

## Prewriting Analyzing an Expository Prompt

Most writing tests ask you to respond to a prompt. A prompt is a set of directions that tells you what to write. It's crucial for you to analyze the prompt carefully so that you write a response that fits the requirements of the test. When you analyze a prompt, answer the following **STRAP questions**:

- Subject:** What topic (school schedule, homework policy, healthy living, friendships) should I write about?
- Type:** What form (essay, letter, announcement, report, article) of writing should I create?
- Role:** What position (student, community member, son or daughter, friend) should I assume as writer?
- Audience:** Who (classmates, teacher, principal, parents, city council) is the intended reader?
- Purpose:** What is the goal (inform, explain, evaluate) of my writing?

The following key words are often found in **expository** prompts: *inform, explain, analyze, compare and contrast, outline, and define*.

### Try It!

Analyze these prompts by using the STRAP questions.

1. The principal has asked for student essays for next year's "Freshman Survival Guide." Write an article that compares and contrasts eighth grade with ninth grade. Focus on providing information to help new freshmen adjust to ninth grade.
2. Your school newspaper is printing a series of articles about heroes and heroines. Write about someone who is a hero or heroine to you. That person may be someone you know or someone you have read about. Explain why you believe this person is heroic.
3. "That's what friends are for." Most people know the word "friend," but everyone has a different idea of what makes a friend. Define the word "friend" and include clear examples.

### Tip

Some prompts do not contain key words for every STRAP question. You will have to use your best judgment to answer these questions.

## Planning Your Response

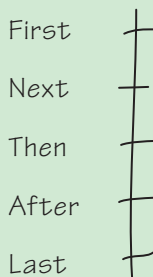
Once you have answered the STRAP questions, you should quickly plan your response. The following graphic organizers can help.

### Graphic Organizers

#### Quick List (Any Essay)

1. First Point
  - Detail 1
  - Detail 2
2. Second Point
  - Detail 1
  - Detail 2
3. Third Point
  - Detail 1
  - Detail 2

#### Time Line (How-To/Process)

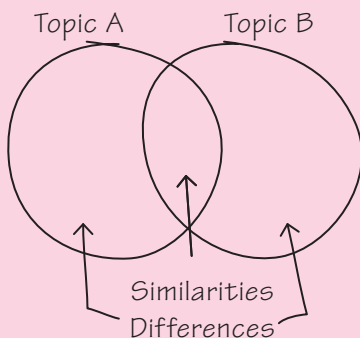


#### T-Chart (Two-Part Essay)

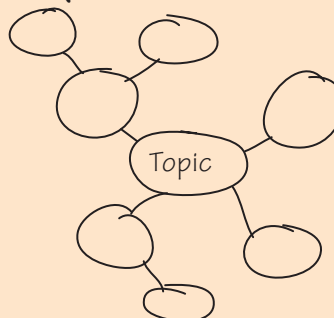
Topic:

Part A	Part B
*	*
*	*
*	*
*	*

#### Venn Diagram (Compare-Contrast)



#### Cluster (Definition/Classification)



**Reread the expository prompts on page 194.** Choose one prompt and use one of the graphic organizers above to quickly organize a response to the prompt.

### Tip

Always allow time for prewriting and for revising and editing. For example, with 45 minutes to respond to a prompt, use 5 to 10 minutes to analyze the prompt and plan your response, 30 to 35 minutes for your writing, and the last 5 minutes for revising and editing.

## Writing Responding to a Prompt

After answering the STRAP questions and using a graphic organizer to plan your response, it's time to begin writing. Make sure to use a tone and level of language appropriate to your topic and to your audience. Review the sample prompt and response that follow.

### Sample Expository Prompt

*What could be done to make your community better? Could something be done to make it safer? Could there be more opportunities for young people? In an essay, explain one idea that you have to improve your community.*

### Try It!

Answer the STRAP questions for this prompt. Remember that answering these questions will help you understand the prompt and form your response. (See page [194](#).)

### Response

#### Beginning

The beginning paragraph states the thesis (underlined).

#### Make Way for Walking and Biking

To drive from one end of New London to the other takes 15 minutes. On the north end of town, there is a small shopping mall, plus a new grocery store. The downtown, in the middle of New London, contains a few shops, restaurants, and the Crown Movie Theater. A medical clinic, another grocery store, and a hardware store anchor the south end of town. What makes New London inconvenient is getting from one shopping area to another—when not driving a car. New London would be a better community if it were more accessible for pedestrians and cyclists.

Walking is difficult because there are very few continuous sidewalks. Some sidewalks end halfway down

a block. In order to continue, pedestrians have to walk across front lawns until they come across more sidewalk. If it's wet or muddy, they have to walk in the street. As silly as it sounds, there are parts of town with only one or two small sections of sidewalk on some blocks. If all homeowners were required to have sidewalks, New London would be a safer place to walk.

**Middle**

Each middle paragraph covers one main point.

Riding a bike is not any safer than walking. The streets in New London are very narrow, and many people park their cars on the street. Riding a bike through this obstacle course can be dangerous. Even experienced cyclists have been known to clip a parked car and crash. It would be impractical to include a bike lane because the streets are so narrow. But many cities have made old railroad paths into bike trails. This could work in New London because of the unused railroad tracks running through town.

**Ending**

The ending explains the importance of the topic.

A lot has been said about the value of cutting back on driving to save energy. That would certainly be possible if people didn't have to drive everywhere in New London. Walking or biking would also give some New Londoners more opportunity to get some exercise. Continuous sidewalks and a bike path would give them different ways to get around town and clearly make the community a better place to live.



**Practice responding to an expository prompt.** Review the prompt you chose from page 194, reminding yourself of the STRAP questions and the graphic organizer you have created. Then write a response to the prompt in the amount of time your teacher gives you.

## Revising Improving Your Response

Most writing tests allow you to make corrections to improve your work, though you should find out ahead of time how many changes are allowed. Always make changes and corrections as neatly as possible. If the test allows revising and editing, use the STRAP questions to guide your changes.

**Subject:** Does my response focus on the topic in the prompt? Do the main points in my response support the thesis?

**Type:** Have I followed the correct form (*essay, letter, article*)?

**Role:** Have I assumed the position indicated in the prompt?

**Audience:** Have I used the right level of language for my audience?

**Purpose:** Does my writing accomplish the goal set forth in the prompt?



**Improve your work.** Reread your response, asking yourself the STRAP questions above. Make neat changes in the time your teacher allows.

## Editing Checking Your Response

Check your response for punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar. You don't want any careless errors that confuse the reader.

### Conventions

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Have I used end punctuation for every sentence?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Have I capitalized all proper nouns and first words of sentences?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Have I checked my spelling?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Have I made sure my subjects and verbs agree?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Have I used the right word (*there, they're, their*)?



**Check your conventions.** Review your response for punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar. Make neat corrections in the time your teacher allows.

“Grammar is an ever-evolving set of rules for using words in ways that we can all agree on.”

—Patricia T. O’Conner

## Expository Writing on Tests

Use the following tips as a guide whenever you respond to an expository writing prompt.

### Before you write . . .

- **Understand the prompt.**

Use the STRAP questions listed on page 194.

Remember that an expository prompt asks you to *explain*.

- **Plan your time wisely.**

Spend several minutes making notes and planning before starting to write. Use the last few minutes to read over what you have written.

### As you write . . .

- **Decide on a focus or thesis for your essay.**

Keep your main idea or purpose in mind as you write.

- **Be selective.**

Use examples and explanations that directly support your focus.

- **End in a meaningful way.**

Remind the reader about the importance of the topic.

### After you've written a first draft . . .

- **Check for completeness.**

Use the STRAP questions on page 198 to revise your work.

- **Check for correctness.**

Check for errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar.



**Plan and write a response.** Analyze one of the prompts below using the STRAP questions. Then plan and write a response. Complete your work within the time your teacher gives you.

### Expository Prompts

- Explain why it is good for a person to play a competitive sport, participate in musical performances, or belong to a school organization.
- Explain how to build something or how to do something. Give your reader enough information to actually do what you are explaining.

## Persuasive Writing

# Writing a Position Essay

Don't just sit there; take a stand! That's the position former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher took on the topic of debate. She said, "I love argument; I love debate. I don't expect anyone just to sit there and agree with me; that's not their job."

Whether you are a famous politician or a student, you are sure to encounter topics that you feel very strongly about—topics worth debating. Maybe the school board wants to cut the sports budget at your school, or perhaps your city plans to create a landfill near your home. Issues like these are bound to cause differences of opinion in your community and even among your family and friends! What will you do? Will you sit there, or will you take a stand?

Persuasive writing helps you address a difference of opinion. By stating an opinion and defending it, you can convince others to agree with you. In this chapter, you will write a position essay about a local controversy in your community.

### Writing Guidelines

**Subject:** A local controversy in your community

**Form:** Position essay

**Purpose:** To defend a position

**Audience:** Classmates and community members

"Understanding is a two-way street."

—Eleanor Roosevelt



## Persuasive Writing Warm-Up: Using Support

When you write a persuasive paragraph or essay, it's important to include plenty of effective supporting details. You can include, among other things, facts, statistics, quotations from experts, and personal experiences. (See pages 569–570 for additional types of details.)

