

The Independent Learner's Guide to English Writing

# THE WRITE IDEA

SERIES

Topic Idea Banks for IELTS or TOEFL Writing & Speaking

## Vol. 1 EDUCATION

VOCABULARY | SUBTOPICS | EXAMPLES | QUESTIONS | ESSAYS

in collaboration with  **writetop**

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## Introduction

The key to persuading readers not only to read an essay from start to finish, but to engage with the content is to provide them with concrete and effective ideas that support a strong thesis. This expression of ideas, moreover, must be presented in a clear, concise, and convincing manner.

The aim of this book is to help writers express strong arguments, solutions, explanations, descriptions, and so on in a timed situation (i.e., test) by offering a range of ideas about a topic. By working with keywords, questions, examples and essays, test takers will be prepared for any question on a topic that appears on a writing test. For those taking a speaking test, these ideas, vocabulary, and questions can also be used to present verbal description, arguments and more.

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## HOW TO USE THIS E-BOOK

There are no shortcuts to learning; everyone needs to actively engage the language, be active in one's practice on a daily basis, and to work hard to achieve high scores on language tests. This applies especially to the idea bank. The idea bank is something that you need to constantly build up, add to, go back to, and practice using.

Here are the key steps to getting the most benefit from The Write Idea:

1. Look over the collected keywords. You will know many of these already, but there will also be many new words for you to learn. Label them as follows:

- 1) words you already know
- 2) words you have seen or heard before and can probably guess in context
- 3) words that are completely new to you

Look up new words in the dictionary and create sentences using them. Become comfortable and confident in using these words. (Start with the #2 words, then move on to the #3 words)

There are also sets of synonyms and expressions for you to use to improve your lexical range, as certain words and expressions will often repeat themselves. For example, instead of using the word *student* several times, you can use *pupil*, *major*, or *undergraduate*. Instead of *study*, you can use *major*, *pursue*, or other verbs and expressions. Study these as well.

You can categorize the keywords according to your own groupings. You can, and should, add other words to these lists.

Go over these lists regularly. Try also connecting words to specific topics or questions to see how they might be used to create supporting arguments. Don't forget to try to use these keywords in different parts of speech (convert nouns to verbs, adjectives to adverbs, etc.).

2. Read over the questions to make sure you understand exactly what is being asked, i.e., what is the focus of the question? What are you being asked to do (give an opinion, answer yes or no, offer solutions, etc.)? Most importantly, become familiar with the question types.

Try underlining key words in the questions to make sure you have the right focus, and then list some of the vocabulary you studied that could be useful in answering the question.

3. Create a plan for a full essay for every question. Answer the following questions:

- What is the general topic?
- What is the specific question, issue, debate, etc.?
- What is your opinion, thesis?
- Provide a general outline of how you will present your arguments/ideas.

Practice until you can create a plan for any question within 3–4 minutes.

4. Look at the subtopics and the points associated with each. Try to create a variety of questions about these specific areas, then create a plan to answer them. Think of other subtopics that might come up.
5. Look over the examples and study their structures and general functionality. Connect these to the questions to which they may be applicable.  
  
Add your own examples, from your own experiences and knowledge (your own personal examples will likely be easier to recall on test day).
6. Practice writing full, timed essays every other day.
7. Look over the sample essays. These include high-end vocabulary, varied sentence structures, transitions and linking devices, and other important elements necessary for high scores on exam writing sections.

**Remember: To pass the test, you must work hard. There are no shortcuts.**

## KEYWORDS

The following groups of words are meant to help you create mental pictures of ideas associated with Education. By no means should you try to memorize all the words below; however, these words will help you tap into a large pool of ideas related to all aspects of this general topic. Your own experiences as a student will certainly provide you with material with which to write a few essays, yet there are many aspects of this field that you may have never considered and that may have never been a part of your educational experience. For example: a teacher's role beyond delivering course material, different ways to evaluate student performance, the effects of bullying, and so on.

Moreover, strong essays use a variety of words. By immersing yourself in these keywords, you can increase your vocabulary range and thereby your score on language tests that specifically evaluate this aspect of your language ability.

### Facilities/Amenities

campus	media center	lecture hall
classroom	student housing	gymnasium
auditorium	sports/athletic facility	cafeteria
daycare	dormitory/dorm room	student center
library	commons/union	school bus
language lab	art/music/film studio	sports field/arena
playground	AV lab (audio-visual lab)	stadium
lab (laboratory)	medical clinic/nurse's station	locker/change room
theatre/er	faculty lounge	computer room/center/lab
other:		

### Earned

degree	know-how	reputation
experience	award	credit(s)
diploma	recognition	qualification(s)
certificate	respect	
other:		

## Degrees

BA/B.A.: Bachelor of Arts	BBA: Bachelor of Business Administration	PhD (Doctor of Philosophy)
B.A. (Hons) (with honours)	BSC: Bachelor of Science	MA (Master of Arts)
Baccalaureate	major	graduate
post-doctoral	minor	post-graduate
undergraduate	major/minor	GED (General Education Development — high school equivalency)
BFA (Fine Arts), B.Ed. (Education), B.Comm. (Commerce), etc.	double major	
other:	Associate degree	

## Studies

theory	skills	rote
academic	tutorial	sex ed.
liberal arts	workshop	residency
special ed.	seminar	subjects
co-op (co-operative)	science fair	class
physical education	critical thinking	lecture
internship	problem solving	psychology
humanities	fine arts (art, dance, music, drama)	social sciences
sociology	ECE (Early Childhood Education)	political science
STEM fields (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics)	ESL/EFL (English as a Second/Foreign Language)	philosophy
other:		practice/practical
		apprenticeship

## Special Events

assembly	mock UN	initiation
prom	field trip	spelling bee
homecoming	orientation	fire drill
commencement	pep rally	graduation ceremony
social calendar	social	
other:		

## Schools

college	preparatory	vocational school
university	boarding school	cram school
polytechnic	nursery (school)	public/private school
community college	higher education	homeschooling
technical college	alma mater	law/medical/business school
preschool	kindergarten	language school
elementary	post-secondary	recognized
secondary	international/domestic	non-traditional
tertiary	Montessori/Waldorf	distance learning
accredited	online course	
night school		
other:		

## Course related

course of study	reading list	citation
prerequisite	rubric	curriculum
unit	learning needs	credit
syllabus	attendance	thesis
research	elective	hours
matriculate	compulsory	goals/aims
dissertation	co-op	strategies
fellowship		
other:		

## Groups

alumni	faculty	sponsors
sorority	study group	Ministry of Education
student union	student organization	student government
pledge	student body	intramural league
fraternity	Department of Ed.	UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization)
lobby groups	Board of Ed.	
student government	school team (sports)	
other:		



## School-related

policy	grant	organization
accreditation	scholarship	department
institution	administration	placement
sister school	collaboration	exchange program
other:		

## Evaluation

experiment	review	skills
assignment	revise	quiz
paper	grade	spelling
conduct	essay	oral exam
project	proficiency	feedback
exam	mark	qualitative
debate	merit	makeup test
homework	practicum	extra credit
test	re-sit a test	report card
pass	attendance	assessment
fail	take-home exam	hand in
submit	standardized testing	quantitative
lab work	SAT, GRE, GMAT, etc.	hypothesis
open-/closed-book exam	multiple choice exam	GPA (grade point average)
independent study project		
other:		

## Tools

technology	smartboard	software
chalk	projector	blackboard
textbook	audio/visual aids	device
uniform	database	hardware
marker	copier	keypad
whiteboard	printer	scanner
tablet		
other:		

## Skills

organizational	novice	writing
technical	amateur	listening
soft skills	professional	empathy
time-management	develop	public speaking
communication/ive	expert/expertise	technological
people person	proactive	analytical/critical thinking
other:		

## Student

dyslexia	bullying	jock
student life	peer pressure	rebellious
discipline	course load	identity
absence	plagiarism	nerd/geek
debt	cheat	prom king/queen
lazy	expulsion	popular
self-esteem	competition	student-centered
gifted	introvert	overachiever
student loans	extrovert	high achiever
self-educated/taught	popular	apathetic
procrastinate	gifted	underachiever
suspension	protégé	procrastinate
ADHD (attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder)	well-rounded	learning disability
other:	application	

## Teacher

advisor	tutor	guide
scholar	instructor	faculty
evaluation	pedagogue	mentor
professor	coach	trainer
lesson plan	patience	compassion
credentials	approachable	educator
disciplinarian	role model	classroom management
outcomes/objectives		
other:		

