

Writing Prompts for High School

NEW High School Cause and Effect Prompt

1. At a recent conference at the University of Chicago, David Walsh of the National Institute on Media and the Family presented a paper titled “Video Game Violence and Public Policy.”

The paper stated that “79% of American children now play computer or video games on a regular basis. Children between the ages of seven and 17 play for an average of eight hours a week.”

“The growth of electronic games has not been without controversy, however. The subset of games that feature violence, gore, and antisocial behavior has raised concern among parents, educators, child advocates, medical professionals, and policy makers.”

According to Walsh, research shows reason for concern:

“Exposure to violent games increases physiological* arousal. . . .Heart rate . . . and . . . blood pressure all increase when playing violent games. . . . These are the same types of physiological reactions bodies have when engaged in a fight.”

“Exposure to violent games increases aggressive emotions.” In one study, “students who were more ‘addicted’ to video games were significantly more likely to be in a bad mood before, during, and after play than were non-addicted students.”

“In a study of 8th and 9th graders, students who played more violent video games were also more likely to see the world as a hostile place, to get into frequent arguments with teachers, and to be involved in physical fights.”

**physiological: relating to the body’s normal functions and processes.*

Using the information presented in the paper, experiences from your own life, and/or other information you have read, write an article for your school newspaper about the negative effects of playing violent video games.

As you write your article, remember to:

- Focus on the negative effects of children playing violent video games.
- Consider the purpose, audience and context of your article.
- Organize your ideas and details effectively.
- Include specific details that clearly develop your article.
- Use standard grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

NEW High School Definition Prompt

1. Perseverance is a steady effort to maintain a course of action, purpose, or belief, often in spite of difficulty. Write a speech for a school assembly about the meaning of perseverance as it applies to personal success. You may use the following information as well as your own experiences, observations, and/or readings.

The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time you fall.
Source: Nelson Mandela

Pain is temporary. It may last a minute, or an hour, or a day, or a year, but eventually it will subside and something else will take its place. If I quit, however, it lasts forever.
Source: Lance Armstrong

I would go and look at a stonecutter hammering away at his rock perhaps a hundred times without as much as a crack showing in it. Yet at the hundred and first blow it would split in two, and I knew it was not that blow that did it, but all that had gone before.
Source: Jacob A. Riis

Do not think of today's failures, but of the success that may come tomorrow. Remember no effort that we make to attain something beautiful is ever lost. Sometime, somewhere, somehow we shall find that which we seek.
Source: Helen Keller

It's not that I'm so smart; it's just that I stay with problems longer.
Source: Albert Einstein

If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it.
Source: Michael Jordan

As you write your speech, remember to:

- Focus on the meaning of perseverance as it applies to personal success.
- Consider the purpose, audience and context of your speech.
- Organize your ideas logically and effectively.
- Include specific details that clearly develop your speech.
- Edit your speech for standard grammar and language usage.

High School Expository/Informative Prompts

1. **NEW** A television network is looking for ideas for a new television series for teenagers. Write a letter to the president of the network explaining your idea for the new television show. Include all the information that will help the president evaluate your idea, including the show's title, what kind of show it is (such as reality, comedy, music, game, or sports), specific details or features of the show that would be appealing to teenage viewers, and an example of what viewers might see in a typical episode.
2. Write an essay explaining the importance of being able to see a situation from another person's point of view.
3. Write an essay explaining why it is important to forgive.
4. Music plays an important role in every culture and in every individual's life. Write an essay explaining the role music plays in your culture or in your own life.
5. Write an essay explaining what makes a great leader.

6. Some people feel that the public school system does not adequately prepare students for the real world. Identify one improvement you think schools need to make in order to better prepare students for life after high school. Write a letter to the school board in which you describe this improvement and explain why it is needed.
7. Write an essay explaining why a decision you made was the right one.
8. You are serving on a committee that will design a new high school for your community. Choose one feature for the new high school that you will suggest to the design committee. Write a report to the committee, explaining what this feature is and why it is beneficial.
9. In order to survive, people have been known to go to great lengths and to do things they would not ordinarily do. Write an essay for your teacher that explains the lengths to which people will go in order to survive. You may use examples from real life, books, movies, or television shows to support your essay.