The notebook page below shows supporting details that one student collected to support her opinion about soft-drink machines in schools.

### Details for Persuasive Paragraph

Ban “Liquid Candy” in School	
<b>personal experience</b>	Some of my friends drink three or four sodas per day in school.
<b>statistics</b>	According to the USDA, teens 25 years ago drank almost twice as much milk as soda pop. Today they drink twice as much soda pop as milk.
<b>facts</b>	The USDA recommends only 40 grams of refined sugar for the entire day.
<b>quotation</b>	“The explosion of candy and soda machines in public schools is a relatively new phenomenon closely paralleling the rise in childhood obesity.” —WebMD

### Try It!

On your own paper, express an opinion about an important topic in your school. Then find at least three different types of details to support your opinion. Use the information above as a guide.



## Writing a Persuasive Paragraph

A persuasive paragraph expresses an opinion about a specific topic and contains effective evidence and details to support the opinion. A persuasive paragraph has three main parts:

- The **topic sentence** states the opinion.
- The **body sentences** support the opinion.
- The **closing sentence** revisits the opinion.

### Persuasive Paragraph

In the following persuasive paragraph, the student writer expresses her opinion about soda vending machines in her school. She uses all four types of details that she collected on page 202.

#### Ban “Liquid Candy” in Our School

The soda machines should be removed from Brooktown Central High School because soft drinks are partly to blame for growing health problems. The average can of soda contains about 40 grams (10 teaspoons) of sugar, and many students at BCHS drink several cans every day. This might not seem like a big problem until an individual considers that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommends an individual consume a maximum of 40 grams of refined sugar for the entire day! The USDA’s figures also show that 25 years ago teens drank nearly twice as much milk as soda pop; today they drink twice as much pop as milk. Doctors are seeing the effects of this trend. An article on WebMD reports, “The explosion of candy and soda machines in public schools is a relatively new phenomenon closely paralleling the rise in childhood obesity.” Drinking too much soda costs more than money; it can also cost a student his or her health. Schools should not encourage students to buy something that’s not good for them.

The **topic sentence** states an opinion (underlined).

The **body sentences** support the opinion.

The **closing sentence** reflects on the opinion.



**Write a persuasive paragraph.** Review the three parts of a paragraph (top of page) and what they do. Then present your opinion and details from page 202 in a persuasive paragraph about a school-related topic.

## Understanding Your Goal

Your goal in this chapter is to write a well-organized persuasive essay that defends a position. The traits listed in the chart below will help you plan and write your essay. The rubric for persuasive writing on pages 234–235 will also guide you.



### Traits of Persuasive Writing

#### ■ Ideas

Use specific reasons to defend a clear position on a controversial issue in your community.

#### ■ Organization

Create a beginning that states your position, a middle that provides support and answers an objection, and an ending that restates your position.

#### ■ Voice

Use a persuasive voice that is appropriate for your topic and audience.

#### ■ Word Choice

Choose fair and precise words to state and defend your position.

#### ■ Sentence Fluency

Write clear, complete sentences with varied beginnings.

#### ■ Conventions

Check your writing for errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar.



**Literature Connections:** You will encounter persuasion in all types of media—from TV commercials advertising the latest clothing fad to works of literature with lasting appeal. For example, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous “I Have a Dream Speech,” which persuaded people to support civil rights legislation in the 1960s, continues to inspire people today.

## Position Essay

A position essay clearly states where you stand on an issue. By stating and defending your position, you may be able to convince others to agree with you. In this sample essay, the student writer defends his position on keeping open a local home for mentally challenged adults.

### Beginning

The beginning introduces the topic and states the position (underlined).

### Save Hillhouse

Hillhouse is the big, old house on the hilltop near Beecher and Main Streets. It is a home for mentally challenged adults. Yesterday the Journal Express printed an article about closing Hillhouse. It said that Hillhouse needs more than \$100,000 worth of repairs, and there isn't enough money available to get them done. The city wants to close Hillhouse and tear the building down. Is closing it the best way to solve the problem? No. The best solution is to pull together as a community and keep Hillhouse open.

First, keeping Hillhouse open is very important to the people who live and work there. If Hillhouse shuts down, twenty-six residents will need to find new homes, and seven staff members will lose their jobs. Half of the adults at Hillhouse have lived there for five years or more. For some, it's the only place they have lived since leaving their parents' homes. One resident is named John. He is 34 and has been at Hillhouse since he was 18. John has no family, and he thinks of himself as the official caretaker. He is always the first one to welcome a new resident and to make sure that he or she feels like a part of the Hillhouse family. John says that he would make the repairs by himself, if he knew how. Moving from Hillhouse would mean that people like John would have to adjust not only to a new home but to new friends, new caretakers, a new neighborhood, and maybe even a new city!

### Middle

The first middle paragraph supports the writer's position with statistics and a personal experience.

A second reason to keep Hillhouse open is the house itself. Hillhouse was built in 1870, just five years after the Civil War ended. It has had many well-known local owners, and some people in the community want it declared a historical landmark. If the building was made a landmark, then the city could not close it down. As a landmark, it might even be eligible to get some government money to fix it up. The local historical society is willing to work with

The second middle paragraph provides interesting facts.

the Heritage Museum to try to get the Hillhouse building on the National Register of Historical Places. President William Howard Taft's stepbrother, Charles Phelps Taft, lived in the house at the turn of the twentieth century. Also, several early mayors have lived there.

Lastly, the best reason for keeping Hillhouse open is to show that the community cares for its people. If everyone gets together and conducts fund-raisers, organizes volunteer efforts, and donates time and money, it will show that this city is a great place to live and that the citizens look out for each other. Businesses can step up and donate materials, and individuals can donate time to help fix things up. Certainly, the people of Hillhouse would want to help if needed. The city needs to get busy and help them with what they need.

Some people think that the residents of Hillhouse should move to Hawthorn Manor, which is more like a nursing home. These people don't understand that the residents don't need daily nursing care. They can do a lot by themselves. They are somewhat independent and want keep their "family" together. Tearing down the house and breaking apart that special family can't be a good thing.

Everyone needs to pull together as a community and keep Hillhouse open. Community members can all find ways to help with the repairs so that the residents won't need to move, and the staff won't lose their jobs. Maybe Hillhouse can stay open if it is declared a historical landmark. Someday soon it would be nice to read an article in the *Journal Express* about the amazing way the community solved the Hillhouse problem.

The third middle paragraph appeals to a sense of community.

The last middle paragraph defends the position against an important objection.

**Ending**  
The ending restates the writer's position.



**Respond to the reading.** Answer the following questions about the sample essay.

**Ideas** (1) What three reasons support the writer's position?

**Organization** (2) What method of organization does the writer use (time order, order of importance, order of location)? (3) Which paragraph answers an objection?

**Voice & Word Choice** (4) Does the writer sound knowledgeable and persuasive? Explain.

## Prewriting



Prewriting for a position essay involves selecting a controversial issue in your community, gathering reasons and details to support a position on that issue, and organizing your ideas. Careful prewriting makes persuasive writing easier and more effective.

### Keys to Effective Prewriting

1. Choose a controversial local issue in your community. Decide what your position is.
2. Write a clear position statement to guide your writing.
3. Gather the best reasons and details to support your position. Rank the reasons —1, 2, 3— from least important to most important.
4. Select an important objection that you can address.



## Prewriting Selecting a Controversy

A controversy happens when there is a disagreement about an important issue. To find a writing topic, student writer Keefe Collum answered two key questions about local controversies in his community. He put an asterisk next to the controversy that he wanted to write about.

### List of Local Controversies

*In the past two weeks, what local controversies have been covered most often on the front page of our local newspaper?*

- *the upcoming school referendum*
- *rerouting Highway C away from Sanderville Woods \**
- *building a fire station on the far north side of town*
- *the need for more security at local sports events*

*What local controversies have we discussed in class recently?*

- *the upcoming school referendum*
- *the city council's decision to make recycling mandatory*
- *the accuracy of bacteria testing at New Eastland Beach*



**List controversies.** On your own paper, answer the two key questions above. Try to come up with at least three topics for each question. Then choose one controversy that you feel strongly about. Write a sentence that states your position and explain the reason for your choice.

Highway C should be moved away from Sanderville Woods. I picked this issue because I've started to become really interested in wildlife and their habitats. Many birds and animals live in that area, but the highway puts them in great danger. I would like to see our community consider the wildlife for a change when it decides to do something.

### Focus on the Traits

**Ideas** Choose an issue that you can defend with several clear, convincing reasons. The more knowledge you have about your topic, the easier it will be for you to defend your position.

## Gathering Reasons to Support Your Position

After you have stated your position, you need to gather reasons to support it. Making a “why” chart helped Keefe gather reasons that supported his position.

### “Why” Chart

Why should Highway C be moved away from Sanderville Woods?		
because ②	Deer are getting hit by cars.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase in deer population</li> <li>• dead deer on highway</li> <li>• accidents injure people</li> </ul>
because ③	Birds and animals are being driven away by traffic noise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sandhill cranes making a comeback in our state</li> <li>• cranes nesting near the woods</li> <li>• noise and exhaust fumes drive cranes away</li> </ul>
because ①	People who live near the woods oppose commercial development and noise in the area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• built homes near the woods to get away from noise of the city</li> </ul>



**Create a “why” chart.** Create your own chart. At the top of the chart, write your position in the form of a “why” question. In the boxes below it, write three reasons that answer the question. Then add details about each reason.