## People

bully	senior	freshman
peers	junior	trainee
classmate	principal	apprentice
dean	examiner	co-ed
lab assistant	prodigy	associate
lab technician	proctor	roommate
secretary	pupil	adjunct
specialist	sophomore	registrar
colleague	fellow	candidate (PhD.)
headmaster/mistress	hall monitor	mature student
substitute (teacher)	guest lecturer	researcher
(guidance) counsellor	exchange student	international student
TA (teaching assistant)	experts from the field	Rhodes Scholar
dorm supervisor		
other:		

## Time

gap year	due date	term
schedule	lunch	recess
sabbatical	vacation	deadline
tenure	timetable	calendar year
grace period	period	after-school
suspension	year abroad	school year
extracurricular	overdue	school/academic year
detention	timeslot/ window	Professional Development
other:	semester/trimester	Day

## General Education

knowledge	edification	witty
numeracy	breeding	trade
teaching	reform	skill
training	tutelage	pedagogy
tuition	il/literacy	didactic
paradigm shift	comprehension	collegiate
evolution	erudition	development
lesson	illumination	raising
academia	culture	guidance
discourse	ignorance	refinement
scholastic	cultivation	remedial
remedial	dogma	enlightenment
upbringing	methodology	craft
rearing	intelligence	holistic
brainwash	smart	immersion
preparation	wise	aptitude
multi-disciplinary	clever	knowledge transfer
other:	sharp	bright

## Idiomatic Language (idioms, phrasal verbs, expressions, collocations)

Note: these idioms can be used (sparingly) in formal academic writing for the IELTS, TOEFL, or other English language exams. However, be sure to use them correctly and in the appropriate context, or not at all. They can also be used in speaking test and informal letters of the IELTS General test.

fall behind	hit the books
honor roll	burn out
make up	flunk out
catch up	take up
drop out	pick on
figure out	spell out
school of thought	hand out
ace the test	take part in
know-how	pull an all-nighter
show of hands	a quick learner
hazing	teacher's pet
bookworm	eager beaver
make the grade	brush up on
learn the ABC's	fall behind
cut / skip class	sign up for
A for effort	learn one's lesson
brainstorm	cover a lot of ground
back to basics	teach someone a lesson
old school	school someone in something
full ride (scholarship)	carrot & stick approach
school of hard knocks	can't teach an old dog new tricks
other:	

## Collocations

get a degree	make a mistake	formal education
finish school	do research	eradicate illiteracy
take a test	get good grades	school system
sit for a test	take a class	teacher training
do homework	skip school	core subjects
miss a class	pass/fail a test, class	be accepted/rejected
make progress	learn by heart	join a class
do one's best	submit an assignment	attend class
lead by example	raise a hand	book smarts
other:	get a good education	street smarts

## Verbs

teach	influence	assign
initiate	quiz	delegate
educate	decipher	collaborate
train	test	participate
coach	decode	overcome
discipline	encourage	dissemble
instruct	further	disabuse
indoctrinate	absorb	transform
edify	familiarize	enlighten
drill	doubt	acclimate
hone	process	cram
form	double-check	reach
nurture	captivate	confirm
blunt	inquire	prep
rear	question	impress
school	mold	digest
advise	require	reveal
instill	ascertain	clarify
dispel	shape	guide
cultivate	stunt	inform
dull	lead	impart
nourish	accomplish	sharpen
sway	demand	acquaint
support	register	broaden
convert	imbue (with)	inculcate
confuse	drive	provoke
persuade	reproach	motivate
foster	refer	designate
preach	cite	attribute
dissuade	recommend	endorse
others:		

## COMMON TERMS & ALTERNATIVES

If you can avoid repeating words in an essay, do so. The following words are the most commonly used in essays on Education. You should not have to use the word “student” ten times in your essay. In fact, this will weaken your writing as there are other words that work just as well and can be applied in different contexts.

In the examples below, the underlined, *italicized*, or **bolded** words can be replaced with the words/expressions beneath them.

Note: You may have to make adjustments for syntax. Make sure you know which words are appropriate for which context.

### Study

Students who *study* the humanities can learn critical thinking.

- ... *major in* ...
- ... *minor in* ...
- ... *concentrate on* ...
- ... *whose field of study is* ...
- ... *whose concentration is* ...
- ... *focus on* ...
- ... *whose education revolves around* ...
- ... *learn* ...
- ... *explore* ...
- ... *conduct research in* ...
- ... *examine* ...
- ... *take courses in* ...
- ... *enroll in courses in* ...

## Learn

If one wants to really *learn* something, one must dedicate oneself to that topic.

*gain knowledge of*

*hone particular skills*

*acquire skills in*

*absorb ideas (about)*

*grasp the material/information (about)*

*take in knowledge (of/about)*

*familiarize oneself with*

*read up on a topic*

*master a topic/skill*

*review material on*

## Student

Note: Each of following is specific to a particular context.

pupil

junior

senior

freshman

learner

trainee

high schooler

researcher

apprentice

disciple

novice

sophomore

protégé

post-doctoral

attendee/participant

undergraduate (bachelor)

graduate (master)

postgraduate (doctorate)

scholar (professional student)

## College

## provide with

Colleges have a duty to *provide* students *with* skills for the real world.

Universities ...

Tertiary academic institutions ...

Institutions of higher education/learning ...

Post-secondary schools ...

... *give* ...

... *equip* ... *with* ...

... *supply/furnish* ... *with* ...

... *prepare* ... *by giving them* ...



## Attend

## Obtain

Many people go to college in order to *get* a degree ...

... attend ...

... *obtain* ...

... enroll in ...

... *acquire* ...

... enter ...

... *pursue* ...

... join ...

... *secure* ...

Many people complete courses/studies toward a degree in...

Many people take courses to enhance/upgrade/develop their skills in...

## Teacher/Teach

It is the responsibility of teachers to *teach* their pupils the fundamentals of any subject.

... educators ...

... *educate their pupils about* ...

... professors ...

... *instruct their pupils on* ...

... instructors ...

... *train their pupils on* ...

... lecturers ...

... *enlighten their pupils on* ...

... trainers ...

... *expound ... to* ...

... tutors ...

... *ground their pupils in* ...

... coaches ...

... *prepare their pupils in* ...

... mentors ...

... *explain to their pupils* ...

... faculty members ...

... *edify their pupils on* ...

... *develop their pupils' basic understanding in* ...

... *imbue their pupils with a basic understanding of* ...

Note: If you find that your practice essays tend to repeat certain words, or if there are words you often confuse with other words, write them here and make sure you have synonyms for them and are aware of every word's meaning and contextual usage.

This image shows a full page of blank white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a guide for writing. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## EDUCATION SUBTOPICS

Education is a very broad field. It involves much more than teachers and students, classrooms and campuses. The following subtopics present various aspects of Education that are often overlooked. By familiarizing yourself with these ideas, you should be prepared to view Education from a wide perspective and write about any topic that concerns it.

### Study Abroad vs. Domestic

**Abroad:** *cons*—more expensive: international student tuition, currency exchange, need to pay for housing and boarding (food, groceries, other essentials), shipping equipment and supplies or buying new (computer, specialized items, etc.); culture shock, need to adjust to new social cues, expectations, language, social etiquette, and norms (gender issues, religious tolerance/intolerance, politics, etc.), no social circle at first, relationships are different (between sexes, student-teacher, coworkers, etc.), homesickness, inability to support family with part-time work (need visa), financial burden, expectations (school's, peers', professors', family's, etc.), new temptations, distractions, influences; *pros*— master new language and skills, broader academic and work experiences and opportunities after studies (internship, mentorship, apprenticeship), network, global experience and network, learn new standards

**Domestic:** *cons*— remain in small bubble, smaller social circle, no global experience, limited new interactions, no new challenges, family pressure is closer; *pros*— cheaper (can live at home, domestic fees), established relationships, family and friends support, familiar with surroundings so can concentrate on academics, can work part-time, can find work after studies without need for visa

other:

### Private vs. Public School

**Private:** image conscious (elite, reputable, upper-class, superior; others see as snobby, entitled, privileged, detached), alumni network (not what you know but who you know, old boys' network), high tuition, ancillary costs/fees (uniform, social activities, keeping appearances (looking like everyone else), extra tutoring, etc.), very competitive (academics, popularity), high pressure, better staffed schools, higher rates of acceptance to college, better academic preparation, more freedom in curriculum development, better equipped (tech in classroom, facilities, etc.), may require a commute, different worldview, cultural identity

