

Sample Writing Topics

Choose a topic from the list below. Remember to choose the topic you know the most about. Try to make your writing piece about 2 pages in length, handwritten.

Persuasive

1. Pretend that a friend of yours has decided not to eat milk, cheese, or any kind of vegetable. Write a paper to talk your friend into eating a healthy diet. Use good reasons to convince your friend.
2. Almost everybody would like to change someone's mind about something. Perhaps there is something you would like a friend, parent, teacher, principal, public official, or someone else to feel differently about. Write to the person PERSUADING him or her to change that particular position or attitude. Use specific reasons and examples to make your argument CONVINCING.
3. Think about one change you would make in your community. What would the change be? Why? Write a letter to your mayor, city manager, or city council representative CONVINCING them to make the change.

How to Write a Persuasive Paper or Letter

The primary purpose of a persuasive essay is to convince readers to think the way that you do about a subject. To accomplish this goal, you will have to establish a reasonable and thoughtful argument supporting a subject or a position you have strong feelings about. (From *Writers Inc: A student handbook for writing and learning*, by Peter Sebranek. Pg 116)

- Presents and supports a point of view to convince and influence.
- Has a clear position.
- Has details to support the position.
- Is logical.
- Sounds convincing.

Grade 6: Persuasive (Example of a "High " paper)

Title: "Let's Go Swim"

Topic: People tell us that we need exercise to stay healthy. **Write a paper to convince** your reader to join you in an activity that will be fun as well as healthy.

SCORES AND COMMENTARY (Phrases in bold are taken from the *Official Writing Scoring Guide*):

Ideas and Content: 5 **The writing is clear, focused, and interesting.** The writer involves the reader with details that are **suitable** for the audience as well as **accurate** and **credible**. The paper does not go up to a 6 because the paper does not have a level of rich details and sophistication of insights to warrant that higher score.

Organization: 5 Although this paper is formulaic, it scores a 5 because of its strength in transitions, both between paragraphs ("First of all," "Next," and "In addition to") and within sentences ("but really," "like to"). It has **effective sequencing** with an especially **satisfying sense of resolution** ("So turn off that TV and let's go swim!").

Voice: 5 **The writing is expressive, engaging, and sincere.** The writer makes swimming as a form of exercise appealing by showing a commitment to the topic ("First of all, swimming is fun! You get to hold your breath underwater, jump off the diving board..."). The reader definitely feels a **sense of interaction** ("It is very clear to me, and hopefully you too...").

Word Choice: 5 Words are **accurate** and **specific** ("The most common stereotype of exercise is..."). **Ordinary words** are used to **evoke clear images**. The temptation might be to score this paper a 4 for Word Choice because the writer does not experiment much with language, but the expression here is better than just functional. **The words convey the intended message in an interesting, precise, and natural way** appropriate to a student audience.

Sentence Fluency: 5 This paper includes **variation in sentence structure, length, and beginnings that add interest to the text.** ("It is very clear to me, and hopefully you too, that you should come swimming with me.") There are no lapses in stylistic control. Strong control over more complex sentences is evident near the end of the essay: "In school you just learn, on video games, you just have fun, and on treadmills you just exercise; but when swimming, you get all 3!"

Conventions: 5 The writer's **skill in using a wide range of conventions in a sufficiently long and complex piece** is evident. The few errors are overshadowed by what this writer attempts and does correctly. **Grammar and usage contribute to clarity and style.**

Let's go Swim!

Everyone knows that you need exercise to survive. The most common stereotype of exercise is that it is hard, painful, and/or boring, but really, it is often more enjoyable than sitting on your bum, watching TV. That's why I want you to come to the pool. "That's not exercise!" You say? It is a lot more exercise than sitting on your rear-end watching TV!

First of all, swimming is fun! You get to hold your breath underwater, jump off the diving board, and do cannonballs into 3' foot water! You can cool off from the hot summerson, and meet new friends.

Next, when you're at the swimming pool, it is easy to learn new things, like to doggy-paddle, to treadwater, or to backstroke, which might save your life one day. You can also learn to do flips underwater, and to dive.

In addition to learning new things, everyone can burn calories at the pool, why I know someone who lost 2 lbs. from swimming! It is very, very important to keep fit, and swimming is an easy way of doing so.
(next page)

It is very clear to me, and hopefully you too, that you should come swimming with me. You have fun, learn, and get some exercise all at one time, a good combination indeed. In school, you just learn, on video games, you just have fun, and on treadmills you just exercise; but when swimming, you get all 3! So turn off that TV, and let's go swim!

Persuasive Essay

(example: Jordan wants to have a nice, long summer at the end of seventh grade; her persuasive essay makes that quite evident with several points that support her opinion through the use of statistics, comparison, and expert testimony.)

Summer: 15 Days or 2 1/2 Months?

The final bell rings. It's the last day of school, and summer has finally come! Students don't have to think about school for at least another 2 1/2 months. That is the way it should always be. Schools should continue using the traditional calendar and not a year-round schedule. There are numerous downsides to year-round schooling. It has no positive effects on education, it adds to costs, and it disrupts the long-awaited summer vacation.

Contrary to the well-accepted belief, year-round schooling has no constructive impact on education. Most year-round schedules use the 45-15 method: 45 days of school followed by 15 days off. Because of this, there are many first and last days of school. All those transitions disrupt the learning process. Also, there is no evidence of higher test scores. Due to that, many schools that change to year-round schedules end up switching back. For example, since 1980, 95 percent of schools that tried the year-round schedule changed back to a traditional calendar. It is obvious that changing to year-round schooling does not help students; therefore, why is the change necessary?

Like any other facility, keeping a school open requires a great deal of money. When a school changes to a year-round schedule, the costs skyrocket. Keeping school open in the middle of summer requires air conditioning, and that adds significantly to the school's expenses. The usual utility bills grow because of the additional open-school time. Finally, teachers must be paid for all the weeks they are working. With all these factors, the cost of keeping schools open becomes immensely high. For example, a high school in Arizona had a cost increase of \$157,000 when they switched to year-round schooling. Some schools may not be able to handle such increases, and other schools that can handle these expenses could be doing better things with the money. Is year-round school really where the money should go?

An important part of a child's life is summertime. With year-round schedules, students would hardly have any time to relax. During the 15-day breaks, they would be thinking about their quick return to school. It would also be difficult to coordinate family vacations with parents' work schedules. Similarly, children would not be able to go to most summer camps. One expert, Dr. Peter Scales, says, "The biggest plus of camp is that camps help young people discover and explore their talents, interests, and values. Most schools don't satisfy all these needs. Kids who have these kinds of [camp] experiences end

up being healthier and have fewer problems." Obviously, the summer is crucial to a child's learning and development. Why should this invaluable part of a young person's life be taken away?

It is evident that year-round schooling is not the best option for the school calendar. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the traditional school year. Why change something that works so well? The final bell rings. Let's make sure this bell means that the "real" summer vacation has come.