### Focus on the Traits

**Organization** Persuasive essays are often organized by order of importance. After you have finished your chart, rank your reasons—1, 2, 3—from least important to most important.

## Prewriting Gathering Objections

Once you have a solid list of reasons that support your position, you should anticipate any arguments that the reader might have. If your position is that something *should* be done, come up with reasons someone might argue that it *should not* be done. By planning how to answer objections, you can make your position even stronger.

### Identifying Objections

Here are several ways to identify objections.

- Read newspaper articles and listen to local news reports to see how these sources present different sides of an issue.
- Think about debates you've had about the issue. Try to recall opposing positions and reasons.
- Ask the opinions of your friends and family. Try to debate positions that differ from yours.

Keefe listed the following objections to his argument.

County Highway C is a scenic drive.

County Highway C has become a popular alternate route to Taborville.

Moving the highway will cost a lot of money.\*



**Gather objections.** Use the strategies above to identify and list three objections to your position. Put an asterisk next to the strongest objection.

### Countering an Objection

Countering an objection is simply arguing against it. Keefe counters the strongest objection in three ways.

*Moving the highway will cost a lot of money.*

1. The woods represents years of history and a vital ecosystem.
2. No one can put a price tag on natural resources.
3. As the city expands, this peaceful place should be saved for future generations.



**Counter an important objection.** Write down the strongest objection to your argument. Try to counter it in two or three ways.



## Writing



Now that you have planned your essay, you are ready to get your ideas on paper.

### Keys to Effective Writing

1. *Get all your ideas on paper in your first draft.*
2. *Write on every other line to allow room for changes.*
3. *Introduce the controversy and state your position in the first paragraph.*
4. *In the middle paragraphs, use specific reasons and details to support your position. Also address an important objection.*
5. *In the ending, restate your position and summarize your support.*



## Writing Getting the Big Picture

As you prepare to write your first draft, study the following graphic to see how the parts of your essay should fit together. (The examples are from the student essay on pages [213–216](#).)

### Beginning

The **beginning** introduces the controversial issue and states the writer's position.

#### Position Statement

Highway C should be rerouted because Sanderville Woods is an irreplaceable community resource.

### Middle

The **middle** paragraphs support the writer's position.

#### Topic Sentences

First of all, relocating Highway C would restore peace and quiet to area neighborhoods.

Another reason for moving the highway away from the woods is to avoid the increasing deer population.

The best reason for relocating Highway C is that its traffic disrupts the habitat of birds and wildlife.

People who oppose rerouting Highway C point out how much it will cost.

The **last middle** paragraph answers an important objection.

### Ending

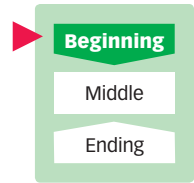
The **ending** sums up your position and gives the reader something to think about.

#### Closing Sentence

Relocate Highway C and save Sanderville Woods before it's too late.

## Starting Your Essay

The beginning paragraph of your essay should get the reader's attention, introduce the topic, and state your position.



- **Begin with a powerful lead sentence.**

Get the reader's attention in the first sentence with a strong opening idea.

*Don't let Sanderville Woods lose its natural beauty and serenity.*

- **Provide important background information.**

Be honest, creative, and even dramatic as you introduce the controversy.

*The quiet woodland paths, ponds, and streams are being invaded by the roar of traffic and the smell of diesel fuel along that stretch of Highway C.*

- **Build up to your position statement.**

Your position statement is the thesis statement for your entire essay. All of the sentences in the beginning paragraph should lead up to your position statement.

*Last week, Calvin County proposed solving the problem by rerouting Highway C away from the woods. . . .*

## Beginning Paragraph

The controversy is introduced.

The writer's position is stated (underlined).

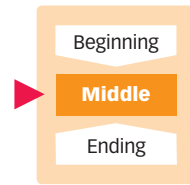
Sanderville Woods with its natural beauty and serenity is in trouble. The quiet woodland paths, ponds, and streams are being invaded by the roar of traffic and the smell of diesel fuel along that stretch of Highway C. Last week, Calvin County proposed solving the problem by rerouting Highway C away from the woods. This idea has become a heated issue. In a poll taken by the Pine Valley Times, 67 percent of those responding agreed with the county's proposal. Even more support is needed. Highway C should be rerouted because Sanderville Woods is an irreplaceable community resource.



**Write an opening.** Write the beginning paragraph of your essay. Does it engage the reader? If not, write another version or two. Choose the one that you like best.

## Writing Developing the Middle Part

Begin each middle paragraph in your essay with a topic sentence and add details that support it. Refer to your “why” chart (page 209) for ideas for this part of your essay. Remember to address a significant objection in your last middle paragraph.



## Using Transitions

Transitions will help you show order of importance in your paragraphs. The following chart includes transitions that could connect your first three middle paragraphs.

Paragraph 1	Paragraph 2	Paragraph 3
First of all,	→ Another reason . . .	→ The best reason . . .
To begin,	→ Also	→ Finally,
To start with,	→ In addition,	→ Most importantly,

## Middle Paragraphs

A topic sentence (underlined) introduces each middle paragraph.

First of all, relocating Highway C would restore peace and quiet to area neighborhoods. Before Highway C became a busy road, many people built homes near Sanderville Woods. They wanted a quiet woodland setting where they could relax and enjoy nature. They didn't bargain for a noisy highway.

Another reason for moving the highway away from the woods is to avoid the increasing deer population. Why is that important? The number of deer being hit on the highway has increased 30 percent since last year. Hitting a deer can cause a serious accident. Protecting the lives of people as well as animals is an important reason for relocating the highway.

The middle paragraphs build to the most important reason.

The best reason for relocating Highway C is that its traffic disrupts the habitat of birds and wildlife. For example, the marsh at the edge of Sanderville Woods has become a habitat for sandhill cranes. Until recently,

sandhill cranes had nearly disappeared in our state. Now they are making a comeback. They nest near Sanderville Woods. The noise and traffic on Highway C may drive them away. Other wild animals, like raccoons and foxes, may be forced to leave the area, too.

The last middle paragraph counters an objection.

People who oppose rerouting Highway C point out how much it will cost. However, no one can put a price tag on natural resources. Sanderville Woods is a gold mine of local history and ecology. In addition, it is a popular place for quiet sports like hiking, snowshoeing, bird-watching, and so on. Many school children enjoy science field trips to Sanderville Woods. It also provides a peaceful habitat for wildlife. This valuable resource should be preserved for future generations.



**Write your middle paragraphs.** Construct middle paragraphs that support your position. Make sure to organize your support according to order of importance—from least important to most important reason.

## Tip

- **Use transitions** between paragraphs to show order of importance.
- **Include clear reasons** and avoid sounding too emotional.
- **Support your reasons** with facts, statistics, quotations from experts, and personal anecdotes.
- **Respond to a significant objection** by countering it in a thoughtful, reasonable way.



## Writing Ending Your Essay

At this point, you have stated your position, supported it with solid reasons, and responded to an objection. Now you are ready to write your ending paragraph. Follow these guidelines.

- Revisit your position and add a final insight.
- Sum up the main reasons that support your position.
- Sum up your response to the objection.
- Leave the reader with a final thought.

Beginning

Middle

Ending

### Ending Paragraphs

The position is restated.

The paragraph sums up support points and revisits the response to the objection.

The reader is left with a final thought.

Clearly, Highway C should be moved away from Sanderville Woods. Relocating the highway would restore peace and quiet to area neighborhoods, decrease the number of deer being hit by cars, and, most importantly, help preserve vital wildlife habitat. If current development continues along Highway C, it will become an extended strip mall. From the perspective of long-term value, the cost of rerouting a highway seems smaller than what it would take to re-create a thriving nature preserve complete with marshes and woodlands. Relocate Highway C and save Sanderville Woods before it's too late.



**Write your ending and form a complete first draft.** Write the final paragraph of your essay. Restate your position and summarize your reasons. Leave the reader with something new to think about. Then prepare a copy of your entire essay. Write on every other line if you write by hand, or double-space if you use a computer. This will give you room for revising.

### Tip

If you have followed the traditional persuasive essay structure, your first draft should have turned out quite well. That structure follows:

- Introduce the topic and state your opinion.
- Support your opinion.
- Answer an objection.
- Wrap up your argument.

## Revising



When you revise, you may add or delete details, rearrange parts of your writing, and work on improving your voice. You should also check your word choice and refine your sentences.

### Keys to Effective Revising

1. Read your *essay* aloud and decide if it sounds convincing.
2. Make sure you have clearly stated your position.
3. Check your paragraphs to make sure that they contain convincing support.
4. Work on your writer's voice so it sounds informed and confident.
5. Check your writing for strong words and varied sentences.
6. Use the editing and proofreading marks found inside the back cover of this book.