**Public:** image as inferior/common, middle-class, free in most countries (government subsidized), attendance based on location (parents choose where to live based on local school reputation), core curriculum set by government, teachers' strike, local culture, more integrated (not exclusive), majority of citizens educated here, less isolated, real world experience, success based on hard work, have to stand out

other:

## Studying Online vs. On Campus

**Online:** *pros*— gain computer literacy by using common tools (Microsoft Office suite, Google docs, Photoshop, etc.), cheaper (only tuition and materials is same, no commute, own housing and board, etc.), set own schedule, comfort of one's living room, ability to work part time, good for introvert, can replay video lectures; *cons*— no access to computer lab and assistance, technical support (must be self-sufficient), self-study, need to be self-driven and disciplined, loneliness, no face-to-face interactions with peers (on-screen only and limited), harder to meet new people, accreditation (not all online programs are recognized), stigma in workplace, employer attitudes, bad for extrovert

**On campus:** *pros*— ask teacher questions directly and receive answers quickly, better networking (including outside one's field), after-class interactions, respectability of program, more facilities, more student services (writing lab, computer lab, fitness center, library, etc.), make friends; *cons*— ancillary fees, crowded classroom/lecture hall, higher costs (accommodations, transportation, facilities fees, socializing, etc.), more time wasted getting to and from classes, may need to be away from family, need strong note-taking skills, can't miss too many classes, peer pressure (drinking and parties, have partner, fashion and trends, etc.)

other:

## Vocational/Technical School or College/University

**Vocational/Technical:** practical & concrete knowledge, ready to be employed after graduation, marketable skills, learn trades and crafts (carpentry, mechanics, graphic design, bookkeeping, etc.), instructors have real-world experience, laypersons, hands-on training, experts from the field, cheaper tuition, certificates and diplomas, 6 months to tow years (depending on program), college/university students often attend after their degree studies in order to gain employable skills, more accessible, local, easier admissions process and requirements, leads to lower salary positions, offer more strict schedule but also night school, offers courses based on market demands, increasingly popular as more practical

**College/University:** theoretical knowledge, abstract studies, professional studies (medicine, engineering, law, etc.), B.A. seen as increasingly meaningless in many countries, degree studies are much more expensive (tuition, textbooks, fees, equipment, etc.), academic professors (often have less real-world experience), ivory tower, highly educated scholars (write articles, books), 4+ years of studies, often graduate without employable skills and need training in something practical, leads to postgraduate studies in a specialty, can teach in college, certain professions must have degrees, more professional network, peers are driven and hard-working, selective admission (top tier candidates), college experience (social life, pressures, etc.), more facilities

other:

## Learning a Foreign Language

**Benefits:** more access to global employment (marketable skill), wider variety of available positions, can make more friends, diverse international experiences, can travel, can read foreign books and see foreign movies, more access to diverse cultures, stronger brain is healthier brain (help fight diseases such as dementia)

**Challenges:** levels: (low-, high-) beginner, intermediate, advanced, fluent, native-like, near-native), takes time and energy and often money (though with self-discipline and effort can be done for free), cultural connections to language (e.g., can't understand jokes even if understand the language), finding people to practice with, frustrations, requires a high level of patience

**Byproduct:** *positive:* culture sharing, influence, foreign ideas and concepts, integration, global networking, employable skill, global mobility, international trade and cooperation, personal relationships (friends, partners, etc.) *negative:* culture loss, assimilation, loss of identity

**Learning:** native vs. nonnative speaker, textbooks vs. real-life situations, immersion (learn the language in the place it's spoken), practice, online forums & courses, language school, elementary school, online videos, the younger the better to start learning, good brain exercise for older students

other:

## Approaches to Studying: Theory vs. Practical Training

Arts/Humanities vs. STEM (science, technology, engineering, math); School vs. Internship/Apprenticeship

**Theory:** general knowledge, base/foundation, essence of a topic, deeper understanding of how things work, abstract thinking, develop critical thinking and imagination, learn to adapt to new ideas, potential for new discoveries, broaden one's horizons, brain development, transcends cultural differences, humanistic approach, gain transferable skills, necessary for some professions—medicine, law, engineering, architecture, arts

**Practical Training:** gain employable skills, start working right away, gain advantages in workplace competition, specialization/expertise in particular fields, can train others, limited knowledge but deeper, less flexible employment opportunities, more narrow-minded, dependence on industry for employability, more hands-on and accessible to more people

**Best Approach:** a combination of above—theory reinforced with practical skills and vice versa, university students often go to other school to gain employable skills and training, theory allows flexibility to adapt to context-specific training

**Arts/Humanities:** builds imagination, stimulates innovation through out-of-the-box thinking, human element, helps with preservation of culture (language, society, history), cross-cultural tolerance and communication, wider perspective (social, global), do not repeat mistakes of past (history), can be utilized in many fields including marketing, advertising, journalism, etc.

**STEM:** necessary for today's digital world and its advancing technology, automated workplace, can deliver greater benefits to greater numbers, concrete applications (water desalination, building, agriculture, internet, education, etc.), high demand in workplace, often lacks in artistic creativity but can lead to interesting and useful inventions

**School:** set curriculum, peers and fellows, guidance, knowledgeable and trained teachers, standard pedagogy, socialization, strict rules, group mentality, too much theory

**Apprenticeship:** limited peers (usually older), less social interaction, hands-on training, skilled and experienced trainers, real-world experience, great for resume, outside-the-box thinking, immediate employability

other:

## Technology in the Classroom

**Devices:** smartphones, tablets, laptops/notebooks, smartboard, e-books/e-readers, scanners, digital dictionaries, translation apps

**Impacts:** *positive*— access to more and unlimited information, speed, interactive learning (with global reach), create a global village, globalized learning, on-demand knowledge, aid independent learning, multi-media skills, multi-faceted (audio, video), increased engagement as student more interested, easier collaboration, adaptability to changing world, ready for the labour market that is increasingly digitized and automated

*negative*— creates distractions for younger students, ADHD, dangerous as the internet is full of inaccuracies and false information, Wikipedia, plagiarism, cheating, teachers and students become lazy as dependence on tech grows, addiction, lose skills (handwriting, spelling, grammar, research, basic math), cyberbullying, increase costs for schools (teacher training, equipment, maintenance, tech support, IT staff, etc.) means rising tuition costs and fees

*both*— instant gratification for students and teachers; teaching aid, requires training, replacing printed materials (books, magazines, newspapers)

**Parental involvement:** parents lag behind their children in terms of usability, may need to pay for extra tutoring, getting harder to control what kids see online (especially if kids know more than parents), discipline, safety (cyberbullying, predators, scammers)

other:

## Teacher

**Qualities:** patience, motivation, inspiration, care, empathy, thirst for knowledge, eagerness, guidance, counselling, good listeners, passion, objective

**Qualifications:** B.Ed., certification, Teacher's College, specialization, practicum

**Types:** kindergarten teacher, K-12, assistant professor, teacher's assistant, adjunct, tenured, tutor, coach, mentor, emeritus (retired)

**Duties:** teach, guide, educate, tutor, lead, evaluate, assess, test, discipline, babysit, shepherd, manage classroom, learn more than students so can teach them new things, administration (paperwork, reports, recommendations, etc.), in charge of many, trained to assess and overcome problems, cares about school's reputation, knows the curriculum and national requirements, knows what universities demand, knows the subject material, repetitive work

**Parents as teachers:** emotionally attached, biased, subjective, vested interest, rely on teachers, not qualified, more or less strict, lacking motivational skills, disciplining skills, care about family name/reputation, do not understand the modern social environment of schools, were students in a different time and environment (can't relate to being a child or a student anymore)

other:

### Dorms vs. Off-Campus Housing

**Dormitory:** *pros*— can make new friends right away, on campus so don't need to waste time commuting, cheaper (dorm rooms are usually furnished and come with meal plan), safe, kept clean by janitorial staff; *cons*— can't choose roommate, can't control other tenants (parties, noise, games, etc.), many rules means less freedom, like living with parents, less privacy, communal bathroom, dorm politics, rumors and gossip

**Off-campus:** *pros*— more freedom and can set own rules, can choose roommate(s), can control social environment, have privacy and can set study hours at one's convenience, gain life experience (paying bills, cleaning after oneself, doing own chores, etc.), can bring friends over anytime, can choose the neighbourhood one likes, can feel a separation from school in off hours, easier to find part-time job nearby; *cons*— more expensive so might need more than one roommate and a part-time job, need to supply own furnishings and appliances, need to know how to cook, need to do own cleaning, need to motivate oneself to study, easy to lose focus on school, have to deal with landlord (can be good or bad)

other:

