

INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate your thoughts and opinions in writing is an important life skill. Even in today's technologically advanced society, written communication remains important at school, at work, and even at home. Expressing your thoughts and opinions effectively takes organization and planning. Persuading others through writing that your opinion is valid requires support with details and examples. Developing persuasive writing skills in students is an essential step to helping them function productively in society.

This book includes reproducible writing prompts that provide practice with organizing thoughts and forming opinions about topics that are relevant and of interest to students today. Forty different prompts on a variety of subjects call for students to write short persuasive essays. Each prompt has three levels of support, which allows the teacher to choose the best option for each student's needs. Activities, rubrics, and sample essays are also included for teachers to use with their students.

Bonnye Wier Cavazos created this book to reach and engage writers who struggle with some of the skills necessary for good writing. The content is based on Cavazos' years of teaching language arts to at-risk middle school students and preparing them for standardized tests in writing, as well as her experience teaching GED classes to struggling adult learners.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

Activities are provided to teach the elements of effective persuasive writing, including good introductions, transitions, supporting details, and conclusions. These ideas can be used throughout the year any time students write persuasive essays.

ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING PERSUASIVE WRITING
IDEAS TO HELP STUDENTS FORMULATE THEIR OPINIONS

Students need to understand that when writing a persuasive essay, it is important to be able to clearly express an opinion. Feeling apathy toward the subject will not allow them to write an effective essay. To practice the technique of taking sides, lead students through the following activities that require them to formulate opinions.

Activity 1: AUDITORY AND KINESTHETIC

Place a large sign that reads "yes" in one corner of the room and a sign that reads "no" in another corner. Instruct your students to stand up and explain that they must choose to use of these corners after you ask each of the questions below. Tell them to notice that there is not a sign that reads "maybe."

Here is a list of questions to ask:

- Should the driving age be reduced to fourteen?
- Should Americans stop driving SUVs because these vehicles use too much fuel?
- Should people who get lung cancer sue cigarette companies?
- Should people who gain too much weight sue fast food companies?
- Should parents limit the amount of time their children watch television?
- Do cats make better pets than dogs?
- Are pens better to write with than pencils?
- Are motorcycles better than cars?
- Are two-story houses better than one-story houses?
- Do women make better teachers than men?

Students are bound to become noisy during this activity, and they will want to express their opinions. Be sure they understand, however, that the emphasis should be on formulating an opinion rather than on supporting it with reasons.

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REPRODUCIBLE PAGES

Reproducible pages, such as a writing checklist and an elaboration strategy page, are included to be given to all students to refer to during the writing process. Prewriting strategy pages and handouts to be used with instruction on writing persuasively are also included.

Activity 2 QUESTIONS

1. What is your favorite color?
2. If you could go anywhere in the world, where would it be?
3. What is the best subject in school?
4. What sport is the most fun to play?
5. What sport is the most fun to watch?
6. Who was the best president the United States has ever had?
7. What is the best flavor for a soft drink?
8. What is the best time of day?
9. Who is the best actor or actress of all time?
10. What is the best brand of jeans?
11. What is the best restaurant in town?
12. What is the scariest animal?
13. What is the best book ever written?
14. What is the saddest thing you have ever heard on the news?
15. What is the best job anyone could ever have?
16. What is the best radio station in town?
17. What is the best thing about school?
18. If you had a super power, what would you want it to be?
19. Where is the best place to buy groceries?
20. When is the best time of day to start school?

PRO-ED PERSUASIVE WRITING

RUBRICS

Clear, concise rubrics that can be used with any persuasive essay are provided. It is recommended that the rubrics be shared with students to help guide them before, during, and after the writing process. Students can use the rubrics to assess themselves and their peers. Teachers can use the rubrics to assess students and also as a reference during conferences about writing.

PERSUASIVE ESSAY RUBRIC

SCORE POINT	ATTRIBUTES OF THE ESSAY
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes a clear stance on the issue • Easy for the reader to follow • Has an introduction with a thesis statement, a conclusion that restates the stance taken, and fully developed body paragraphs • Uses examples, details, and other evidence to make clear points about why the stance was taken • Uses effective transitions both within and between paragraphs • Contains complete sentences that are arranged in a logical order • Uses descriptive words and appropriate word choice • Grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling do not interfere with the message of the essay
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes a stance on the issue • Logically organized • Has an introduction, conclusion, and body paragraphs • Uses examples, details, and other evidence to explain why the stance was taken • Uses effective transitions between paragraphs • Contains mostly complete sentences that are arranged in a logical order • Some variety of word choice • Grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling do not interfere with the message of the essay for the most part
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes a stance on the issue • Not well organized • Inappropriate use of paragraphing, such as lacking indentations or missing a key part • Few transition words and phrases used • Incomplete sentences that make it difficult for the reader to understand the points being made • Few details and examples used • Little or no variety of word choice • Errors in grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling make it difficult for the reader to fully comprehend the points being made

PRO-ED PERSUASIVE WRITING

SAMPLE ESSAYS

Sample essays that are persuasive in style and that model good use of introductions, transitions, supported opinions, and logical conclusions are provided to share with students. Teachers can make copies on overhead transparencies or make individual copies for students. The sample essays should serve as classroom discussion starters about what makes good persuasive writing.

