Helpful Steps for Writing an RLA Extended Response:

1. Begin with a hook: an attention-grabber or starter that can be a question, statistic, statement, anecdote, etc.

2. Identify each writer and give a one-sentence statement that evaluates the sufficiency of evidence to support his/her claim.

3. Craft your position. Which writer has more convincing evidence? Note: this is not your opinion on whether or not we should have self-driving cars. It is your opinion on which text has the most convincing evidence.

4. Begin your body paragraph with a topic sentence: include one writer and your evaluation of his her evidence. Give support or an example of good or bad evidence. Explain why that evidence was good or bad. Use a transition and shift to a second example of good or bad evidence. Explain why that evidence was good or bad. Give a concluding statement.

5. Repeat step 4 but analyze the other writer in the prompt.

6. Write a short conclusion that re-emphasizes why you chose to argue that one writer had a stronger argument than the other.

Sample TDL Extended Response: Mr. Peter’s Argument is More Convincing

Since Henry Ford built and manufactured the Model-T, Americans have loved their cars and the freedom they have to travel across our nation. The recent technological advancement of self-driving cars stirs up many issues that must be considered. Robert W. Peterson makes that case that self-driving cars are already here, so people should adjust to that reality. Eric Peters argues that self-driving cars could be more dangerous than human-driven cars because those cars can’t be programmed to disobey traffic laws when necessary. However, Mr. Peters’s argument is more convincing because he focuses most of all on the issue of safety.

First, Mr. Peters’s argument includes claims supported with logical examples. He begins by conceding that self-driving cars may be able to prevent some accidents such as when one car runs a red light and hits another car. This gives him credibility with the reader because he is conceding a point to the opposing side of his argument. Then, he concludes that self-driving cars are like our computers and will have glitches. Each and every person can likely relate to a time when a computer did not work when he or she need it to. This logical example brings up the serious question of the safety of self-driving cars. It’s likely that glitches could cause dangerous and even fatal accidents. Secondly, he points out that it is difficult to program self-driving cars to disobey traffic laws when, for instance, a child has run out into the road. This is the best example that he gives that convinces the reader that self-driving cars could be more dangerous than cars driven by humans.

On the contrary, Mr. Peterson makes the opposing argument that self-driving cars are a positive technological invention. His argument is not as strong because he does not always give logical reasons to support his claims. He begins by using respectable stats to prove that riding in a car can cause injury or death. However, he does not provide any evidence that self-driving cars are less dangerous than regular cars. He says that self-driving cars will eliminate human errors, but he never considers computer glitches or a lack of human judgment in unusual cases such as the child in the road. Next, he focuses on the convenience of not having to drive. For most of us, the idea of more free time sounds great, but he doesn’t consider whether or not people will still have to be alert and ready to take control of the self-driving car at a moment’s notice. He points out that self-driving cars could help the elderly or the disabled travel freely and safely, but he does not offer any evidence to support this point. He also argues that self-driving cars will be cheaper because people will not have to buy their own cars, gas, or insurance, but he fails to admit that a self-driving car service will still cost a substantial amount of money. Also, his tone is a bit arrogant as he fails to consider any valid claims from those who oppose self-driving cars. He doesn’t care “whether Americans are ready” for self-driving cars. He says they “need to get ready.” These are examples of his hateful tone towards the opposition. All of these points make his argument weaker than Peters’s argument.

In conclusion, Mr. Peters’s argument against self-driving cars is the stronger of the two. He focused his argument on the safety of all individuals. Mr. Peterson’s also considers safety, but his facts are mostly about the dangers of car riding and driving and do not include proof that self-driving cars are actually safer.

Evaluate Paragraphs:

\_\_\_\_\_\_1. Does the body paragraph begin with a topic sentence?

\_\_\_\_\_\_2. Does the writer use transitions to show the relationships among ideas?

\_\_\_\_\_\_3. Does the writer make logical claims about the texts?

\_\_\_\_\_\_4. Does the writer support claims with evidence from the texts?

\_\_\_\_\_\_5. Does the writer give commentary or analysis after giving evidence?

\_\_\_\_\_\_6. Does the writer give a concluding statement to sum up the main claim of the body paragraph?

\_\_\_\_\_\_7. Does the writer include a conclusion that briefly restates the thesis?

Answer Key:

Mr. Peterson’s Argument is Stronger

What will they think of next? One of the hottest new technologies is self-driving cars. Imagine texting an order for a self-driving car. In just moments, you could be riding to your destination—without the worry and responsibility of driving and with more free time to text, watch tv, or play a game. Mr. Peters argues that self-driving cars cannot override their own programming, which could be necessary in certain situations. Mr. Peterson argues that self-driving cars are the future and even the now and that they will be safer and more convenient. Mr. Peterson makes a stronger argument since he uses more facts and statistics to prove that human error makes driving extremely dangerous.

First, Mr. Peterson makes a strong argument that self-driving cars are here, here to stay, and here to prevent many accidents. Peterson uses the argument that, because of human error, human-driven cars cause numerous accidents each year. He gives facts that support this claim: in each of the past 5 years, 32,000 people in the U.S. have died due to vehicular accidents. He also uses a shocking statistic to drive this point home: those 32,000 deaths would be the equivalent of five 737 jets crashing each week. This fact emphasizes that driving as we know it today is very dangerous. Then Peterson gives a new fact—that human error caused between 93 and 95 percent of these accidents. He offers a valid source for this statistic—the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. He uses this fact to set up his argument that if self-driving cars reduce human error, then they will likely reduce the number of accidents. Peterson strengthens his argument by giving more facts about the number of injuries caused by vehicular accidents. Next, Peterson emphasizes the cost of buying and maintaining a car. He points out that young people are less interested in having their own cars and that using some sort of self-driving car service would likely be cheaper than buying a car. These are some of the reasons why Mr. Peterson’s argument is strong.

However, Mr. Peters’s argument is built around one scenario or situation rather than facts. Mr. Peters’s concedes that self-driving cars may, in fact, be able to reduce the number of accidents caused by human error. For example, he uses the situation of a car running a red light and smashing into another car. He explains that vehicle-to-vehicle communication may be able to prevent that kind of accident, but he is more concerned with the self-driving cars’ inability to disobey traffic laws if necessary. For example, if a child runs out into the road, a human driver would swerve to miss that child if at all possible. He is concerned that self-driving cars may not have that capability. Mr Peters’s argument is based on the strength of this one example or situation. He does not give any real proof or facts that self-driving cars are more dangerous. Because of Mr. Peters’s lack of factual support, Mr. Peterson’s argument is the stronger of the two.

In conclusion, Mr. Peterson’s argument uses numerous facts to support his claim that since self-driving cars will eliminate many cases of human error, self-driving cars will be safer than human-driven ones.