### Tests vs. Projects/Independent Studies

**Tests:** level playing field (everyone takes same test), ability to adapt to situation, real-world demands, conformity, get an overall picture of a student's progress, relative achievement (relative scores to other students), regional comparisons, test of ability to prepare for a test, mean score, not personal, high pressure, stress, anxiety, make or break (pass and succeed or fail), university entrance exam preparation, concrete numbers (objective, remove biases)

**Projects:** learn teamwork and collaboration/cooperation, requires self-motivation and discipline, manage deadlines, learn to ask for assistance, build research skills, develop a skill set (organization, time management, critical thinking, writing), easier to cheat, can pay others to do the work (outsourcing, plagiarism, internet sources), resourcefulness

other:

## Homework

**Student:** *pros*— reinforce lessons of the day, eliminate misunderstandings, can identify weak areas and work on them, keep up with classmates (have more time to solve problems without holding up others), can get extra help (parents, tutors, etc.), may enjoy the subject and want to learn more, have a sense of accomplishment and independence, learn time management and organizational skills, practice makes perfect, show parents hard work, real-world demands (workplace, other commitments, etc.); *cons*— increased pressure from demands and deadlines, using up more time, can't engage in other hobbies/activities, if subject is not interesting than extra boredom, remain indoors, repetition, competition with other students, may not add anything to one's understanding

**Teachers:** *pros*— can make sure students are following the material, help manage the class by keeping everyone on the same page, can reduce lesson planning time by checking homework in class, can reduce tests and quizzes by evaluating and grading homework assignments; *cons*— burn out (too much extra work involved making the workday too long and unpaid time), less time for teaching new material & more time checking, parents' increasing demands, students lose interest or get annoyed

other:

## Discipline/Motivation

**Self:** set own goals, meet deadlines, set one's own parameters for accomplishing a goal, push oneself to work, easy to procrastinate, need extra drive and self-inspiration, learn by doing/from experience, get to know oneself, know what one wants and go after it, can easily lose direction

**Others (teachers, parents, society):** use punishment and deterrence or rewards (carrot and stick approach) to drive students, can offer tradeoffs (e.g., higher grades for better toys, etc.) punish by withholding, motivate with incentives

**How:** need to establish clear aims and targets, have a mentor and/or role model, observe others and mimic, ask questions

other:

## Internet

*positive:* useful educational tool, unlimited fast resources, global connectivity and engagement, wider network, can ask others, discover new things, places, ideas, share and collaborate on a global scale, get involved in projects regardless of location, learn employable skills

*negative:* unreliable information (anyone can post info and often post false things), need to sift through endless data, open to hackers, can be victim of anonymous cyberbullying, distractions (games, ads, videos), need to worry security (passwords, identity theft, abuse), addiction, inappropriate sites and messages, young kids lack world experience and can be naïve and preyed on

*both:* access to social media, Wi-Fi mobility, 24/7 connectivity, can connect with anyone (new friends, predators)

other:



## Bullying

**Victim:** trauma, psychological and emotional scars, distraction from schoolwork, school as microcosm of world, rough path to adulthood, obstacles to learning and growing, kids can be cruel, status and appearance affect how others treat you, can lose motivation, retreat into a shell

**Bully:** also a victim (home life), need for attention, peer pressure, compensate for faults or lacks, revenge/rebel (against system, society, parents, teachers, others), use social media, the Other, often grow into sociopaths, can do physically or anonymously online

**Treatment/Punishment:** zero-tolerance, schools can expel, make bullies have counselling, parent-teacher meetings, show a better way, need to understanding motivations and guide to a different way, lend an ear (listen to), pay attention to cries for help

other:

## Miscellaneous

**Gap year** (a year away from school between high school and college): can work or travel, experience life, rest the brain, find oneself, lose/find a direction, lose focus, lose momentum, hard to return to disciplined study and focus, get work experience and make money, become adult/mature

**Volunteering (as a student):** gain experience, social engagement, community outreach, extra credits for school, extracurricular activity (looks great on application/resume/CV/Personal Statement, etc.), appreciate what one has, a break from books and classrooms, different voices and insights, learn from those outside one's usual social sphere/circle

**Uniforms vs. Free Choice:** standardization/uniformity, focus on studies not fashion, popularity not a matter of money or style, status quo, learn responsibility by caring for uniform, consequences of one's choices (image set by clothing), public opinion, gossip, personal identity, experimentation, find social circle

**Genders:** equal abilities, preferred subjects for boys and girls, dominance in certain areas (e.g engineering for men, nursing for women, etc.), changing attitudes, modern gender roles, social/cultural/religious attitudes, more working women means more educated women, more employable people is a benefit to workforce/economy, different perspectives, patriarchy is old-fashioned, pay equity (equal pay for equal work)

**Continuing Education:** evolve to meet demands of the market, the strongest/smarter survive, the world changes—need to adapt, automation and better tech will lead to job losses that will need new skill sets, stay ahead of the competition, improve in one's own field with new insights, methods, systems, etc., digitized environment, learn (cutting-edge, state-of-the-art, keep up-to-date), career change, safety net, new hobbies, retirement activities, lifelong learning, active brain=healthy brain, prevent dementia, reduce boredom, stay fresh, teachers should also be students, relate to students, keep up with younger generation, productive employees, extra workload, takes time, added pressure and cost but need to invest to compete

**Health:** nutrition, exercise, school cafeteria, physical education classes, demonstrate consequences of unhealthy lifestyle choices, establish good habits, teach parents to reinforce healthy lifestyle, remove sugary drinks from school vending machines, child obesity is huge problem, hygiene, lifelong benefits

**Money:** teach students to appreciate money they did not earn, start work etiquette classes before they are of legal working age, teach them to manage their money and make appropriate choices, tradeoffs (e.g., video game now or save for bicycle later), financial basics, prioritizing, making sacrifices, learn to figure out the value of things, big picture thinking, long-term vs. instant gratification

**Soft skills:** public speaking, sharing a space, sharing equipment, learning to read body and facial cues, gestures, tolerance, effective communication (written, oral), listening skills (listen to others, not always try to speak), social cues, social norms, worldviews, cultural differences (handshake vs. bow vs. kiss on the cheek, etc.); hard skills are those you use specifically for your job (driving, carpentry, graphic design, nursing, typing, bookkeeping, etc.)

**Sports:** major focus in many schools, student athletes, need determination, learn skills such as strategizing, exercise, health, desire to win, teamwork, school spirit and reputation, athletics vs. academics, sports stars can be school heroes, boys teams and girls teams, sports teams are a major source of funding for American colleges, scholarships for athletes, commercialization, learn the thrill of victory and the pain of defeat, relate to everyday life (win some battles, lose others), learn fair play and sportsmanship, learn to sacrifice

other:

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS

By knowing what to expect, you can prepare for any scenario. These questions are varied enough to cover many aspects of Education such that you can draw on the ideas you have prepared to answer these questions and apply them to any that may appear on a test. Also, you will notice that some of the questions cover similar topics, yet these are presented differently according to the question type.

Make sure to distinguish between those questions that ask for an opinion, those that do not, and those that are hybrid.

**Yes / No** (don't forget the *why* or *how* questions that may be included)

1. Should college students be forced to take courses outside their main area of study? Why?
2. Does a smaller class size contribute to students' academic performance? How?
3. Should a teacher be allowed to ask a student who is being disruptive to leave the classroom? Why? Why not?
4. In your opinion, would introducing technology such as tablets into the classroom help students be more engaged? How? Why?
5. Do you think that students who graduate from secondary school these days have enough general knowledge of the world they live in? Explain.
6. The world is changing at an increasingly fast pace, especially when it comes to the workplace and the technologies used therein. As a result, many older workers can't keep up with the changing needs of their industries. Should people in their 40s or 50s be required to take night courses to keep up with changes in technology?
7. Do you think employers should make it mandatory for older staff to take additional college courses in order to keep up with changes in their industry? Why?
8. Are students with high grades always smarter or better equipped for the workplace than those with average grades?
9. As the popularity of texting, tweeting, social networking, and blogging increases, many educators fear that future generations of students will read fewer books and essays and lose critical thinking and comprehension skills. Is technology changing our reading habits? How might this affect future generations?

other:

## Agree / Disagree

**Do you agree or disagree with the following:**

**Do you agree or disagree with this statement/belief/idea?**

**To what extent do you agree with this statement?**

**Do you agree that \_\_\_\_\_?**

10. Schools should focus more on the STEM (science technology engineering mathematics) courses and less on the fine arts (painting, music, dance, theatre).
11. Schools should prepare students for the labour market and not waste time and resources on theoretical knowledge.
12. A child's education is the responsibility of the parents more than the schools.
13. Governments should make higher education free for everyone who cannot afford it.
14. Parents should start teaching their children English at the same time they start to learn their native tongue.
15. Teachers should be paid according to the results their students achieve on standardized tests.