## Revising for Ideas

**6** My position is very well defended and compels the reader to act.



**5** My position is supported with logical reasons, and I respond to an important objection.



**4** Most of my reasons support my position. I respond to an objection.



When you revise for *ideas*, make sure the reasons you use are accurate and logical. Also make sure that you have adequately supported your opinion. The rubric strip above can guide you.

### How can I avoid errors in logic?

You can avoid errors in logic by eliminating statements that are hard to support. Here are some types of logic errors you should remove from your writing.

- **Statements that jump to a conclusion**

**If County Highway C isn't rerouted, Sanderville Woods will be replaced by a strip mall.**

This statement is hard to support because you cannot prove that the woods will become a strip mall.

- **Exaggerations**

**No one will visit Sanderville Woods if Highway C stays where it is.**

To support this statement you must prove that *no one* will visit Sanderville Woods.

### Exercise

Identify at least two logic errors in the paragraph below. Explain why they are errors.

- 1 All kids should have cell phones. A cell phone is handy for calling a
- 2 family member for a ride or just making plans with a friend. Cell phones
- 3 can also be safety devices in an emergency. With cell phones, people never
- 4 have to worry about anything. They can get anything they need.



**Check for logic errors.** Read the body of your essay. Look for exaggerations and statements that jump to a conclusion. Revise any errors that you find.



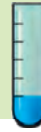
**3** I need more supporting reasons and a more convincing response to an objection.



**2** I need to rethink my position from start to finish.



**1** I need to learn how to defend a position.



## Have I included adequate support for my opinion?

You have effectively supported your opinion if you include clear, provable details. The following checklist can help you decide how well you have supported your opinion.

- \_\_\_\_\_ **1.** Do you strongly believe in the opinion that you are developing?
- \_\_\_\_\_ **2.** Do you include convincing supporting details? Name the different types of details that you used.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **3.** Do you address an important objection? What other objections are there? How important are they?



Revise

**Check your essay.** Answer the questions in the checklist above. Continue to work with those parts that you were not able to answer with a “yes.”

### Ideas

A new detail adds support to the topic sentence.

An exaggeration is replaced by a statistic.

Sanderville Woods with its natural beauty and serenity is in trouble. The quiet woodland paths, ponds, and streams are being invaded by the roar of traffic <sup>and the smell of diesel fuel</sup> along that stretch of Highway C. Last week, Calvin County proposed solving the problem by rerouting Highway C away from the woods.

This idea has become a heated issue. In a poll taken by the Pine Valley Times, <sup>67 percent</sup> ~~almost all~~ of those responding agreed with . . .

## Revising for Organization

**6** All of the parts of my essay work together to build a thoughtful, convincing position.



**5** My overall organization is clear, and my reasons are arranged effectively.



**4** Most parts of my essay are organized well except for one part.



When you revise for *organization*, you check the structure of your essay. Be sure that your paragraphs are connected in a logical way and your reasons are arranged by order of importance. The rubric strip above can be used as a guide.

### Is my essay unified?

Your essay is unified if all of the parts work together. If your essay doesn't have unity, the reader won't be able to follow your argument. The following checklist will help you evaluate the unity in your essay.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Does my first paragraph include my position statement?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Does the topic sentence of each middle paragraph give a key reason in support of the position statement?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Do all of the sentences in each paragraph support the topic sentence?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Does my final paragraph sum up my position?

### How can I improve unity with transitions?

You can improve unity in your essay by using transitions to tie ideas together between sentences and between paragraphs.

#### Exercise

Improve the paragraph below by using transitions between sentences or combining some sentences. For a list of transitions, see pages **592–593**.

A poll shows that 80 percent of students support building a skate park next to North Beach. Some area residents have safety concerns. The park will have a boundary fence. Some residents think skaters might skate outside the fence and get hurt. Residents think the skate park will bring gangs to the beach.



**Check for unity.** Revise your essay using the checklist above as a guide. Also check your essay for effective use of transitions.

**3** I need to reorganize the middle part of my essay from least important reason to most important.



**2** I need to include a beginning, a middle, and an ending in my essay.



**1** I need to learn how to organize a persuasive essay.



## Do I present my reasons in the best order?

The reasons in your essay are in the best order if they are presented according to order of importance. Check for order of importance by using the checklist below.

- \_\_\_\_\_ **1.** Does the topic sentence of my first middle paragraph address my least important supporting reason?
- \_\_\_\_\_ **2.** Does the topic sentence of my second middle paragraph address the next important reason?
- \_\_\_\_\_ **3.** Does the topic sentence of my third middle paragraph address the most important reason?

Position statement

Least Important Reason

Next Important Reason

Most Important Reason

Position Summary



Revise

**Check the organization of your essay.** Make sure you have built your argument from the least important to the most important supporting reason. Rearrange any paragraphs that are out of place.

### Organization

A transition is changed to improve unity.

A sentence that does not support the topic sentence is removed.

*The best*  
~~Another~~ reason for relocating Highway C is that its traffic disrupts the habitat of birds and wildlife. For example, the marsh at the edge of Sanderville Woods has become a habitat for sandhill cranes. ~~Each year there is a crane count.~~ Until recently, sandhill cranes had nearly disappeared in our state. Now they are slowly making a comeback. They nest near Sanderville Woods. The noise and traffic on Highway C may drive them away. . . .

## Revising for Voice

**6** My knowledgeable voice creates total confidence in my position.



**5** My voice is persuasive and respects my audience. I balance facts and feelings.



**4** My voice respects my audience, but I need to sound more persuasive and knowledgeable.



When you check for *voice*, make sure that you have focused primarily on facts rather than personal feelings in your essay. A knowledgeable-sounding voice will connect with your reader. The rubric strip above will guide your revising.

### Have I used a knowledgeable-sounding voice?

You have used a knowledgeable-sounding voice if you focus primarily on factual information in your essay. (Persuasive writing succeeds when it contains reliable facts and details that support the main position.) On the other hand, if you focus too heavily on your personal feelings, your voice will sound overly emotional, impulsive, and unconvincing.

Notice the difference between the two passages below. In the first one, the writer sounds too emotional. There is nothing thoughtful or convincing about his voice. In the second passage, the writer effectively balances facts with personal feelings. As a result, he sounds much more convincing.

#### Overly Emotional Voice

The new rules at the video arcade are the worst. The manager hates kids. He hired a security guard to stand at the door. That makes kids feel like they are being watched all the time. The arcade used to be fun, but now it feels like a prison.

#### Knowledgeable-Sounding Voice

The video arcade has upgraded its security. The manager became concerned about fights in the arcade, so he hired a security guard. Now, going to the arcade isn't as much fun as it used to be. According to Mike Kuhn, an arcade user, "The security guard creates . . ."



**Check your dialogue.** As you review your essay, make sure that you sound knowledgeable and thoughtful rather than too emotional. Revise accordingly for voice.

**3** My voice has a few problems sounding respectful and knowledgeable.



**2** My voice may not respect my audience, and I sound too emotional and unconvincing.



**1** I need to learn how to create a respectful, knowledgeable voice.



## Do I connect with my audience?

You connect with your audience if, among other things, you address any objections in a respectful way. Your audience may include people who have not made up their minds about the issue, as well as people who feel differently about it. Dealing with an objection in a respectful way will make you sound more convincing. In the following paragraph, the writer addresses an objection in a disrespectful way.

**Extending the landfill to Harrison Road is a really dumb idea. It would mean chopping down lots of trees. People in nice homes on Harrison Road don't want to look at a big, ugly landfill. Everyone knows that a landfill stinks.**

### Exercise

Rewrite the paragraph above so that it addresses the objection in a respectful way. Trade papers with a classmate. Decide if your partner's voice connects more respectfully with the reader.



**Review for voice.** Read the paragraph that counters an objection to your position. Does it sound respectful? If not, revise it until it does.

### Voice

One sentence is deleted and another is revised to create a more respectful voice.

People who oppose rerouting Highway C point to how much it will cost. ~~They are being very unreasonable. It is stupid to~~ **However, no one can** put a price tag on natural resources. Sanderville Woods is a gold mine of local history and ecology. In addition, . . .

## Revising for Word Choice

**6** My words make a powerful case for my position.



**5** Carefully chosen words make my writing persuasive and effective.



**4** I have avoided inflammatory (unfair) words, but I need to remove a few qualifiers.



Checking for *word choice* means making sure that you have used the best words to build your argument. It also means making sure that you have not overused qualifying words or used inflammatory words. The rubric strip above can guide you.

### Did I overuse qualifiers in my essay?

You have overused qualifiers in your essay if too many of your sentences contain words like these: *seems*, *appears*, *maybe*, *somewhat*, *rather*, *quite*, or *might*. Such words make a writer sound unsure.

#### Sentence with Qualifiers

It **seems** that the mayor is **somewhat** willing to meet with us.

#### Sentence with Qualifiers

The mayor is willing to meet with us.

### Exercise

Read the paragraph below. Rewrite it in a straightforward, convincing way.

- 1        Apparently the mayor will meet with us to discuss our plan. He
- 2        indicated that he was quite pleased with the proposal we sent him. If he
- 3        agrees with our position, then maybe we can eventually get a stoplight at
- 4        the corner by our school. It seems the mayor has already set aside money
- 5        for a project somewhat like this.



