The Tray Test

Trace how evidence and a limitation shape an argument.

10.CL.9.c "Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning, relevant and sufficient evidence, appropriate transitions..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the writer's claim, number two supporting details, circle a transition that introduces a limitation, and bracket the conclusion to trace how the argument develops.

Should Cafeterias Use Washable Trays?

1 At the end of lunch, a cafeteria worker may face a pile of trays that held food for only twenty minutes. Schools that use disposable trays should switch to washable ones when their kitchens can clean them safely. A tray used once becomes waste after a single meal, while a washable tray can serve many students over time. This matters beyond the cafeteria: the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reports that the United States generated municipal solid waste at a rate of 4.9 pounds per person per day in 2018. Trays are only one source of waste, but repeated single use adds to the problem.

2 The case is not simply that washable trays look greener. A cafeteria that already washes metal utensils could collect trays at the same return point and use its cleaning equipment, if that equipment has room for them. This offers a possible path from a waste problem to a change in daily routine. However, washing requires water, electricity, staff time, and enough trays to cover the next lunch period. A school with no safe dishwashing setup would need to calculate those costs before switching. Ignoring that obstacle would weaken the argument, not make the proposal more convincing.

3 For that reason, a sensible policy would begin with a small trial rather than an instant schoolwide change. Staff could count how many disposable trays are thrown away during a typical week, then compare that total with the water, labor, and replacement costs of a trial using washable trays. If the kitchen can clean trays safely and the trial cuts trash without unreasonable costs, the school should expand it. The national waste estimate shows why reducing throwaway items matters; the trial would show whether this particular solution works here. A measured switch supports both environmental goals and a cafeteria that can actually function.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What is the writer's claim? Why is it conditional rather than absolute?

2. Identify two details that support reducing disposable-tray waste. Explain what each detail adds to the argument.

3. What does "However" signal in paragraph 2? Why does including the point that follows strengthen the argument?

4. How does the proposed trial help the conclusion follow from the writer's reasons?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one paragraph arguing whether school sports events should offer washable cups instead of disposable ones. Use two relevant details from the passage, explain how they support your claim, address a limitation with a transition, and end with a conclusion that follows from your reasons.

ANSWER KEY

The Tray Test

GRADE 10 · 10.CL.9.c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the writer's claim, number two supporting details, circle a transition that introduces a limitation, and bracket the conclusion to trace how the argument develops. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the writer's claim? Why is it conditional rather than absolute?	**Schools using disposable trays should switch to washable ones if their kitchens can clean them safely. The writer recognizes that some kitchens may lack a safe or affordable way to do so.**
2	Identify two details that support reducing disposable-tray waste. Explain what each detail adds to the argument.	**A disposable tray becomes waste after one meal, while a washable tray can be reused. The EPA waste rate shows that waste is a larger problem worth addressing, though it does not measure tray waste specifically.**
3	What does "However" signal in paragraph 2? Why does including the point that follows strengthen the argument?	**It introduces the costs and practical limits of washing trays. Addressing those limits makes the proposal more credible than ignoring them.**
4	How does the proposed trial help the conclusion follow from the writer's reasons?	**The trial would test whether washable trays reduce trash without unreasonable costs and whether the kitchen can clean them safely. Those results would support a decision to expand the change.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

School sports events should offer washable cups if staff can clean them safely. The passage explains that a disposable tray becomes waste after one meal; likewise, a disposable cup becomes waste after one game. It also reports that the United States generated municipal solid waste at a rate of 4.9 pounds per person per day in 2018, which makes cutting single-use items worth considering. However, washing takes water, electricity, and staff time, so the school should test cups at one event and compare the costs with the trash saved. If the trial works, washable cups would be a practical way to reduce waste.

Accept different marked details if students can explain how they support the claim. In Part 3, accept either position when two passage details are used accurately and the conclusion follows from the reasoning.