OR:

Teachers' salaries should reflect the feedback they receive on teacher evaluations conducted by their students.

16. Young people do not have anything to teach older people.
17. Learning skills at a technical college is more valuable than learning theoretical knowledge at university.
18. Students should never question their teachers.
19. There are benefits to studying abroad, at least for part of one's higher education. All students should try to include at least one year of a study-abroad program in their university or college education.
20. Schools should teach students how to maintain a healthy lifestyle by including classes on good nutrition and exercise in the curriculum.

other:

## Compare / Contrast / Discuss

21. Some students prefer to study near home while others want to study in another city or even another country. Compare these two options and say which you would prefer and why.
22. More and more companies are willing to view graduates of online universities on an equal level as those who attended brick-and-mortar classrooms. Discuss the advantages of both styles of learning as it relates to the working world.
23. Many parents these days want their children's education to focus more on the sciences and mathematics because they believe this will better prepare their children for a good career. Some parents still appreciate the value of the arts in education. Compare the value of both academic approaches and say which you think is more beneficial for children.
24. Some students go directly to university or college after high school while others take a gap year to work or travel. Discuss both approaches and say which you prefer.
25. Some teachers prefer to evaluate their students' progress by asking for an independent study project such as an essay or presentation. Others prefer to use multiple choice tests. Compare the benefits of both evaluation styles and say which you think is a better reflection of a student's ability.
26. Many schools these days require their students to contribute a minimum number of volunteer hours doing community service, believing this teaches them to be responsible and socially engaged. Some parents think this is a needless distraction. Compare both views and say which you agree with.
27. Many parents complain that their children have too much homework. Others complain that their children are not given enough homework. Discuss both views and give your own opinion.
28. Some schools base their teachers' salaries according to their students' performance on standardized tests. Others base it on teacher evaluations submitted by students at the end of the school year. Discuss both approaches. Do you think there is a better way to decide a teacher's value?

other:

## Advantages and/or Disadvantages

29. The most effective way to improve one's language ability is to live and study in a country where that language is spoken. What are some of the benefits of living abroad in order to learn another language? What are some disadvantages? Which do you think is greater?

30. As children work more and more on electronic devices, such as laptops, tablets and smartphones, many are losing their handwriting skills. Many parents want teachers to reinforce this skill by making students submit handwritten assignments. What would the advantages and disadvantages of doing this be?

31. In order to prepare students for the working world, which often requires public speaking skills, many English teachers require to make their students deliver a speech in front of their classmates. What are some advantages of this practice? (What other skills should teachers help their students develop?)

32. More and more schools are adopting a zero-tolerance policy towards bullying, meaning that a student caught bullying others, even once, is automatically expelled. Do the advantages of such a policy outweigh the disadvantages? Why?

33. Many educators believe that teaching young children a foreign language early helps develop their brains. Others think that this weakens their grasp of their native tongue. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of teaching young children a foreign language and say which you think are greater.

34. Some students prefer to study online, while others prefer to study in a physical classroom. Compare the advantages of each approach and say which you prefer.

35. In many countries, students are encouraged to work part-time during high school. What are the advantages and disadvantages of doing this?

36. Some people believe that young people today do not get enough regular exercise. They want schools to increase their focus on physical education and to implement a regular exercise program everyday. Would the advantages of doing this outweigh the disadvantages?

ther:

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**Open** What (cause, reason, effect, solution)? Why? How? Who? When?

37. How does good handwriting ability help students?
38. What are some ways teachers can motivate students?
39. Why might older people feel uncomfortable about returning to school for further training or education?
40. How can a person benefit from continuing education? Who can benefit?
41. What are some ways schools can reduce bullying?
42. Some people think teaching good behaviour is the responsibility of parents. Others argue that it should be taught at schools. Who should be responsible for teaching young students good manners in public?
43. Why is it important for young children to learn history?
44. Why is it important that young people learn how to handle money while they are still in school?
45. When should students start to think about their future academic and/or career goals?
46. What are some possible causes for students losing motivation in pursuing their studies?
47. Not all things can be learned in books and classrooms. There are things a person will only learn when he or she travels. This is why parents should encourage their children to study abroad as part of their overall education. What are some things a person can learn only when away from home? Why is this so?
48. Many universities and colleges in English-speaking countries have seen a large increase over the last few years in the number of international students who study at their campuses. What are some of the factors that have led to this growth in international student populations?
- other:

## Choice / Preference

49. Some students prefer to take a gap year after high school. Others prefer to go straight to college. Which option do you prefer? Why?

50. Teachers these days often make use of technological devices in the classroom to make lessons more engaging for students. Which of the following do you think would have the greatest impact in a classroom? Why?

Tablet

Smartboard

Laptop

Smartphone

51. Some teachers are very strict and demand students remain quiet in class and pay attention to the lecture. Other teacher are more friendly and encourage discussions in their classes. Which type of teacher do you prefer? Why?

52. Teachers have many options when it comes to evaluating their students' understanding of the class materials: they can give them a test, assign a research project, have them deliver a group presentation, or have them write essays. Which of these options do you think is the most effective? Why?

53. In today's world, there are so many important issues for students to think about that teachers have a difficult time choosing a topic for their students to concentrate on. Which of the following issues should teachers make sure their students learn about the most? Why?

The Environment

Global Politics

Money Management

Social Responsibility

other:



## EXAMPLES

Examples are used in all essay types to support an argument or a point made. They should be concrete, that is, real and specific, not abstract and vague, and they must be relevant to the context of the essay and especially the paragraph they are in.

It is very important to note that examples can be personal, they can come from related fields (education examples for an education topic), or even unrelated fields as long as the light they shed on the argument/point is clear. Test takers should keep in mind that examples must appear real and true but do not necessarily have to be so. For example, you may reference research that doesn't exist, or the results of surveys that were never presented to anyone. The key is to present the ideas in these "examples" in a way that supports the point made and that has a sense of authority (i.e., it "sounds" believable, realistic).

Don't forget to introduce your example:

For example, for instance, to illustrate, in fact, this idea is supported by, take \_\_\_\_\_ as an example; etc.

### Scientific examples:

**Research, Studies, Surveys, Polls—conducted, presented, held, looked into, released by; found, concluded, backed up, supported, reinforced the idea that..., etc.**

**Researchers, Sociologists, Linguists, Scientists, Teachers' Colleges, Doctors, ... at place/organization/school, etc.**

**Statistics—numbers, percentages, 120 per 1000, twice/four times more likely to, half as many, etc.**

Research conducted by Harvard University's Faculty of Education found that students who spend at least one hour doing homework every day are three times more likely than their peers to have above-average grades.

Recent studies released by the Ministry of Labour found that graduates with strong writing skills were able to secure employment within six months of leaving school, whereas those whose writing skills were poor often had to return to school to improve this aspect of their skillset.

This idea is supported by scientific polls in which participants were asked whether they would be willing to complete their studies abroad if this meant a better chance of finding a good job after graduation; over 85% of respondents said they would.

Sociologists at the University of California at Berkeley who had studied the effects of bullying on young children found that as many as 280 students per 1000 had experienced some form of abuse during their academic careers, and as many as 30 were emotionally scarred by the experience.

In fact, a Cambridge University study on student behavior, conducted by the Behavioral Sciences Department, concluded that students who wore uniforms at school were more likely to be organized and conform to set standards upon entering the workplace; on the other hand, those who were free to dress as they pleased were found to be more innovative and open to risk-taking.

(Note: None of the examples above are true. The schools named in these examples may or may not have conducted the research cited. These examples are presented to illustrate ways to present supporting evidence in your essays.)

### Personal examples:

To illustrate, take my cousin Vincent; after several failed attempts to score well on law school admissions tests, he was finally accepted to a program based on his performance at a mock court session where the presiding guest judge, a law professor, recognized Vincent's exceptional talent and gave him a chance to demonstrate it at his law school.

