**Persuasive Essay Prompts**

**Persuasive writing seeks to influence the reader to take some action or bring about change to an idea or opinion. It may contain factual information, such as reasons, examples, or comparisons; however, its main purpose is not to inform, but to persuade the reader to think or act in a certain way. Examples include editorials or persuasive speeches, and advertisements.**

**The persuasive topics in 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress writing assessment asked students to write letters to friends, newspaper editors, or prospective employers, to refute arguments, or to take sides in a debate. Many of the persuasive topics asked students to write in response to information provided with the assessment, such as newspaper articles, charts, photographs, and reported dialogues. The writing assessment prompts presented students with a variety of tasks, such as writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper.**

1. **The Board of Education has decided to extend the school day for one hour because the State of Illinois has increased the number of subjects students must know about. Do you agree or disagree with making the school day longer? Write an essay to the principal, and explain your answer.**
2. **Your teacher has decided to give exams in three subjects on one day. Persuade your teacher to spread out the tests over several days.**
3. **A leading doctor has published a research paper which claims that all students should be in bed by 8:00 p.m. in order for them to learn well in school. She suggests that all televisions should be off and all lights turned out by 8:00 p.m. so that students get a full night's rest. Your parents are considering doing what the doctor suggests. Write an essay for your parents and explain your position.**
4. **The school board is debating on whether or not to mandate school uniforms, write a persuasive essay either for or against the idea**
5. **Write a letter home to mom/dad trying to persuade them to grant permission for something you want.**
6. **There has been a problem in local schools with discipline and violence. Your school board has decided to institute a school uniform policy in order to cut down on these problems, based on the positive examples that they have seen at other schools. What is your position on this issue? Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper stating your position on this issue and supporting it with convincing reasons.**
7. **The principal at your school has instituted random locker and backpack/book bag searches to check for guns, knives, and other weapons. Anyone caught with these weapons will be immediately suspended. The principal argues that the random searches will not only guard against illegal weapons at school but will also will help students feel safer. What is your position on this issue? Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper stating your position and supporting it with convincing reasons.**
8. **Some of the parents at your school have started a campaign to limit the homework that teachers can assign to students. Teachers at your school have argued that the homework is necessary. What is your position? Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper stating your position and supporting it with convincing reasons.**
9. **A litter problem has developed on your school's campus. Students are throwing trash on the ground, leaving empty soda cans and bottles outside on benches, and dropping napkins and other trash on the cafeteria floor rather than carrying them to the trash can. Your principal has asked students to take more care, but the litter problem persists. The principal has reacted by canceling all after-school activities until the problem is taken care of. What is your position on this issue? Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper stating your position and supporting it with convincing reasons.**
10. **As part of a new technology initiative, your local school district is increasing the number of computers in every school. The district plan provides for two computers in every classroom. Teachers at your school are lobbying instead to place all the computers together, creating two computer-based classrooms so that all students in a class can work at the computers together, rather than only one or two students at a time. The district is worried about the additional cost of creating and maintaining these special classrooms and is concerned about how access to the classrooms can be provided fairly and efficiently. What is your position on this issue? Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper stating your point of view and supporting it with convincing reasons.**
11. **Following a reading of "The Gingerbread Man" children brainstorm ideas to persuade the Gingerbread Man not to take a ride across the river with the fox. Children will draw a picture and write sentences to show alternate ways of crossing the river.**
12. **Following a unit on underwater creatures, the students will write a letter to their PTA convincing the PTA members to make a donation to the Save A Whale Foundation.**
13. **The snow has melted from the playground. Much litter is now visible. Create a poster to convince your schoolmates to stop littering.**
14. **Soccer season begins next week. You have observed a new student on the playground who seems to be a good athlete. Write a note convincing him/her to join your team.**