**Check your word choice for balance.** Change any sentences that may contain too many qualifying words.

**3** I need to change some inflammatory words and remove some qualifiers.



**2** I need to change my unfair language to make a believable position.



**1** I need to learn what words are inflammatory and how to use qualifiers.



## How can I avoid inflammatory words?

You can avoid inflammatory words by expressing your opinion without blame. Strong language aimed at someone or something only weakens your argument. Here are some examples of inflammatory words.

greedy  
phony

foolish  
unfit

stupid  
mean

dumb  
disgusting

so-called

**Note:** Being sarcastic can also be inflammatory. Don't call something a great idea when you clearly mean that it is *not* a good idea.

### Exercise

Identify inflammatory statements in the paragraph below. Then rewrite the paragraph so that it convinces without blame or sarcasm.

HGR Inc. is being unreasonable and mean. Their so-called East Side Improvement Plan includes tearing down the recreation center. How ridiculous! That center is where kids go for fun after school. What a brilliant plan—send kids to the streets. HGR should remodel the center and offer more activities.



**Review for inflammatory words.** Read your essay carefully. Rewrite any parts that blame or use sarcasm.

### Word Choice

The argument is strengthened by removing two qualifying words.

Clearly, Highway C should be moved away from Sanderville Woods. ~~Perhaps,~~ relocating the highway would restore peace and quiet to area neighborhoods, ~~maybe~~ decrease the number of deer being hit by cars, and, most importantly, help . . .

## Revising for Sentence Fluency

**6** My sentences spark the reader's interest in my position.



**5** My sentences are skillfully written with varied beginnings.



**4** I use different sentence types, and most of the beginnings are varied.



To revise for *sentence fluency*, check to see that you have used different kinds of sentences and that your sentences have varied beginnings. The rubric strip above will help you.

### Have I used a variety of sentence types effectively?

You have used different kinds of sentences effectively if they help you develop your argument. Here are the three types of sentences that you can use.

**Declarative sentences** make statements.

(Most of your sentences should be declarative.)

**Interrogative sentences** ask questions.

(Asking a question or two in your essay may help you connect with the reader.)

**Imperative sentences** make commands or requests.

(Use imperative sentences when you want to make a call to action.)

### Exercise

Read the following paragraph. How many declarative, interrogative, and imperative sentences does it contain? Where do the interrogative sentences appear? Why? Where do the imperative sentences appear? Why?

1       **Signs that old Southport lighthouse is crumbling include chipped**  
 2 **mortar and loose bricks. Isn't it time to restore this historic landmark? Even**  
 3 **though the lighthouse hasn't been used for years, it has been an important**  
 4 **symbol in our community. For many years, it was open to the public. Did**  
 5 **you ever climb all those spiraling stairs to the top and look out at the ocean**  
 6 **far below? The lighthouse should be fixed so that it can be reopened. Next**  
 7 **week, the city council will vote to repair it or tear it down. Call your council**  
 8 **person today. Ask for a yes vote.**



**Review your sentences.** Read your essay. Have you used different kinds of sentences effectively?



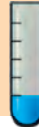
**3** I use different types of sentences, but I need to vary my sentence beginnings.



**2** Most of my sentences are the same type and begin the same way.



**1** I need to learn about different types of sentences and how to vary the beginnings.



## Have I varied my sentence beginnings?

You have varied your sentence beginnings if all of your sentences do not begin with the main subject. Compare the following paragraphs.

### Similar Beginnings

A bike trail near Lang Road will attract people to other recreation areas in our community. The trail will pass the recreation center, the city playground, and Wentworth Beach. Families can combine a bike ride with other activities along the way. Older kids can use the trail as a safe way to get to places to meet their friends.

### Varied Beginnings

A bike trail near Lang Road will attract people to other recreation areas in our community. In addition to the recreation center, the trail will pass the city playground and Wentworth Beach. When families go bike riding, they can enjoy other activities along the way. For older kids, the trail will provide a safe way to get to places to meet their friends.



**Check your sentence beginnings.** Read your essay looking at sentence beginnings, especially the subject-followed-by-a-verb pattern. Revise by adding words, phrases, or clauses to the beginnings of some sentences.

### Sentence Fluency

An interrogative sentence is added.

Another reason for moving the highway away from the woods is to avoid the increasing deer population. *Why is that important?* The number of deer being hit on the highway has increased 30 percent since . . .

## Revising Improving Your Writing



**Check your revising.** On a piece of paper, write the numbers 1 to 12. If you can answer “yes” to a question, put a check mark after that number. If not, continue to work with that part of your essay.

### Revising Checklist

#### Ideas

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Do I state my position clearly?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Have I included solid reasons that support my position?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Do I effectively respond to an important objection?

#### Organization

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Does the overall structure of my essay work well?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Are my reasons arranged by order of importance?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Have I used transitions to create unity in my writing?

#### Voice

- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Is my voice appropriate for my topic?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Have I shown my audience the proper respect?

#### Word Choice

- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Have I avoided overusing qualifiers?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Have I removed inflammatory language and sarcasm?

#### Sentence Fluency

- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Have I used different kinds of sentences?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Do I vary my sentence beginnings?



**Make a clean copy.** When you have finished revising, make a clean copy of your essay before you edit. This makes checking for conventions easier.

## Editing



After you finish revising your essay, you are ready to edit for *conventions*: punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar.

### Keys to Effective Editing

1. Use a dictionary, a thesaurus, and the “Proofreader’s Guide” in the back of this book (pages 604–763) to check your writing.
2. Use the editing and proofreading marks inside the back cover of the book to mark your writing.
3. If you are using a computer, edit on a printed computer copy. Then enter your changes on the computer.
4. Check for any words or phrases that may be confusing to the reader.
5. Check your writing for punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar errors.



## Editing for Conventions

**6** My essay is error free from start to finish.



**5** I have one or two errors, but they don't distract the reader.



**4** I need to correct a few errors in my paper because they distract the reader.



When you edit for *conventions*, you correct punctuation, grammar, capitalization, and spelling errors. The rubric strip above can guide your editing.

### Have I correctly punctuated introductory elements?

You have punctuated a long introductory phrase or introductory clause correctly if you have set it off from the rest of the sentence with a comma.

#### Introductory Prepositional Phrases

**With the arrival of winter weather,** the school should be opened earlier.

#### Introductory Participial Phrase

**Following this proposal,** Ms. Madsen met with the school's security staff.

#### Introductory Clause

**Whenever the temperature drops below 32,** the doors will open by 7:00 a.m.

**Note:** You may omit the comma if an introductory phrase is short.

**After school** the main doors remain open until 4:00 p.m.

### Grammar Exercise

Rewrite any sentence below that needs a comma. Add the correct punctuation.

1. For the first time in two years we have a chance to change the lunch menu.
2. Before any decision is made students must complete a questionnaire.
3. Providing a new menu the cafeteria staff hopes to meet the dietary needs and tastes of more students.
4. By noon most students have already eaten.



**Check introductory phrases and clauses.** Review your essay, looking for long introductory phrases and introductory clauses. Make sure you have punctuated them correctly.

**3** I need to correct several errors in my paper because they confuse the reader.



**2** I need to correct the many errors because they make my essay difficult to read.



**1** I need help finding errors and making corrections.



## Have I used the correct forms of adjectives?

You have used the correct forms of adjectives if they make the proper comparisons. The *comparative* form compares two people or things; the *superlative* form compares three or more people or things.

- **Comparative adjectives** (*-er, more, or less*) compare two things.

**bigger**      **more profitable**      **less economical**

- **Superlative adjectives** (*-est, most, or least*) compare three or more things.

**biggest**      **more profitable**      **less economical**

### Grammar Exercise

Correct each underlined adjective below by making it either comparative or superlative.

1. The fall festival will be the challenging project our service club has done.
2. Extra volunteers will make this festival enjoyable than last year's.
3. We believe this will be the great festival in the history of our school!



**Check for forms of adjectives.** Add more punch to your essay by including some comparative and superlative adjectives.

#### Conventions

A comma is added.

The form of an adjective is corrected.

From the perspective of long-term value, the cost of rerouting a highway seems ~~small~~ <sup>smaller</sup> than what it would take to re-create a thriving nature preserve complete with marshes and woodlands. Relocate Highway C and save Sanderville . . .

“Fortunately both my wife and my mother-in-law seem to love digging up mistakes in spelling and punctuation. I can hear them in the next room laughing at me.”

—Sherwood Anderson

## Editing Checking Your Writing



Edit

**Check your editing.** On a piece of paper, write the numbers 1 to 9. If you can answer “yes” to a question, put a check mark after that number. If not, continue to edit for that convention.

### Editing Checklist

#### Conventions

##### PUNCTUATION

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Do I use end punctuation after all my sentences?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Do I use commas after long introductory phrases and introductory clauses?

##### CAPITALIZATION

- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Do I start all my sentences with capital letters?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Do I capitalize all proper nouns and adjectives?

##### SPELLING

- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Have I spelled all words correctly?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Have I checked the words my spell-checker may have missed?