Sample ESSAY

SHOULD STUDENTS HAVE HOMEWORK?

What is at the top of your "I Can't Wait To Do" list when you get home from school? I bet I know one thing that does not even make the list: homework! Homework is not always fun, but it is important. I believe students should have homework, because it teaches us a sense of responsibility, helps us learn valuable information, and lets us practice important study skills.

Firstly, the idea that homework teaches students a sense of responsibility is a good reason for teachers to assign it on a regular basis. Too many students today grow up in homes where they have few responsibilities. In these homes, everyone seems to be too busy to take the time to make sure that the chores are always done, so often the chores are not done. However, teachers do make the time to ensure that the chore of homework gets done. Students who complete their homework earn the rewards of good grades and increased knowledge. Those who do not do their homework suffer punishments such as poor grades and the loss of privileges. Therefore, we need to learn to keep up with our responsibilities for school.

Secondly, homework helps students learn valuable information. Teachers should not assign homework unless it is meaningful, so what they assign needs to be worthwhile. We can learn things we do not know and increase our knowledge by practicing new skills. Homework is exercise for our brains, and it gives us an edge over those who do not learn outside of the classroom. We can all use a little edge when it comes to our education.

Finally, my homework is important because it gives us practice with important study skills. Does anyone plan to skip to high school classes? No, we should graduate and go on to college. To be prepared for college, students must know how to study. Homework offers calls for reading, researching, or interviewing. These strategies can also be applied to life in general. Learning these important skills now will help us later as we prepare for meetings, interviews, and other situations. The well-known philosopher Confucius said, "Success depends upon previous preparation, and without such preparation there is sure to be failure." That is, homework leads to success.

In closing, I would like to remind you to do your homework tonight. Homework is important for students because it teaches us responsibility, helps us learn new things, and gives us practice using study skills that prepare us for success in life. I truly believe that teachers should assign homework on a regular basis.

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WRITING PROMPTS

The forty different prompts included are clearly written and are designed to get students to form an opinion, to learn to express that opinion, and to persuade others that their opinion is valid because it is supported by details and examples. Each prompt has three levels of support.

Name _____ Date _____

Persuasive PROMPT 1.1

An advertisement in the local newspaper asks readers to write an essay about their favorite restaurant and why they like to eat there. The person who writes the winning essay will be awarded a \$50 gift certificate for that restaurant. Think about your choice for the best place in town to eat, and write your essay to persuade the judges of the contest that your choice is a good one.

Dear Judges,

I am writing to tell you about my favorite restaurant, so please to want to meet me at _____ after reading this for your next meal.

My favorite thing about _____ is _____
I like it because _____

Another great thing about this restaurant is _____

I think people really enjoy it because _____

Let's not forget the _____
This makes dining at _____ an unforgettable experience because _____

In closing, _____ is the best place in town because _____

This place truly deserves the title of "Best Place to Eat in _____."

Sincerely,

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Level One gives students a way to begin their paper, along with transition words to use between paragraphs, phrases to build support within paragraphs, and a way to end their paper.

Name _____ Date _____

Persuasive PROMPT 1.2

An advertisement in the local newspaper asks readers to write an essay about their favorite restaurant and why they like to eat there. The person who writes the winning essay will be awarded a \$50 gift certificate for that restaurant. Think about your choice for the best place in town to eat, and write your essay to persuade the judges of the contest that your choice is a good one.

Dear Judges,

The first great thing about _____ is the _____

The second great thing about this place is _____

Another great thing is the _____

As you can see, because of its great _____ and _____, I say _____ is the best place to eat in _____.

Sincerely,

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Level Two offers students transition words to use between paragraphs and a way to end their paper.

Name _____ Date _____

Persuasive PROMPT 1.3

An advertisement in the local newspaper asks readers to write an essay about their favorite restaurant and why they like to eat there. The person who writes the winning essay will be awarded a \$50 gift certificate for that restaurant. Think about your choice for the best place in town to eat, and write your essay to persuade the judges of the contest that your choice is a good one.

Think of an interesting way to begin your essay, decide on three great things to say about your favorite restaurant, and write your essay below. Be sure to include specific details.

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Level Three provides students with a few brief reminder tips for writing their paper and space to write.