High School Persuasive Prompts

1. **NEW** Occasionally, students in elementary school are allowed to advance to the next grade even though they have not successfully completed the lower grade. Advocates of “social promotion” think that keeping a child in a grade for longer than a year hurts his or her development and self-esteem. Write an essay stating your opinion on this issue, making sure to support your opinion with convincing reasons.
2. Your city council is considering a proposal that would ban the use of cell phones in privately owned businesses such as restaurants, movie theaters, and retail stores. Violators would be subject to a fine. What is your position on this issue? Write a letter in which you convince the city council to support your position, giving strong evidence for your reasons.
3. In some countries every young person must serve two years of military service. Should we have a similar policy in the United States? Write an essay stating your position on this issue and supporting it with convincing reasons. Be sure to explain your reasons in detail.
4. Your state legislature is considering a bill that would require a person to earn a high school diploma before he or she could receive a driver's license. What is your position on this issue? Write a letter to convince your state legislature to accept your point of view.
5. Your city council is considering a curfew that would make it illegal for teenagers to be out on the streets after 10 p.m. on weekdays or after midnight on weekends. What is your position on this issue? Write an essay that would convince the city council to agree with you. Be sure to support your position with detailed reasons.
6. A well-known football coach once said, "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Write an essay in which you state your position and support it with convincing reasons.
7. Your local school board is considering requiring students to take part in community service programs in order to graduate. What is your position concerning this issue? Write a letter to the members of the school board stating your position and supporting it with convincing reasons. Be sure to explain your reasons in detail.

8. In an effort to save money, your local school board is considering eliminating elective subjects such as art, band, and auto mechanics. What is your position on this issue? Write a letter to the school board stating your position and supporting it with convincing reasons. Be sure to explain your reasons in detail.
9. Some people believe it's better to grow up in a small town. Other people think it's better to grow up in a big city. What is your position on this issue, and what reasons support your position?
10. Your principal is considering a new grading policy that replaces letter or number grades on report cards with pass or fail. What is your position concerning this issue? Write a letter to your principal stating your position and supporting it with convincing reasons. Be sure to explain your reasons in detail.

High School How-To Prompt

1. Your friend wants to get a part-time job after school or on weekends. Write a composition in which you tell your friend all the steps he or she should take in order to get a part-time job.

High School Descriptive Prompts

1. Think about your favorite season, and then write an essay describing that season. Include sensory details so that a reader can imagine what it is like to experience the season, and make sure it is clear from your description why this season is your favorite.
2. Think of a time when you experienced a rainstorm. In a composition, use sensory details to describe what the rainstorm was like so that a classmate could clearly imagine the experience.
3. Most people have a place where they feel comfortable and relaxed. Think of a place where you feel comfortable and relaxed. Picture it in your mind. In a composition, describe this place for your classmates so that they can imagine what it is like and how you feel there.

High School Narrative Prompts

1. **NEW** Think about a time when you faced a challenge. Write a story about that time, including how you dealt with the challenge and what its outcome was. Be sure to narrate an event or a series of events and to include specific details so that the reader can follow your story.
2. **NEW** Write a story about a time when you taught something to someone. What you taught could be a song, an activity, a game, a way of figuring out a homework problem, or something else. Be sure to narrate an event or a series of events and to include specific details so that the reader can follow your story.
3. Think about an event in your life that taught you an important lesson. Write a narrative in which you tell what happened and how you learned a lesson. Be sure to include specific details so that a reader can follow your story.

High School Biographical Narrative Prompt

1. Write a narrative about a person or character who overcomes an obstacle or a difficult situation. The character must be a person from history or from literature, movies, or television.

High School Writing About Literature Prompts

1. Read the poem "Our Son Swears He Has 102 Gallons of Water in His Body" by Naomi Shihab Nye. In an essay, discuss the son's relationship with his parents and explain what the last stanza reveals about this relationship. Be sure to include specific examples from the text to support your ideas. Remember that your response will be evaluated in two ways—on your understanding of the poem and on the quality of your writing.
2. "The Story of an Hour" tells a story about a woman who receives some shocking news. Read the story. Then, write an essay discussing Mrs. Mallard's conflict in the story and how she deals with the conflict. Be sure to include examples and details from the story to support your ideas. Do not merely summarize the story. Remember that your response will be evaluated in two ways—on your understanding of the story and on the quality of your writing.
3. "What Happened During the Ice Storm" tells a story about some farm boys and pheasants during an ice storm. Read the story. Then write an essay in which you discuss the story's theme. What does the author say about human nature and how people behave in challenging situations? Be sure to include examples and details from the story to support your ideas. Do not merely summarize the story. Remember that your response will be evaluated in two ways—on your understanding of the story and on the quality of your writing.
4. Often in literature, character relationships change and evolve. From the literary works you have read, choose one in which a character's feelings toward another character change. Write an essay in which you explain how the character's feelings changed, why the feelings changed, and how this change affects the work as a whole. Include specific examples from the work of literature you have chosen to support your points. Also include the title of the work and, if you remember, the work's author.

High School Writing About Nonfiction Prompts

1. Read "Teen Drivers," and think about the ideas the author presents. Then write to explain some ways that your views on teenage driving have been confirmed or changed as a result of reading the article. Be sure to include specific information from the article to support your explanation. Do not merely summarize the article. Remember that your response will be evaluated in two ways—on your understanding of the article and on the quality of your writing.
2. Read "A Lady in a Machine-Shop." Then write an essay explaining what skills and qualities Margaret Knight possessed that led to her success as an inventor. Be sure to include specific information from the article to support your ideas. Do not merely summarize the article. Remember that your response will be evaluated in two ways—on your understanding of the article and on the quality of your writing.