##### GRAMMAR

- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Do my subjects and verbs agree in number (*She and I are going*, not *She and I is going*)?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Do my pronouns agree with their antecedents?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Have I used the correct forms of adjectives?

### Creating a Title

- Sum up the controversy: **Save Sanderville Woods**
- Write a slogan: **Cast a Vote for Peace and Quiet**
- Be creative: **Don’t Make Nature Take a Backseat**

## Publishing Sharing Your Essay



After writing, revising, and editing your persuasive essay, make a neat final copy to share. You may also present your essay in a debate, publish it in a newspaper, or send it to an official in your community.



**Make a final copy.** Follow your teacher's instructions or use the guidelines below to format your essay. (If you are using a computer, see pages 76–78.) Create a clean final copy of your essay and carefully proofread it.

### Focus on Presentation

- Use blue or black ink and write neatly.
- Write your name in the upper left corner of page 1.
- Skip a line and center your title; skip another line and start your writing.
- Indent every paragraph and leave a one-inch margin on all four sides.
- Write your last name and the page number in the upper right corner of every page after page 1.

#### Contact an Official

Think of a community or state official who has the authority to take action on your issue. Send your essay to that person along with a letter briefly stating your position and asking for help. In the letter, explain that your essay includes important reasons to support your opinion.

#### Publish a Letter

Reformat your essay as a letter to the editor of your community newspaper. Check submission guidelines. Then submit your letter.



#### Stage a Debate

Gather a group of family members or friends who hold opposing opinions on your issue. Try to include one neutral person who has not formed an opinion. Stage a debate. Present and defend your position; allow others to present and defend theirs. Then ask the neutral person to form an opinion based on the debate.



## Rubric for Persuasive Writing

Refer to the following rubric for guiding and assessing your persuasive writing. Use it to improve your writing using the six traits.

### 6 Ideas

The position is convincingly supported and defended; it compels the reader to act.

### 5

The position is supported with logical reasons; an important objection is countered.

### 4

Most of the reasons support the writer's position. An objection is addressed.

### Organization

All of the parts of the essay work together to build a very thoughtful, convincing position.

The opening states the position, the middle provides clear support, and the ending reinforces the position.

Most parts of the essay are organized adequately except for one part.

### Voice

The writer's voice is extremely confident, knowledgeable, and convincing.

The writer's voice is persuasive, knowledgeable, and respectful.

The writer respects the audience but needs to sound more persuasive or knowledgeable.

### Word Choice

The writer's choice of words makes a powerful case.

The writer's word choice helps persuade the reader.

The writer avoids inflammatory (unfair) words but needs to remove some qualifiers.

### Sentence Fluency

The sentences spark the reader's interest in the essay.

Variety is seen in both the types of sentences and their beginnings.

Variety is seen in most of the sentences.

### Conventions

The writing is error free.

Grammar and punctuation errors are few. The reader is not distracted by the errors.

Distracting grammar and punctuation errors are seen in a few sentences.



3

More supporting reasons and a more convincing response to an objection are needed.

2

A clearer position statement is needed. Better support for the position must be provided.

1

A new position statement and reasons are needed.

Some parts of the essay need to be reorganized.

The beginning, middle, and ending run together.

The organization is unclear and incomplete.

The writer's voice needs to be more persuasive and respectful.

The writer's voice sounds too emotional and unconvincing.

The writer needs to learn about voice in persuasive writing.

The writer needs to change some inflammatory words and remove some qualifiers.

The words do not create a clear message. Some inflammatory words are used.

Word choice for persuasive writing has not been considered.

More variety is needed in the beginnings or kinds of sentences used.

Too many sentences are worded in the same way.

Sentence fluency has not been considered.

There are a number of errors that may confuse the reader.

Frequent errors make the essay difficult to read.

Nearly every sentence contains errors.

## Evaluating a Persuasive Essay

Read the position essay below and focus on its strengths and its weaknesses. Then read the student self-assessment on the next page. (**The student essay that follows contains some errors.**)

### Open a Teen Center Downtown

Ninth graders get stuck in the middle. They're not kids, but they're still too young to drive. After school, juniors and seniors drive places to meet friends and have fun. Ninth graders are stuck finding places within walking distance from the high school, or places they can get to on public transportation. Last week, Mayor Steve Ricchio recommended to the common council that it should "seriously consider an after-school program for students at Pine Ridge High." He's right! It's time for a teen center downtown where kids can go after school.

First of all, a downtown teen center would be most convenient, especially for nondrivers. About a third of Pine Ridge students head downtown after school because it's so close to the high school. A teen center downtown would be easy for students to get to. It would also be near the public library, so if they wanted to study with their friends at the teen center, they could get study materials from the library first. Best of all, all city buses stop downtown at the Transit Center, so students would have a way to get home without calling their folks to come and get them.

A downtown teen center would help the relationship between all teens and downtown store owners. Many times, it's cold or rainy outside, so kids hang out in the stores. Store owners don't like this. They either don't let students in at all, or they can only come in two at a time. A teen center would get kids out of the stores and into a place that's better for meeting with friends. That would make both the store owners and the kids happy.

The most important reason for a downtown teen center is to have a definite place to go after school. Right now, kids hang out on street corners, in coffee shops, and at the park. There isn't much to do in those places, so it's easy to get board. A teen center would provide a safe place where kids could listen to music, dance, play games, and have fun with their friends.

The adults in town believe that teens are troublemakers. In a recent letter to the local newspaper, one adult wrote, "If we provide a place for teens to congregate downtown, there will be nothing but

trouble. Downtown will become a dangerous place, and more people will go to the suburbs to shop.” This person couldn’t be more wrong! A few kids cause trouble, but most kids just want a safe place to study with friends, learn new things, and just have fun.

A downtown teen center is a great idea! It would be easy for students to get to, and it’s near places they need to go, like the library. It would get kids out of stores and create a place where they can get together and have fun. Best of all, it would help the adults in town see that young people are good, law-abiding citizens.

## Student Self-Assessment

### Persuasive Rubric Checklist

**Title:** Open a Teen Center Downtown

**Writer:** Janelle Jones

#### 4 Ideas

- Does my essay have a clear position statement?
- Is my position backed with solid reasons?
- Does my essay have any logic errors?

#### 5 Organization

- Does the beginning introduce the issue and state my opinion?
- Are my reasons arranged by order of importance?
- Does my ending sum up my reasons and opinion and leave the reader with something to think about?

#### 4 Voice

- Is the tone of my writing appropriate?
- Did I connect with my audience?

#### 3 Word Choice

- Did I use too many qualifying words?
- Does my essay have any inflammatory words?

#### 5 Sentence Fluency

- Did I use different kinds of sentences?
- Did I vary my sentence beginnings?

#### 5 Conventions

- Does my essay avoid most errors in punctuation, spelling, and grammar?

### OVERALL COMMENTS:

My position essay shows that I feel strongly about having a teen center downtown. I backed up my opinion with good reasons because my friends and I have talked about it a lot.

I graded down for ideas because I had some logic errors, like including everyone when I just meant some people.

I graded down for voice because I think I sounded too emotional in some places. My word choice could have been better. I found some blaming words in my essay.

I think I did an excellent job of organizing my essay, and I didn’t have many mistakes in conventions, either.



### Review your essay.

Rate your essay and write comments that explain why you gave yourself the scores you did.

## Reflecting on Your Writing

After you finish your position essay, take time to reflect on your writing experience. On your own paper, complete each of the sentences below. This exercise will reinforce what you learned from the writing experience and help you apply that knowledge to future assignments.

### My Position Essay

1. The strongest part of my essay is . . .
2. The part that still needs work is . . .
3. The prewriting activity that worked best for me was . . .
4. The main thing I learned about writing a position essay is . . .
5. In my next persuasive essay, I would like to . . .
6. One question I still have about writing a position essay is . . .

## Persuasive Writing

# Pet-Peeve Essay

If someone is “peevish,” it means that they like to complain. A pet peeve is something annoying that someone likes to complain about. Nearly everybody has a pet peeve. You probably have a few of your own. Maybe it bothers you when the neighborhood dog barks every morning, starting around five o’clock. Maybe people talking on cell phones while they drive really burns your toast. Maybe you are annoyed by classmates who tap their pencils on their desks during algebra tests.

Writing about a pet peeve is a form of persuasive writing. In this form, the writer complains about something annoying, without really expecting to change it. A pet-peeve essay gives the writer a chance to vent some frustration, often in an entertaining way.

In this chapter, you’ll read a sample pet-peeve essay. Then you’ll write your own essay about something that irritates you.

### Writing Guidelines

**Subject:** Something that annoys you

**Form:** A pet-peeve essay

**Purpose:** To complain

**Audience:** Classmates

“A man has to live with himself,  
and he should see to it that he  
always has good company.”

—Charles Evans Hughes



## Pet-Peeve Essay

In the following pet-peeve essay, Devon complains about people who use—or misuse—cell phones in public.

### Beginning

The beginning grabs the reader's attention and introduces the pet peeve.

### Middle

The writer devotes one paragraph to each way this topic is annoying.

The writer relates an anecdote to illustrate his pet peeve.