15. **Some fifth graders think they are old enough to decide how late they can stay up at night. What do YOU think? Explain when you think kids are old enough to set their own bedtimes. Give reasons that will convince your readers to agree with you.**
16. **Think of a rule you would like changed. Try to talk an adult into changing that rule.**
17. **The staff of Pioneer has applied for a grant to provide Pioneer with a state-of-the-art computer system for the library. The grant will be given to this school IF the students can convince the grant committee that it is needed. Write a letter to the President of the grant committee, Dr. David Johns, for or against this plan. Be sure to take note of your opposition's point of view. Sign your arguing name, "B.D. Best."**
18. **We know that many students begin smoking, even as young as students in our class. Write a letter to your classmates convincing them not to begin smoking.**
19. **The principal of your school has been asked to discuss with a parent group the effect watching TV has on students' grades. Think about the effect watching TV has on your grades and your friends' grades. Now write to convince your principal to accept your point of view on the effect watching TV has on grades.**
20. **The President's Council on Physical Fitness has reported that 65 percent of all elementary students are seriously out of shape. The Council has recommended that elementary schools adopt a policy requiring physical education classes daily for all students. Pioneer is considering implementing this proposal. Write a letter to your principal expressing your agreement or disagreement with this proposed policy. State your reasons, and please consider the other side of the argument.**
21. **Think about where people live. People live in small towns, large towns or even big cities. Some people live on farms or in houses in the country. Think about where it is best to live and why. Choose the one place where you would like to live and give reasons why you think it is the best.**
22. **Your newspaper is offering a prize for the Best Relative of the Year. Think about which one of your relatives should win this prize. This relative could be a parent, grandparent, sister, brother, aunt, cousin, or anyone in your family. Think about the reasons your relative is the best. Think about how you will persuade the judges to give your relative the prize. Decide which relative should win the prize. In the beginning of your paper, name the relative and give reasons he or she deserves the prize. Explain the reasons in order to convince the judges that your relative should win. These reasons may include what the relative is like or things he or she has done.**
23. **There has recently been much discussion about violence in the music, film, and television that children enjoy. Some experts argue that the media is one major reason crime rates are on the rise. They believe the violence that youths hear and see through TV, film, and music leads them to behave in violent ways. Write an editorial for your local newspaper convincing readers of your point of view.**
24. **As a resident of Arlington, you are quite concerned over plans to construct a trash incinerator in your community/ Write a persuasive letter to your town council stating and supporting your opinion.**
25. **You have just found what you think will be a wonderful pet (dog, cat, bird, dragon, tiger, rat). Now you must convince your parents to allow you to keep it. Give several reasons and support your ideas with details and examples.**
26. **Your school has decided (to change the dress code, to stop assigning homework on the weekend, to end summer vacations and go to year-round schooling, etc.). Write a letter to persuade the school board to make the change or to keep the policy.**
27. **If you were to include an item in a time capsule for future generations, what would it be? The item should exemplify the culture of the late twentieth century. Convince the committee sponsoring the time capsule to include your item, explaining thoroughly the item's use and significance in the 1990's.**
28. **What is the most important (invention, historical event, author, idea) in this subject? As someone who has studied this subject, convince your teachers to keep this part of the course.**
29. **Imagine that you are a political candidate for the Presidency, and you are asked at a debate to agree or disagree with one of the following statements: "All Americans are free," or, "All people are equal." Respond to the American public.**
30. **You are faced with the decision of whether or not to work while in high school. Present an argument to your parents either for or against teen employment.**
31. **NASA is looking for a professional in (journalism, science, politics, medicine, education) to travel aboard a space station. Who would you propose NASA choose? Convince the administration to select your choice.**
32. **A company has just announced that they plan to build a chemical manufacturing plant next to your home. Local officials have asked for input from nearby residents. Write an editorial that convinces your leaders to welcome or reject the company's plans.**
33. **The station that carries your favorite TV show has just decided to cancel it and replace it with reruns of a show for very young children. As an avid viewer, write a letter that influences the station to continue showing your program.**
34. **You want to convince your parents to let you buy a very expensive item (TV, computer, ski vacation, etc.). Write to persuade them to purchase the item for you.**
