

Prompt Format

HIGH SCHOOL

Prompt # Description

Writing Situation

- The first sentence provides the background for the writing assignment and the general topic.
- The remaining sentences help writers consider different aspects of the topic, realize that they know enough about the topic to write, and focus their individual responses.

Directions for Writing

- The first sentence identifies the nature of the writing (an essay) and also identifies an audience and purpose(s).
- The remaining sentences remind students to help their audience understand their ideas by giving many details and examples to support their position and also directs students to address opposing viewpoints.

HIGH SCHOOL INSTRUCTIONAL EXAMPLE PROMPTS

HIGH SCHOOL

Prompt 1 Requiring Helmets

Writing Situation

Many communities have discussed requiring the use of helmets for riders of motorcycles, bicycles, and all-terrain vehicles. For example, many people assert that for safety reasons and reduced numbers of accident fatalities, governments should require riders to wear helmets. However, others believe in personal freedom and claim that as long as riders don't hurt others, the risk is theirs to take. Consider these opinions and the variety of other opinions on this issue.

Directions for Writing

Write an essay in which you take a position on this issue and persuade adults to adopt your view on whether communities should require riders of motorcycles, bicycles, and all-terrain vehicles to wear helmets. Help readers understand the logic of your viewpoint by providing convincing reasons and specific examples to support your position and by addressing possible objections to your point of view.

TEACHING TIP: Help students to deconstruct this prompt by identifying the elements included from the “prompt format” box on the first page.

HIGH SCHOOL

Prompt 2 Required Volunteer Experience

Writing Situation

Many high schools have discussed mandating a certain number of documented volunteer experience hours for students to graduate. For example, some schools see the role of civic responsibilities as essential to the high school experience. However, other schools believe a student’s time is better spent taking or studying for a traditional course. Consider both the positive and negative effects volunteering can add to a high school student’s life.

Directions for Writing

Write an essay for publication in your school newspaper to persuade readers to adopt your position on required volunteer experience for graduation. Help your audience to see the logic of your position by providing convincing reasons and specific examples to support your position and by addressing possible objections to your point of view.

TEACHING TIP: Help students understand the importance of developing their ideas by brainstorming as a class particular reasons and examples that might support various positions on this issue.

HIGH SCHOOL

Prompt 3 Meeting the Needs of High School Aged Employees and Their Employers

Writing Situation

Many employers struggle in mediating their own business needs and the needs of their high school aged employees. For example, many students need work schedules that can be arranged around their classes, homework, extra-curricular activities, and social events. However, many employers resist accommodating the needs of high school students who are often unwilling to make the level of commitment employers have come to expect from adults. Imagine a panel of employers was seeking input from high school students on these opinions and the various other opinions on this issue.

Directions for Writing

Write an essay in which you persuade that group of employers to accept your position on meeting the needs of both high school aged employees and their employers. Help these employers to understand the logic of your viewpoint by providing convincing reasons and specific examples to support your position and by addressing possible objections to your advice.

TEACHING TIP: Help students to explore the concept of audience awareness by discussing how an essay written on this topic to a group of employers might be different from similar essays written to peers, or parents, or teachers, or other adults in general.

HIGH SCHOOL

Prompt 4 Education Inside and Outside the Classroom

Writing Situation

Eighteenth century English historian Edward Gibbon once wrote, “Every man who rises above the common level has received two educations: the first from his teachers; the second, more personal and important, from himself.” Consider the relative importance of both of these types of educations in the lives of men and women.

Directions for Writing

Write an essay for a magazine in which you take a position on this issue and persuade readers to adopt your point of view. Help readers understand the logic of your position by providing convincing reasons and specific examples to support your point of view and by addressing possible objections to your point of view.

TEACHING TIP: Help students engage the prompt by first asking them to paraphrase the quotation and then generate a list of questions about the quotation (such as *What does the phrase “common level” mean?*). Facilitate discussion of the answers to their questions and the meaning of the quotation as a whole.

TEACHING TIP: Remind students that knowledge of Gibbon, his work, or his background is not necessary to respond to this prompt. Although he is identified as the source, the prompt asks the student to write about the ideas contained in the quotation, not about Gibbon.