To support this idea, I need only look as far as my aunt. After graduating from high school, she married her boyfriend and they traveled the world together. While traveling, she learned how to write magazine articles and take professional quality photographs. Today, she is a leading travel writer for a well-known magazine and makes a very good living despite never having gone to college.

My sister is a perfect example of this. At the age of thirty-five she decided that she wanted a career change. She went back to school to learn coding and now owns her own business as a front-end website developer and has many small businesses as clients.

My own experience with this is a perfect example. While taking a year off between college and high school, I worked to save money to travel. I then spent six months backpacking through Asia and met many people who wanted to learn English. I then returned to school and decided to major in English so that I could travel the world as an English teacher.

### Concrete, real-world examples:

**Steve Jobs:** Co-founder of Apple Inc.; dropped out of college; took a calligraphy course out of interest, which led to fonts on Mac; gave a commencement speech to Stanford graduates, told them to "stay hungry" follow their passions and that "the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it."; school friends were in two groups: those interested in electronics and engineering and those interested in the arts and literature.

**Khan Academy:** A free online education platform that uses videos and online materials to provide high-quality education to anyone with internet access; a non-profit created in 2006. This company aims to help educate the world, especially those who would be unable to better themselves through education that would otherwise be unaffordable.

**MOOC: Massive Open Online Courses**—see Khan Academy above

**Wikipedia:** A free online encyclopedia, whose entries are posted by random and unverifiable sources; citations are often lacking, so the veracity of the material is questionable; however, it can provide a good starting point to further research and it provides at least a basic idea of a topic. Most teachers do not consider it a true source of information and prohibit students from using it in their bibliographies or Works Cited pages.

**Social media: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram:** These internet-based social platforms allow friends and strangers to connect to each other from anywhere in the world in real time to share messages, photos, videos, news, etc. These are also used as a tool to spread false information and can be used as well to prey on victims. Young people are often targeted by predators and bullies and many schools have started to teach students about proper etiquette and safe practices on these platforms.

**Waldorf and Montessori teaching methods:** These are nontraditional teaching approaches based on a pedagogical theory that a child can teach him/herself and peers, within limits. The systems do not focus on tests but rather independent learning tasks that allow the students to find expression based on freedom rather than a strict adherence to rules and standards.

### Concrete, yet general examples:

To illustrate, consider the American chemistry expert who only studied science-related courses; this person may be highly qualified in his field, but because he never studied the humanities or geography, he will have a difficult time understanding the ways of his Indian, Chinese, or Brazilian colleagues. In the long term, this will be a liability that may overshadow his technical expertise.

Take for instance, a young girl whose parents are both overweight; if her school does not educate her on the consequences of poor dietary choices and she only learns about this aspect of her life from observing her parents, it is very likely that she too will become obese and her health will be at risk.

For example, a 40-year-old who is not adept at using application software on his phone, but whose industry is moving in that direction, may be replaced by a younger, more tech-savvy employee who can provide the company with what it needs.

### Facts:

According to the Times Higher Education Rankings (2014) of the top 100 ranked universities in the world, 46 are based in the US (10—UK; 6—Germany).

In 2014, the graduation rate of high school students in the US and Canada was over 80%.

The number of people who speak (as a first language): Chinese (Mandarin)—900 million; Spanish—430 million; English—339 million

English is spoken as a first or second language by 1.5 billion people.

English is the most used language on the internet but this rate is dropping: Chinese and Arabic are climbing fast.

### Terms:

*Zero-tolerance policy*— a policy that does not allow for any exceptions when a rule is broken. For instance if a person is caught bullying even once, he/she is to be expelled from the school with no second chance.

*3 strikes*— a term from baseball: when a batter is served three strikes he loses his turn to bat again. A person in everyday life is given two chances. On the third occurrence of a rule break he/she is kicked out/disciplined.

*Core curriculum*— the subjects all students must take regardless of school or location (English math social science).

other:

## SAMPLE ESSAYS

**Some schools make all students wear uniforms, while other schools allow the students to choose what to wear.**

**Which approach do you think is better for students' overall development? Why?**

Many people believe that schools' main functions are to educate young people and ready them for adulthood. Accordingly, some people advocate a dress code as a way to help kids concentrate on their studies. Others counter that giving students options better prepares them for a future in which they will have to make their own choices. In my opinion, uniforms should be mandatory from freshman to junior years, with seniors free to choose their outfits.

The main argument for mandating uniforms is that doing so removes certain social pressures and creates an atmosphere of academic rather than social competition. In other words, students can differentiate themselves not by the labels on their shirts, but by the scores they achieve on tests. This argument is reinforced by studies demonstrating that institutions requiring uniforms experience fewer incidents of bullying, a key feature of which is singling out anyone deemed vulnerable based on their outward appearance. Uniforms remove these social struggles, allowing young learners to develop academically.

In the real world, however, adults compete both in and out of the workplace, and quite often these contests are judged by material standards, such as one's car or one's clothes. Schools would therefore better serve their pupils by allowing them to dress as they please, at least during their final year. This would provide seniors a first-hand experience of the consequences of making a choice and offer them a taste of adult social reality. Moreover, this freedom can also act as an early exercise in shaping one's identity; for example, wearing torn jeans and a stained T-shirt might allow one into the company of struggling artists, but it certainly would not open the doors to a Wall Street lounge. In other words, young people must learn that their clothing choices may affect their lifestyles as well.

In conclusion, school life is a microcosm of adulthood, and teens ought to prepare for it by accumulating qualifications as well as an understanding that there are consequences to their choices. Requiring uniforms early on, with an additional year in which to make up their own minds may be the best option for both schools and students.

(358)

**As Artificial Intelligence advances and becomes a common part of everyday life, some people worry that computerized systems will make many jobs obsolete. Some even worry that AI will eventually do this to teachers and take over their children's and grandchildren's classrooms.**

**Do you think a computer can replace a human teacher? Why? Why not?**

As "thinking" computers move from fiction to reality, people are concerned about their children's education. While it is inevitable that Artificial Intelligence (AI) will someday enter the education system, I highly doubt computers can manage a classroom full of children since they lack certain traits only human teachers have.

Among these traits is empathy. Machines cannot feel, therefore they cannot sense emotional responses and needs in children, who themselves have not fully developed the ability to make themselves understood. In other words, young children depend heavily on their parents' and teachers' abilities to guess what is on their minds. A machine, for all its intelligence, can only be programmed with facts and figures and to respond accordingly; it cannot be taught to react to tears, tantrums, or sullen silences, nor can it equate a student's irrationally aggressive behaviour with his lack of comprehension of the material or even something as simple as hunger.

Conversely, empathy and previous experience enables teachers to expect the unexpected, to make quick adjustments, and to improvise. Of course, computers can calculate scenarios based on data, but they cannot respond properly to human kids acting unpredictably, as kids often do. For example, a computerized instructor could respond to a fire alarm and usher students out of the building to a safe area. However, a computer could not react to an angry child's rebellion by appealing to her rationality, or to a sensitive student's response to a peer's abuse, or to a slumping sports team that requires a pep talk. Human teachers, who have lived through these scenarios themselves, can draw on their life experiences to deal with any situation, be it practical or emotional.

In conclusion, while AI can do many things and be a useful tool in the classroom, the one thing it cannot do, which is essential to teaching, is to be human. Thus, teachers should not worry about being replaced by computers.

(320)

**Over the last few years, school boards have increasingly utilized standardized tests to measure their students' performance. Many people believe these tests do not accurately reflect most students' academic abilities and should therefore be stopped.**

**Do you agree with this belief?**

**What are some other ways students can be assessed for achievement?**

Many academic institutions, nowadays, rely on standardized tests to gauge students' academic aptitude. While some consider these examinations effective, others disagree, claiming these tests do not take individual traits and abilities into account. I agree with the latter opinion and suggest these tests be replaced with other forms of assessment, ones more suited to individual strengths.

The main argument against standardized testing is that it does not consider people's differences. Some students, for instance, simply do not deal well with stress, and these exams can place a tremendous amount of pressure on them. For example, while taking the American SAT it is quite common for some test takers to "go blank", meaning their anxiety overtakes their ability to think rationally and coherently. As a result, they score poorly, which by no means reflects their real proficiency. Others, meanwhile, can be apathetic towards this test and guess their way to a respectable score, likewise inaccurately reflecting their abilities.

