ACT ESSAY EXAMPLE

Intelligent Machines

Many of the goods and services we depend on daily are now supplied by intelligent, automated machines rather than human beings. Robots build cars and other goods on assembly lines, where once there were human workers. Many of our phone conversations are now conducted not with people but with sophisticated technologies. We can now buy goods at a variety of stores without the help of a human cashier. Automation is generally seen as a sign of progress, but what is lost when we replace humans with machines? Given the accelerating variety and prevalence of intelligent machines, it is worth examining the implications and meaning of their presence in our lives.

Perspective One: What we lose with the replacement of people by machines is some part of our own humanity. Even our mundane daily encounters no longer require from us basic courtesy, respect, and tolerance for other people.

Perspective Two: Machines are good at low-skill, repetitive jobs, and at high-speed, extremely precise jobs. In both cases they work better than humans. This efficiency leads to a more prosperous and progressive world for everyone.

Perspective Three: Intelligent machines challenge our long-standing ideas about what humans are or can be. This is good because it pushes both humans and machines toward new, unimagined possibilities.

Write a unified, coherent essay about the increasing presence of intelligent machines.

Now, read the **ACT essay example below**, and try to notice how it meets the criteria in the table above.

ACT Essay Example

From the simplest system of pulleys and ropes to the most complex supercomputer in the world today, machines have had (and continue to have) a profound influence on the development of humanity. Whether it is taking over monotonous, low-skill tasks or removing that messy "human" element from our day-to-day interactions, machines have answered the call to duty. The increasing prevalence of intelligent machines challenges us to change long held beliefs about our limitations and to continue forward to new and even more advanced possibilities.

 One common argument against the increased presence of machines in our day to day lives is that machines leach from us our basic humanity. Indeed, certain people whose only social interactions are anonymous text-based conversations with other anonymous Internet forum dwellers over computers may begin to lose basic human courtesy and empathy. This is crystal clear with a glance at the comments section of any popular news article. Yet machines are also capable of enhancing people's abilities to communicate. An example of this can be found in Tod Machover's lab at MIT, where breakthroughs in neurotechnology have made it possible for quadriplegics to manipulate text on computers with their minds.

Such interactions would be impossible without the existence of intelligent machines. Therefore, I must disagree with Perspective one. Rather than losing part of our own humanity to machines, we instead make that most-essential-to-humanity of acts, communication, possible.

Another school of thought (Perspective Two) argues that machines are good at how and high skill repetitive jobs, which leads to a more prosperous and progressive world for everyone. This can be seen in the human work hours that are saved daily with automated phone menus. Before intelligent machines made automatic telephone menus possible, every customer service call ate up valuable employee time. Now, menus allow callers to choose the number that best suits their needs, routing calls to appropriate destinations without the need for human employees to waste time explaining for the hundredth time that "our business hours are 10am-6pm." On the other hand, no mechanized system of this kind is perfect, because it can't predict all future outcomes. In terms of automated telephone menus, this means that sometimes, no menu options are correct. While automated systems may take the burden off of human workers, it is a mistake to think that they can replace humans entirely. Why else would the last line of resort for most automated phone menus be "Dial "0" to speak to an operator/customer service representative?" Perspective Two is true, but it only goes so far.

A final example will demonstrate how intelligent machines challenge longstanding ideas and push us towards new, unimagined possibilities (perspective three). At my high school, all students had to take diagnostic tests in every main subject to figure out our strengths and weaknesses, and we were then sorted into class by skill level. A truly remarkable pattern emerged as a result of this sorting: it turned out that every kid in my medium-level physics class was also a talented musician. The system that sorted us allowed us to find this underlying pattern, which changed the way our teachers taught us; we learned about mechanics through examples that were more relevant to our lives (answering questions like "how many pulleys are needed to lift a piano?"), which in turn made our classes both more enjoyable and also more effective. When before I had struggled with physics and simply assumed it was a subject I "wasn't good at," the intelligent, automated sorting system allowed me to discover that I could in fact understand mechanics if taught in the right way. This discovery pushed me toward previously unimagined academic possibilities.

In conclusion, intelligent machines help us to move forward as a species to greater heights. While machines can cause problems and may in some cases need human input to function optimally, it is how we react and adapt to the machines that is the real takeaway.