### A Little Respect, Please!

What is it about cell phone users that makes them think they are the only people in the world? Cell phones are great inventions and help keep people safe and connected when necessary. I keep my cell phone with me at all times to check in with my parents or to talk with my friends. But when used improperly, cell phones can be distracting, annoying, and even downright dangerous!

Just look at people who take or make calls in a theater. There are usually announcements in movies, asking viewers to turn off all cell phones or pagers. True, some people, such as doctors, need to have their phones turned on in case of emergency calls. However, most cell phones can be set to a silent vibrating mode. Then a person can check an incoming call to see if it's important and, if it is, leave the theater to answer it. Yet some people insist on keeping their phones—and ringers—turned on. Is the news so vital that the person can't go two hours without getting—or worse, making—a phone call? Why are these people in the theater to begin with if they want to talk?

Then there are the people who think they have to talk extra loud—in public—to be heard on their cell phones. Maybe they have a poor connection and have to shout to be heard, but most cell phones are pretty sensitive and can pick up a whisper. In any case, it seems odd that a person would want to discuss personal issues where others can hear them. Sometimes, listening to calls is downright embarrassing! One time, I couldn't help overhearing a conversation about someone I knew. I heard things I wished I hadn't, and it was really hard to talk to my friend after that! How hard is it for someone to simply say, "Can I call you back later?"

Key facts illustrate the pet peeve.

**Ending**  
The writer repeats his complaint from a new angle.

Probably the worst cell phone misusers are the many people who talk on their handheld phones while driving. Studies have shown that talking on handhelds while driving may cause accidents, because drivers are either distracted or unable to react quickly. Many cities and some states have either introduced or accepted laws against handheld cell phone use by drivers. Some countries, such as Brazil, Japan, and England, have already enacted restrictions. Still, on any street or highway, there will be many people yakking away with only one hand on the wheel. Those drivers are accidents waiting to happen.

So what can be done? I have been tempted to tap an offender on the shoulder and ask him or her to please make the call some other time or place, but I've never done that. I'm too polite. I am also too polite to share my phone conversations in public or disrupt or endanger another person's life with thoughtless or reckless use of a cell phone.



**Respond to the reading.** Answer the following questions.

**Ideas** (1) Has the writer chosen a timely topic? Explain.  
(2) How does the writer relate the problem to the reader?

**Organization** (3) How did the writer organize the middle paragraphs?

**Voice & Word Choice** (4) List three words or phrases that show the writer's annoyance.



**Literature Connections:** In the essay "Primal Screen," newspaper columnist Ellen Goodman complains that Americans watch too much television. Goodman's essay is both persuasive and entertaining.

## Prewriting Selecting a Topic

We all suffer annoyances. Your brother uses all the hot water just before you get into the bathroom. Your neighbor lets his dog, well, use your lawn. Your friend chews gum with an open mouth. Even a small problem can really get to you, and it can make a good topic for a pet-peeve essay. To find a topic for his pet-peeve essay, Devon started freewriting about things that annoyed him.

### Freewriting

*What little things bother me the most? There is always something distracting going on. Yesterday at a movie, someone's cell phone went off. I missed a whole chunk of dialogue because this person answered the call. Maybe I should write about people who aren't considerate about using cell phones in public. They talk so loud. Don't they realize everyone's listening to them? People who use them while driving really bug me. They weave around and are dangerous. How dumb!*



**Choose your topic.** Focus on an average day and freewrite about things that annoy you. Keep writing until you discover something you can complain about in a pet-peeve essay. Pick a topic that is appropriate to share and can be addressed with some humor.

### Focus on the Traits

**Ideas** Adding details will make your pet-peeve essay interesting to your audience. Here are two ways to add interesting details.

- **Use an anecdote.** An anecdote is a brief story that illustrates a main point.  
     One time, I couldn't help overhearing a conversation about someone I knew. I heard things I wished I hadn't, and . . .
- **Use irony.** Irony is saying one thing and meaning something else.  
     And I'm always lucky enough to sit next to them.



**Create details.** Write one anecdote and one ironic statement about your topic. If you like how they turn out, try to work them into your essay.



## Organizing Details

You can organize a pet-peeve essay by logical order or by order of importance. With **logical order**, all of your reasons are of equal importance. They can be placed in any order, but you must move from one idea to the next in a way that flows well and makes sense.

With **order of importance**, you explain the most important reason either first or last. Placing the most important reason first allows you to reinforce the idea throughout the essay. Placing it last allows you to build up to the best reason. This is the order Devon used in his essay.

### Devon's Main Reasons

- Cell phones are disruptive in theaters.
  - Loud private conversations are rude and embarrassing.
  - Using cell phones while driving is dangerous.
- Least important  
↓  
Most important



**Organize your details.** List the main reasons you will use in your essay. Organize them by *logical order* or by *order of importance*.

### Focus on the Traits

**Sentence Fluency** Vary your sentences to make your pet-peeve essay read smoothly; remember to vary your sentence beginnings and lengths. Notice how the sentences in the first passage below follow the same basic pattern.

*I've had to listen to calls that are downright embarrassing. I couldn't help one time overhearing a conversation about someone I knew. I heard things I wished I hadn't. It was really hard to talk to my friend after that!*

Now read the same passage with sentences that are varied. (Some new words have been added.) This writing flows better and is more enjoyable to read.

*Sometimes, when waiting in line somewhere, I have had to listen to calls that are downright embarrassing. One time, I couldn't help overhearing a conversation about someone I knew. I heard things I wished I hadn't, and it was really hard to talk to my friend after that!*

## Writing Creating Your First Draft

Though a pet-peeve essay is a lighter form of persuasive writing, it still should follow a definite pattern. Use the guidelines below.

### Writing Your Beginning Paragraph

**Start** by getting the reader's attention and sharing your thesis or focus statement. Here are several strategies.

- Introduce your pet peeve and tell why it bothers you.
- Ask questions about the topic.
- Use an amusing anecdote about an annoying experience you've had.
- Open with a startling fact or statistic related to your pet peeve.

### Writing Your Middle Paragraphs

**Discuss your pet peeve.** Show the reader why the topic annoys you. Use examples, statistics, and anecdotes to illustrate your pet peeve. Organize your middle paragraphs logically or by order of importance.

- Start each paragraph with a well-crafted topic sentence.
- Develop a paragraph for each main point.
- Support each topic sentence with effective details.
- Use transition words and phrases to connect your ideas.

### Finishing with a Strong Ending Paragraph

**Wrap up your essay** in a satisfying way. Your ending can be serious and reasonable or entertaining and light. Just make sure that it makes sense within the context of the entire essay. Try one of the following strategies to create a strong ending for your pet-peeve essay.

- Offer a humorous or serious suggestion for solving the problem.
- Summarize your feelings about your pet peeve.
- Suggest ways to handle or adjust to the pet peeve.



**Write the first draft.** Use your list of reasons and any details you've gathered to write the first draft of your pet-peeve essay. Get all your ideas on paper, including new ones that come to mind as you write.

## Revising Improving Your Essay

Take a break after finishing your first draft. Let it sit for a while. The following questions can help you decide what to change in your pet-peeve essay.

### Revising Checklist

#### Ideas

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Have I chosen a timely topic and stated my complaint clearly?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Have I included effective ideas and details to prove my point?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Do I need to cut any details that are off the topic or unclear?

#### Organization

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Are my details and paragraphs arranged logically or by order of importance?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Are my sentences and paragraphs easy to follow?

#### Voice

- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Do the anecdotes I use sound genuine and personal?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Am I convincing throughout my essay?

#### Word Choice

- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Have I used effective descriptive words?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Have I avoided name-calling and overly negative words?

#### Sentence Fluency

- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Have I used a variety of sentences?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Have I used transitions to connect my ideas and my paragraphs?



Revise

**Revise your essay.** Use the tips above as you review your essay and make changes.

## Editing Checking for Conventions

After you've revised your pet-peeve essay, it's time to edit it. The following checklist can help you spot any errors in punctuation, mechanics (spelling and capitalization), or grammar.

### Editing Checklist

#### Conventions

##### PUNCTUATION

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Did I end sentences with the proper punctuation?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Have I used commas correctly?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Did I use quotation marks correctly?

##### MECHANICS

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Did I properly capitalize proper nouns?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Did I capitalize the beginnings of sentences and direct quotations?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Did I use a dictionary and/or the computer's spell-checker to check spelling?

##### GRAMMAR

- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Do all my subjects and verbs agree in number?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Did I use the "Proofreader's Guide" in the back of this book to check grammar?



**Edit your essay** using the tips above. Mark your changes on the printout. After fixing any errors, create a final copy and proofread it one last time.

## Publishing Sharing Your Writing

Your pet-peeve essay may amuse your friends, family, or even the whole world. After you've finished the writing, find a way to share it with others.



**Share your pet-peeve essay.** Publish your essay in one of the following ways.

- Share copies of your essay with your class.
- Read your essay aloud to friends or family.
- Post your essay on the Web. (Get permission from your teacher and parents first.)

## Writing for Assessment

# Responding to Persuasive Prompts

Throughout your lifetime, you will have many opportunities to persuade others to agree with you. Perhaps you'll try to convince a friend to see a certain movie, ask a teacher to let you take a makeup exam, or persuade your parents to give you certain privileges. The art of persuasion can be learned. The best arguments are carefully thought out and well structured. They are designed to make your audience think like you do on an issue.