That being said, educators often claim that this form of evaluation puts everyone on an equal footing and that those who prepare sufficiently will do well. However, a recent study by Purdue University offers clear evidence that high-achieving students demonstrate exceptional academic proficiency only when given the right avenue to do so. For example, they may be asked to complete a research essay, collaborate on a team project, or deliver a speech. By allowing students to engage in forms of evaluation that suit their characters, which may or may not include tests, they will better showcase their abilities and thrive, just as they would in the real world where nothing is standard and rewards are based on individual achievement.

To conclude, school boards must realize that students are diverse in character and, consequently, in their strengths and weaknesses. They should therefore be evaluated accordingly for a more accurate assessment of their academic capabilities.

(310)

**Schools should prepare students for the labour market and not waste time and money on theoretical knowledge.**

**To what extent do you agree with this statement?**

Today's work environment has become increasingly specialized. Accordingly, many parents want schools to focus their limited resources on furnishing children with skills that are relevant to the workplace rather than on abstract ideas. I strongly disagree with this notion due to its long-term consequences, both for the individual and for society.

In terms of individuals, graduates with narrow scopes of training become married to their skills. This means they are limited to what they have learned and become highly dependent on the health of their particular industry. Take for example an expert in petroleum extraction who lost his job when the oil market collapsed. His skills are so specialized that he cannot simply move on to another field; thus, he would need to return to school to gain new, employable skills, or wait for the oil market to rebound. Had this person been given a theoretical knowledge base, he may have been more well-rounded and adaptable to changes in his industry.

As regards society, if we create a world of limited individuals, entire communities may lose their diversity and innovation as its members cannot think beyond their schooling. Without theoretical knowledge, critical thinking skills are lost, soon followed by a loss of cultural identity, tolerance for others, and the ability to expand horizons. A society of scientists and accountants, in other words, will not be able to provide people with the spiritual, emotional, and creative stimuli they need to get through life and grow, leading in the long run to stagnant and failed societies.

In conclusion, there is no doubt children should be equipped with skills that will make them employable; however, as children evolve into the adults that comprise a society, they need to be prepared to deal with life outside the office.

(294)

**Some parents want teachers to give their kids homework every day so that they can develop the necessary skills for success in adulthood. Some teachers, meanwhile, argue that a lot of homework does not actually help students.**

**Discuss both views and say which you agree with and why.**

**TOEFL version**

When it comes to education, parents and teachers often disagree on what is best for the children. The former believe that a lot of homework will better equip their kids for academic and, eventually, career success. Teachers, on the other hand, believe students should be allowed to decompress after a long day of classes and engage in other activities. While both arguments are valid, I tend to agree with teachers, as there is more to a well-developed person than scholastic aptitude.

Admittedly, an obvious benefit of homework is that it allows children to reinforce the lessons learned in class and to develop a strong work ethic. In most cases, this effort will translate into better test scores, which may lead to enhanced opportunities when it comes to further education and, eventually, in the workplace as well. Having said that, children who are allowed to pursue their personal interests, like sports or arts, are more likely to cultivate a passion in one area and become highly adept at it. Take for example a child that spends his evenings learning the violin instead of spending hours doing mathematics homework he doesn't enjoy; this child will undoubtedly be better suited for a career in the arts as opposed to one in finance, such as an accountant, and he will probably be more prosperous in that field.

Moreover, children who are given the time and space to experiment with their passions tend to associate with others who share their interests. Being part of this community thus enables them to hone their social skills more effectively than children who spend their evening hours at home alone with their tasks. A child who plays a team sport, for instance, learns things that are simply not taught in books, such as how to win and lose graciously, how to strategize with teammates, and how to face an adversary. More importantly, this child understands how to separate work and play time and know how to relax after a hard day's work. In the long run, this child will have greater longevity both at school and in the workforce.

In conclusion, children who interact more and are given the opportunity to expand their horizons to non-academic areas are often better pupils and more attractive employees. Thus, homework is not as essential as some may think.

(386)



**Some parents want teachers to give their kids homework every day so that they can develop the necessary skills for success in adulthood. Some teachers, meanwhile, argue that a lot of homework does not actually help students.**

**Discuss both views and say which you agree with and why.**

**IELTS Version**

Parents and teachers often disagree on educational approaches. The former believe plenty of homework prepares their kids for academic and career success. Teachers, conversely, believe students should decompress and engage in non-academic activities after a long school day. While both arguments are valid, I agree with teachers, as there is more to life than scholastic achievement.

Admittedly, homework benefits children by reinforcing the day's lessons and helps them develop a strong work ethic. Usually, this effort is manifest in better test scores and improved opportunities at the college level, not to mention in the workplace. Having said that, children who pursue personal interests, like sports or arts, tend to cultivate and master a particular passion. Take for example a boy who practices the violin every night instead doing mathematics homework he does not enjoy; he will undoubtedly be more successful and satisfied in a career in the arts than one in finance, such as an accountant. Thus, homework may in fact hinder his growth rather than propel him higher.

Moreover, children given the opportunity to be creative usually join like-minded peers in groups. As part of this community, they hone their social skills more effectively than children who spend their evenings in isolation doing homework. Those who play team sports, for instance, learn new and important skills, such as how to win and lose graciously and how to cooperate. More importantly, they appreciate work and play time, so they know how to relax after a hard day's work. In the long run, these youngsters demonstrate greater longevity both at school and in the workplace.

In conclusion, children who are allowed to interact and expand their horizons after school generally do better academically and career-wise. Thus, homework is not as essential as some may think.

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**More and more schools these days promote the sciences and maths, as well as sports in their curricula. Less attention and effort is directed toward helping students explore the arts, such as painting, music, and dance.**

**Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this approach, and say whether you agree with it.**

The objective of every educational institution is to prepare students to meet the demands and challenges of an increasingly competitive world. Thus, students are being equipped with the skills and know-how that will make them employable, including social skills gained through sports. It is thus easy to see the benefits of an education based on sciences, maths, and sports. Nevertheless, I believe that a well-rounded individual is one who is also imbued with creativity and imagination, not simply cold facts that limit innovation.

As the world becomes more digitized and efficient at doing everything from building skyscrapers to milking cows with robotic assistance, the need for workers who can adapt to the modern workplace is at an all-time high. Students immersed in the sciences and maths are likely better able to understand the workings of the machines now utilized in almost every industry and can therefore contribute more to employers who use them. Moreover, having been involved in sports allows them to work well with others and to understand the common language of teamwork.

That being said, one wonders where innovation will come from if an entire generation is taught to think that  $1+1=2$ . If every graduate is well endowed in mathematics, for example, what competitive edge will one have over the other? This is where the arts come into play. Activities such as painting and dance provide young people the opportunity and space to explore and express themselves, to create new things, and to rise above the herd. Take Steve Jobs as an example. Most people know him as a tech giant; yet, Jobs did not make Apple Inc. the juggernaut it is because he studied math in university. On the contrary, Jobs found his inspiration in a calligraphy class he sat in on after he had dropped out of college. Art, then, not science is what made him an innovator.

In conclusion, while schools have a duty to equip students with the tools for success, this should not be limited to technical subjects. A well-balanced education should also provide youths with the environment and encouragement to reach beyond static formulas.

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**Education and qualifications gained through accredited institutions via online platforms are just as valuable as those earned on campus. Employers should therefore view these courses as professional and their graduates as fully qualified.**

**Do you agree with this assertion?**

Modern online learning has greatly evolved, allowing anyone on Earth with an internet connection to secure quality education. Unfortunately, many companies still consider these courses as inferior to those taught in brick-and-mortar classrooms. In my opinion, recruiters should take into account these graduates' added value in terms of demonstrable, valuable skills gained through these professional programs.

Firstly, studying through the web does not limit available information. On the contrary, a person can clarify confusing points and even supplement the course material instantly by searching the topic online. Moreover, most internet-based courses provide students with support systems such as forums or live chats, where they can engage in direct communication with peers or instructors. This is no different than the on-campus experience other than the face-to-face element.

Furthermore, today's online courses are mostly taught by experts in their respective fields. As such, employers can be satisfied that students are trained by qualified teachers and are up-to-date with the latest knowledge and industry trends. Courses offered by companies such as Coursera and the Kahn Academy, and even those offered directly by established universities, go out of their way to ensure students in cyberspace are offered the same quality education.

Lastly, the skills one acquires by learning online are directly applicable to the modern work environment. Graduates of these programs tend to have stronger computing skills and increased motivation and self-discipline. Moreover, they are often more adept at problem-solving as they have only themselves to rely on, suggesting they set goals for themselves and are able to reach these goals on their own time and through their own efforts.

