictable and impulsive

**pirouetted:** to rapidly turn the body, as in ballet

3. In the 2009 keynote address for the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students, physician, engineer, and former astronaut Mae Jemison—the first African American woman in space—stated: “Never be limited by other people’s limited imaginations. If you adopt their attitudes, then the possibility won’t exist because you’ll have already shut it out.... You can hear other people’s wisdom, but you’ve got to re-evaluate the world for yourself.”

Write an essay that argues your position on the extent to which Jemison’s claim about considering others’ opinions is valid.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible position.
- Provide evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

**STOP**  
**END OF EXAM**