HIGH SCHOOL

Prompt 5 A Healthier Alternative to Fast Food

Writing Situation

Many people discuss whether fast food restaurants should be required to serve healthier foods. For example, many people believe this requirement would help people eat better and live longer, healthier lives. However, others think individuals should decide for themselves what food to eat. Imagine that a group of lawmakers was gathering to consider these opinions and the various other opinions on this issue.

Directions for Writing

Write an essay in which you persuade that group of lawmakers to accept your position on requiring fast food restaurants to serve healthier foods. Help your audience to understand the logic of your viewpoint by providing convincing reasons and specific examples to support your position and by addressing possible objections to your point of view.

TEACHING TIP: Help students explore the characteristics of the particular audience mentioned in this prompt—a group of lawmakers—by engaging them in a series of discussion questions. For example, *What type of people desire to be lawmakers? What kind of backgrounds and professional experiences might they share in common? What do lawmakers value? What motivates lawmakers?* etc. After discussing such questions, help students apply this information to the planning of their essays by discussing how they might tailor their appeals to this specific audience.

HIGH SCHOOL

Prompt 6 Environmental Protection

Writing Situation

The environment has become one of the major challenges of the past 40 years. Global warming, air and water pollution, wildlife conservation, and control of waste materials are all issues of concern for some. For example, many people feel that the environment should be preserved and protected for the health and livelihood of future generations. However, others believe that the potential risks of harming the environment have been exaggerated. Consider these opinions and the variety of other opinions on this issue.

Directions for Writing

Write an essay in which you persuade a group of adults to accept your position on the environment. Help your audience to understand the logic of your viewpoint by

providing convincing reasons and specific examples to support your position and by addressing possible objections to your point of view.

TEACHING TIP: Help students consider the value of using fair and equitable language when engaging in politically charged, controversial issues. In groups, have students make a list of the words and phrases the proponents of each of side of this issue might find offensive or that include connotations that might undermine the effectiveness of a particular argument. Discuss these lists and help students to see the importance of using such diction with caution.

HIGH SCHOOL

Prompt 7 The Value of Art

Writing Situation

American painter and teacher Robert Henri wrote, “Art cannot be separated from life. It is the expression of the greatest need of which life is capable, and we value art not because of the skilled product, but because of its revelation of a life’s experience.” Consider the value of art as a context for such ideas as inspiration, self-expression, recreation, reflection, and/or critical thinking in the lives of human beings.

Directions for Writing

Write an essay for publication in a popular magazine in which you take a position on the value of art in life and persuade adults to adopt your point of view. Help your audience to understand the logic of your position by providing convincing reasons and specific examples to support your viewpoint and by addressing possible objections to your point of view.

TEACHING TIP: Help students to brainstorm ideas for this essay as a class by listing potential areas of their lives to which this quotation might apply. Facilitate discussion of these ideas and the meaning of the quotation as a whole.

TEACHING TIP: Remind students that knowledge of Henri, his work, or his background is not necessary to respond to this prompt. Although he is identified as the source, the prompt asks the student to write about the ideas contained in the quotation, not about Henri.

HIGH SCHOOL

Prompt 8 The Value of Homework

Writing Situation

Educators often discuss the positive and negative effects homework has on students. For example, some believe that homework is positive because it allows students to practice the skills and master the content presented during the school day. However, others claim that homework is negative because it takes time away from students engaging in other important activities outside of school. Consider these opinions and the variety of other opinions on this issue.

Directions for Writing

Write an essay in which you take a position on the positive or negative effects of homework and persuade a group of school principals to adopt your point of view. Help your readers to understand the logic of your viewpoint by providing convincing reasons and specific examples to support your position and by addressing possible objections to your point of view.

TEACHING TIP: Help students to brainstorm potential methods of structuring their ideas into paragraphs for this essay and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each method.

HIGH SCHOOL

Prompt 9 The Value of Modern Popular Music

Writing Situation

American philosopher and essayist Allan Bloom criticizes modern popular music, writing that it “encourages passions and provides models that have no relation to any life young people who go to universities can possibly lead.” Consider the positive and negative value of modern popular music as a source for inspiration, motivation, self-expression, reflection, and/or critical thinking in the lives of young people.