35. **Inventions are made to advance our society, but not all inventions ultimately have good effects. Identify one invention that has harmed society. Write a newspaper editorial that convinces your community why we would be better off as a civilization without that invention.**
36. **"Failure is often a better teacher than success." As someone who has experienced both, write a letter to a younger student either agreeing or disagreeing with this statement.**
37. **The city council wants to pass an ordinance banning the use of bicycles in the park. Write a letter to the editor of the local paper explaining why this action should or should not be taken.**
38. **In your science and math classes, you have studied both the English and metric systems of measurement. Your science project team must now select one of the measurement systems for use throughout the school year. Write a composition urging them to choose the metric system.**
39. **Suppose that you learned that your neighborhood might be condemned so that the property could be used for a new freeway. Your family would be paid for your house and land, but you would have to relocate somewhere else. What is your position on this issue? Write a letter to your local newspaper, explaining your point of view and explain them completely.**
40. **Because of budget cuts, your school will have to drop either shop or chorus classes. You are not involved in either of these programs, but you have friends in both . Write a letter to your local newspaper discussing both options. State your position on the issue and give good reasons for your position and explain them completely.**
41. **Some states are considering changing the legal age for getting a driving license from sixteen to eighteen. The people who are in favor of this change base their views on the number of accidents that claim the lives of teenagers as well as the number of accidents they feel are caused by the reckless driving habits of young people. Your teachers has asked you and the other students in your class to write essays in which you explain your thoughts about this change in the legal driving age. Your essays will be sent to a state commission that is considering a proposal to raise the legal age for driving.**
42. **Imagine that your school had a full program of extracurricular activities. Now, however, tax cuts have made it necessary to cut all but one of these activities. Write a speech to be given at a public hearing of the school board in which you tell which program you think should be saved. Remember that to convince the board members you will need to support your opinion with reasons and specific examples.**
43. **What's your pet peeve? Is it graffiti? Too many television commercials? Violence in movies? Write an editorial for your school newspaper. Clearly state what your gripe is and what you think should be done about it. Try to persuade your readers to accept your opinion.**
44. **One student will have the chance to work at a local television studio this summer. This student will be expected to answer phones, run errands, and do some library research. Above all, however, this person needs to be responsible, reliable, and eager to learn. Write an essay to convince the station managers that you are the ideal person for this job. Include specific incidents and examples to support your statements.**
45. **Your class has decided to stage a mock trial. The defendant is the villain from one of your favorite fairy tales. The lawyer for the defense is you. Choose the villain you would like to represent. This might be the wolf in Little Red Riding Hood, the stepmother in Cinderella, or any other character. Then write down what you will say in your final remarks to the jury. In this speech, you need to convince the jury to find your defendant "not guilty." Therefore, be sure to support your points with facts and examples and to answer important objections to your views.**
46. **The amount of cultural diversity has increased in your school during the last year. People are forming groups along ethnic lines. Nothing bad has happened, but it is obvious that something needs to be done to make everybody feel like part of the same school. Write an article for your school newspaper clearly describing both this problem and your plan for solving it. Try to write in such a way that you will convince your readers (both students and teachers) that your ideas are worth trying. Be sure to organize your ideas so they are clear to the reader.**
47. **Some people have said that the schools in the United States are not as good as the schools in other countries because students do not spend enough time in school. Your school district is trying to decide whether to have students go to school on Saturday mornings in order to have more time to learn. Your principal is asking students to write an essay giving their opinion and reasons that there should or should not be school on Saturday mornings.**
48. **Write a letter to your principal persuading him/her to buy pop and candy machines for your school.**
49. **Write a newspaper article to the local newspaper about what your class has been doing.**
50. **Everyone has done something that he or she will remember. Before you begin writing, think about a time you did something that you will always remember. Now tell the story about the time you did something that you will always remember.**
51. **Convince your parents to let you have a special pet.**