You may be asked to respond to a persuasive prompt on a writing test. Within time limits, you must structure your argument and arrange it in a logical way. This chapter will show you how to use the writing process to create a clear, persuasive response.

### Writing Guidelines

**Subject:** Persuasive prompt

**Form:** Response essay

**Purpose:** To demonstrate competence

**Audience:** Instructor

"There is no point asserting what the heart cannot believe."

—Aleksander Solzhenitsyn



## Prewriting Improving Your Response

Before you respond to a prompt, you must analyze it to be sure that your response will fit the requirements of the test. One way to analyze a prompt is to answer the following **STRAP** questions about it:

**Subject:** What topic (*lockers, policy, decision, program*) should I write about?

**Type:** What form (*essay, letter, editorial, article, report*) of writing should I create?

**Role:** What position (*student, son or daughter, friend, employee*) should I assume as the writer?

**Audience:** Who (*teacher, principal, parents, classmates, employer*) is the intended reader?

**Purpose:** What is the goal (*persuade, respond, evaluate, explain, tell, describe*) of my writing?

The following key words are often found in **persuasive** prompts: *convince, argue, defend, persuade.*

### Try It!

Analyze these prompts by using STRAP questions.

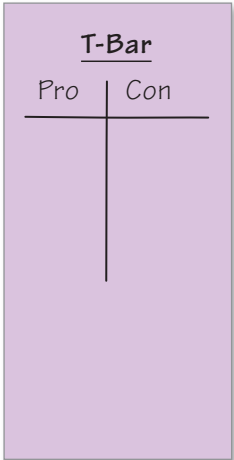
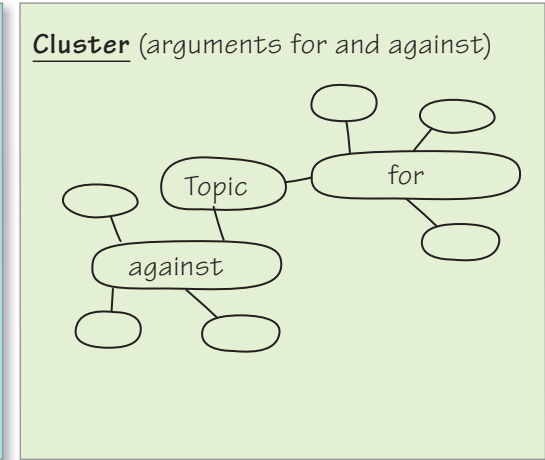
1. The school board has decided to eliminate the school art program because of budget constraints. Write a letter arguing for or against the board's decision.
2. Your principal has reduced the number of school assemblies for the year. The school newspaper editor wants you to write about the decision. Write an editorial either defending the decision or urging the principal to reconsider.
3. To promote literacy, the city library is starting a new reading program pairing teens with younger children. Write a newspaper article calling for teens to volunteer for the program.

### Tip

Some prompts may not contain key words for every STRAP question. Use your best judgment to answer those questions.

## Planning Your Response

Once you have answered the STRAP questions, you should quickly plan your persuasive response. The following graphic organizers can help you.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>T-Bar</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pro   Con</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Quick List</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. First Point -Pro -Con</li> <li>2. Second Point -Pro -Con</li> <li>3. Third Point -Pro -Con</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Cluster</u> (arguments for and against)</p> 
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## Countering an Opposing Point of View

Each persuasive graphic organizer includes space for both pro and con arguments. You must consider points from both sides of an issue to see where your strongest argument lies. Facts usually make the strongest arguments; however, your strong feelings about the issue can be important, too.

When planning your persuasive writing, make sure to counter or address at least one opposing point of view. Presenting another opinion tells your reader that you have carefully examined the issue. And effectively countering the point can actually strengthen your overall argument.



**Reread the persuasive prompts on page 248.** Choose one prompt and use a graphic organizer to plan your response.

### Tip

In a timed writing test, plan carefully. Allow yourself time for planning before you write and for revising and editing after you write. For example, if you have 45 minutes to respond to a prompt, use the first 5 to 10 minutes to analyze the prompt and plan your response, the last 5 minutes to revise and edit it, and the 30 to 35 minutes in between for writing.

## Writing Responding to a Prompt

Once you have answered the STRAP questions and planned your response with a graphic organizer, you can begin writing.

### Persuasive Prompt

*Your school board is considering funding an after-school student center, but some board members feel it is a waste of funds. Write a letter to the board arguing for or against the center, explaining the benefits it will provide or the problems it could create for students, parents, and the community.*

### Try It!

Analyze the above prompt using the STRAP questions. Be sure to write your answers out before proceeding.

### Response

#### Beginning

The beginning paragraph states the opinion (underlined).

Dear School Board Members:

If students are not involved in after-school activities or do not have a job, they may face long afternoons after the final bell rings. Many parents work until 5:00 or later in the evening. Students with time on their hands often look for something to do. Without guidance, they often get into trouble. At the very least, they might just go home and flop in front of the TV. An after-school teen center could create a positive environment for teens.

#### Middle

Each middle paragraph presents a main supporting point.

A teen center provides a supervised place for students. In a teen center, adults are always available to make sure nothing inappropriate happens. Students can be with friends in a safe, supervised atmosphere.

A properly equipped teen center offers a positive place for students, many activities, and healthy snacks. Students are encouraged to engage in physical activity. Sports are usually part of a center as well. With a few simple pieces of equipment, students can engage



in activities such as table tennis, weight training, or aerobics. If the center has space outside, a basketball hoop or volleyball court encourages physical activity in good weather. An indoor gym could give students a place to be active even in bad weather.

The teen center could offer homework help. Volunteers could provide assistance. A computer lab supervised by an adult would help students do research, check e-mail, and have some fun. This environment could encourage students to do their homework.

**Concession**

The writer addresses a possible objection.

Some people might argue that the district can't afford such a facility, but there are ways to make an expensive dream an affordable reality. For one thing, the center could sell snacks and juices to help with expenses. The upper-class students could volunteer to help younger students with class work, earning volunteer service hours for their efforts. Local businesspeople might be willing to mentor students in different areas, working with them at the center. Another resource might be parents. Service organizations could donate materials to help support such a worthy community project. Of course, fund-raisers could be held to support the center.

**Ending**

The ending offers a final plea and summarizes the argument.

All the school board members must consider the importance of a teen center. The youth of today are the parents and citizens of tomorrow. A teen center that offers safe, supervised activities and homework tutoring could show how a community can work together for the betterment of all.

Sincerely,  
Alia Santos



**Practice responding to a persuasive prompt.** Review the prompt you chose on page 249, your answers to the STRAP questions, and your graphic organizer. Then write a response to the prompt in the amount of time your teacher gives you.



## Revising Improving Your Response

Before you begin a writing test, find out whether you will be allowed to make changes in your writing. If this is allowed, always make your changes and corrections as neatly as possible. The STRAP questions below can help.

**Subject:** Does my response focus on the topic of the prompt? Do my main points support the opinion stated in the beginning of my response?

**Type:** Have I used the form requested in the prompt (essay, letter, article)?

**Role:** Have I assumed the position called for in the prompt?

**Audience:** Do I use appropriate language for my audience?

**Purpose:** Does my writing accomplish the goal set forth in the prompt?



**Improve your work.** Reread your response, asking yourself the STRAP questions above. Make whatever changes are necessary to your response.

## Editing Checking for Conventions

A final read-through of your essay gives you the chance to check for punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar errors.

### Editing Checklist

#### Conventions

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Have I used end punctuation for every sentence?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Have I capitalized all proper nouns and the first words of sentences?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Have I checked my spelling?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Have I made sure my subjects and verbs agree?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Have I used the right words (*effect, affect*)?



**Check for conventions.** Read through your response one final time, checking your punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar. Make all of your corrections neatly in the time allowed.

## Persuasive Writing on Tests

Use this guide when preparing to respond to a persuasive writing prompt.

### Before you write . . .

- **Understand the prompt.**

Use the STRAP questions, and remember that a persuasive prompt asks you to use facts and logical reasons to persuade or convince.

- **Plan your time wisely.**

Spend 5 to 10 minutes planning before starting to write.

### As you write . . .

- **Decide on a focus for your essay.**

Keep your main idea or purpose in mind as you write. Be sure all your points clearly support your argument.

- **Be selective.**

Use examples that directly support your opinion.

- **End in a meaningful way.**

Remind the reader about the topic and your point of view.

### After you write your first draft . . .

- **Check for completeness and correctness.**

Use the STRAP questions to revise your work. Then check for errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar.

### Try It!

Plan and write a response. Choose one of the prompts below. Analyze it using the STRAP questions; use a graphic organizer to gather details and plan; then write, revise, and edit your response.

- Your school budget will allow for an additional class to be offered in the coming school year, and your principal has asked students to make suggestions. Write a letter to the principal explaining what class you think should be offered and why.
- As a class project, your English teacher wants to view and analyze a current movie. In preparation for this unit, she would like students to recommend a movie to study. In a memo or an e-mail, convince your teacher to use the movie of your choice.