In conclusion, employers should not underestimate the value of online education. The knowledge gained thereby can be fuller, as high in quality, and demonstrative of the individual's drive and abilities, thus making these graduates as good or even better candidates for many of today's jobs.

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**Adults are highly critical of young people these days, thinking they are not “grown up” or prepared to deal with the realities of life. Many believe that these young people lack basic life skills and that parents have a duty to teach them these skills at a young age.**

**Which of the following do you think is/are the most important skill(s) for parents to teach their young kids? Why?**

**How to cook**

**How to manage money**

**How to do laundry**

**How to stand up for themselves**

The world is changing quickly, and children need to learn certain skills early in life in order to keep up. In my opinion, one of the most important skills children ought to acquire is how to cook. Being able to prepare one's own meals not only helps a person develop a sense of independence, it also provides one other abilities.

Knowing that he can take care of himself if left alone is the first step in building a person's identity and confidence. A child that wakes up before his parents, for example, can go to the kitchen and prepare a simple breakfast without having to wait for anyone to come and feed him. It might be a simple bowl of cereal at first, yet as he gets older and more confident in the kitchen he can move on to toast, eggs, and other meals. This culinary evolution will build his sense of self-reliance, earn his parents' respect and gratitude, and demonstrate that he can also take care of himself in other ways.

A child that can cook, moreover, will develop skills that apply to other areas of life. He will learn to follow instructions, such as in a recipe. He will learn to pay attention, as the consequences of being careless with knives or a hot stove will be painfully clear. He will learn to multitask, with bread in the toaster, eggs in the frying pan, and vegetables to be chopped onto a plate, and have all the items ready simultaneously so as to enjoy the meal while it is hot. His creativity will also improve as his tastes change and become more sophisticated, leading to more complex dishes. These skills, among others, will serve this person well in school and later in his chosen career.

In conclusion, while there is much for parents to teach their children, cooking should definitely be among the top priorities. A child that can feed himself, after all, will be an adult who can take care of himself in other ways.

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**The world is changing very quickly, such that workers today need to constantly update their skills in order to stay competitive. Thus, some believe that it is better to have one highly-developed skill rather than try to be good at many things.**

**If you had to choose just one skill to master, what skill would that be? Why?**

As the world gets smaller, moves faster, and changes directions almost every other minute, people need certain skills to help them cope. Whether for business or even social contention, everyone should have at least one skill that they can rely on and that will carry them through all these changes. Looking back at human history, I would argue that the most important skill a person should master, one that can be applied in a wide variety of situations, is the ability to write well.

The written word has been the backbone of civilization since humanity's earliest days. From cave paintings and hieroglyphs to modern word-processed documents, writing has proven to be the most reliable and impactful form of communication in every area of social interaction. It has served as a means of warning, a record of migrations, a form of identity, and in today's information age its use is unlimited. In fact, there are very few aspects of modern life in which a person does not need to have at least some ability in writing. In business, for instance, one needs to write emails, reports, invoices, analyses, and many other documents. Moreover, if one is to secure a position in a corporation, one must have a strong education, which, in and of itself, suggests an advanced level of writing capacity.

However, business and academics are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to writing. In one's social life, one must write greeting cards, fill out questionnaires and surveys, and keep up with social network accounts. On a more personal level, writing allows one to express oneself in ways that mere speech never can. Combined with a vivid imagination, writing provides a person with the capacity to create new worlds, touch strangers' hearts, and even change his environment. How often have we seen action resulting from an open letter to the editor of a newspaper, or a book causing riots in city streets, or a poem reducing people to tears? We can see this almost every day.

In all, writing is one of the very few skills that have withstood the test of time and permeated almost every area of civilization. Whatever the future holds, writing skills will still be required by most people, regardless of their other abilities.

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**In some countries, parents want their children to focus on their studies only. Because of this, many young people do not get their first job until after college. In other countries, many children get their first part-time job while still in high school. Which approach do you think is better? Why?**

### **TOEFL version**

Education is not limited to textbooks and classrooms. A young person can learn just as much at home, at the playground, or at a workplace. Whereas parents in some countries do not want their children to work during their school life, I believe that having a part-time job while being a student is good for young people. Students who learn to balance an academic program with a work schedule gain certain skills and experiences that will help them in their future careers.

High school and college students have busy schedules of classes and homework. A student who has to add another element to this schedule, such as a part-time job, gains even better time-management skills and learns how to prioritize tasks on a day-to-day basis. Moreover, this person quickly learns to determine the value of time in everyday life. For example, a student who needs to work on the weekend, but also has an assignment due the following Monday, will soon realize that going to a party on a Saturday night will poorly affect not only his grades, but potentially his reputation at work. By prioritizing his duties and sacrificing an occasional party or two, this person will soon learn to appreciate his free moments and to respect his responsibilities.

In contrast, a student that only studies will have a difficult time in the workplace. This person will have fewer multi-tasking abilities and will have a hard time assessing the importance of certain tasks over others. While it may be true that this person can finish a task more proficiently, many companies these days would rather have a well-rounded employee than someone who can do one thing well at a time. In today's competitive job markets, employers want workers who can do many things at once, do them well, and be able to harmonize with their coworkers. A person who spent his entire high school or college life studying in a closed room lacks the skills and experience to keep up in a fast-paced, teamoriented environment.

In conclusion, students who focus only their academic responsibilities are less suited for the real-world work environments that will demand much more of them than task completion. A student who engaged in part-time employment as a student is better adapted to the demands of a position that requires strong time-management skills and the ability to value one's duties to the company and to his team.

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**In some countries, parents want their children to focus on their studies only. Because of this, many young people do not get their first job until after college. In other countries, many children get their first part-time job while still in high school.**

**Which approach do you think is better? Why?**

**IELTS version**

Modern education is not limited to textbooks and classrooms. Young people can gain knowledge everywhere, including at a workplace. Whereas parents in some countries do not want their children working during their schooling, I believe that high schoolers who work part time learn to balance academics with a work schedule, thereby gaining useful skills and experiences for their future careers.

Secondary school students are generally busy with classes and homework. Those who add another element to this routine, namely a part-time job, gain time-management skills and learn to prioritize daily tasks. Moreover, these teens learn to value their time. For example, a student who needs to work on the weekend, but has an assignment due the following Monday, will recognize that partying on Saturday night will poorly affect not only his grades, but his reputation at work. By ranking his duties and sacrificing occasional social events, he gains an appreciation for his free moments and his responsibilities.

In contrast, those who only study will face difficulties in their future workplaces. Their multi-tasking abilities will be weak, and they will have difficulty assessing the importance of certain tasks. While they will likely be able to finish tasks more proficiently, many companies today prefer well-rounded employees over those who can accomplish one thing at a time, regardless how well they do it. In modern competitive job markets, employers want workers who can complete many tasks simultaneously and well, while collaborating with coworkers. Those who spent their entire school life just studying lack the skills and experience to keep up in fast-paced, team-oriented environments.

In conclusion, students focusing only on academics are less prepared for real-world workplaces, whereas those working part time are better suited to these demanding environments; they will have strong time-management skills and the ability to value their duties to the company and their team.

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**More and more schools are adopting a zero-tolerance policy towards bullying, meaning that a student caught bullying others is automatically expelled.**

**Do the advantages of such a policy outweigh the disadvantages? Why?**

Everyone knows that children can be cruel. Yet, when it comes to dealing with incidents of violence and emotional or mental abuse, school authorities should carefully consider the consequences of their decisions. As this essay will demonstrate, potentially more harm than good may result from the removal of bullies from academic situations.

The obvious argument to expel a bully is that he will be away from his victim and unable to repeat his offences. While this seems undoubtedly positive, there are no assurances the bully will indeed stay away from his victim after school hours, or that his expulsion will not drive him to increase his attacks as a means of revenge. In fact, studies have shown that students who had been expelled tend to become more violent as they age, not less so. Thus, while the institution and the bullied child may find relief, society in general loses.

A better approach, and the duty of the education system, is to try to help the bully. For example, guidance counsellors at the school need to get involved and determine the root causes of the bully's motivations. These may include a troubled home life, difficulties with his academic or social life, or other reasons. Thus, by keeping the child enrolled and helping him, rather than casting him out and shifting the problem to others, educators can help the individual and the greater community at once by ensuring his troubled mind does not degenerate into something even worse and more dangerous.

To conclude, removing a bully may be the most convenient action, but it is certainly not the best. Bullies are not born bad; as such, the source of their troubles can be discovered and help given as long as someone cares enough to do this.

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