Directions for Writing

Write an essay for publication in a popular magazine in which you take a position on the value of modern popular music in life and persuade adults to adopt your point of view. Help your audience to understand the logic of your position by providing convincing reasons and specific examples to support your viewpoint and by addressing possible objections to your point of view.

TEACHING TIP: Discuss with students the emotionally charged nature of this prompt. Help students avoid writing an essay that contains only emotional appeals and no appeals to logic or reason. Brainstorm as a class some of the possible logical appeals that might be incorporated into such an essay.

TEACHING TIP: Remind students that knowledge of Bloom, his work, or his background is not necessary to respond to this prompt. Although he is identified as the source, the prompt asks the student to write about the ideas contained in the quotation, not about Bloom.

HIGH SCHOOL

Prompt 10 The Value of Nature

Writing Situation

Nineteenth century British naturalist Richard Jeffries commented on the relationship between humans and nature, writing, “There is nothing human in nature. The earth, though loved so dearly, would let me perish on the ground... the great sun, of whose company I have been so fond, would merely burn on and make no motion to assist me.” Consider the relationship between humans and nature, possibly revolving around such ideas as survival, inspiration, and/or recreation, and determine if you believe that relationship is positive, negative, or indifferent.

Directions for Writing

Write an essay for publication in a popular magazine in which you take a position on the relationship between humans and nature. Help your readers to understand the logic of your position by providing convincing reasons and specific examples to support your viewpoint and by addressing possible objections to your point of view.

TEACHING TIP: Facilitate a “Question the quotation” discussion. Have students write down and discuss five to ten questions they have about the quotation. Such questions might include, *Why is there nothing human in nature? Why does nature appear so indifferent to human life? Why do many humans have such affection for something that takes no interest in them?*

TEACHING TIP: Remind students that knowledge of Jeffries, his work, or his background is not necessary to respond to this prompt. Although he is identified as the source, the prompt asks the student to write about the ideas contained in the quotation, not about Jeffries.

HIGH SCHOOL

Prompt 11 The Value of On-line Courses

Writing Situation

Educators often discuss the value of on-line courses. For example, some believe that participating in an on-line course helps to prepare students for the kind of technology and communication they will encounter in their futures. However, others claim that on-line courses limit a student’s real-world discussion opportunities and face-to-face interaction with peers, thereby limiting learning. Consider these opinions and the variety of other opinions on this issue.

Directions for Writing

Write an essay in which you persuade a group of school administrators to embrace your position on the value of on-line courses. Help your audience to understand the logic of your viewpoint by providing convincing reasons and specific examples to support your position and by addressing possible objections to your point of view.

TEACHING TIP: Help students explore the characteristics of the particular audience mentioned in this prompt—a group of school administrators—by engaging them in a series of discussion questions. For example, *What type of people desire to be school administrators? What kind of backgrounds and professional experiences might they share in common? What do school administrators value? What motivates school administrators?* etc. After discussing such questions, help students apply this information to the planning of their essays by discussing how they might tailor their appeals to this specific audience.

HIGH SCHOOL

Prompt 12 The Value of Discipline and Punishment

Writing Situation

Scottish historian and essayist Thomas Carlyle commented on the idea of self-discipline, writing, “No iron chain, no outward force of any kind, can ever compel

the soul of a person to believe or disbelieve.” Consider the value of self-discipline in such areas as school, work, personal faith, and/or personal relationships in the lives of human beings.

Directions for Writing

Write an essay for publication in a popular magazine in which you take a position on the importance of discipline and punishment. Help readers to understand the logic of your position by providing convincing reasons and specific examples to support your viewpoint and by addressing possible objections to your point of view.

TEACHING TIP: Have students write a paraphrase of Carlyle’s quotation and share their paraphrases in class. Help students better understand the quotation by identifying the most effective paraphrases, by calling attention to varieties of interpretations, and by highlighting definitions of key words.

TEACHING TIP: Remind students that knowledge of Carlyle, his work, or his background is not necessary to respond to this prompt. Although he is identified as the source, the prompt asks the student to write about the ideas contained in the quotation, not about Carlyle.