

End-of-Course Writing Prompts

The following prompts are eligible for use on the Virginia Standards of Learning End-of-Course Writing test based on the *2010 Writing Standards of Learning*:

Some say that the journey is more important than the destination. They argue that people find more joy and satisfaction in working toward a goal than in achieving it. Others say that it is the destination that gives meaning to the journey. They argue that the process of working toward a goal would be meaningless without its achievement. Take a position on this issue. Use reasons and specific examples to support your ideas.

Many schools require students to participate in volunteer programs in their communities as a requirement for graduation. However, some people feel that requiring students to volunteer defeats the purpose of volunteering. Do you think students should be required to volunteer in their communities to receive their high school diplomas? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Because of safety concerns, many states have increased the age at which teens can begin to drive. Your state legislature is considering raising the minimum driving age from 16 to 18. Do you think the minimum driving age should be raised? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

The British naturalist and politician John Lubbock wrote, "Your character will be what you yourself choose to make it." Do we choose our own character traits, or is our character formed by influences beyond our control? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Thomas Jefferson wrote, "Determine never to be idle . . . It is wonderful how much may be done if we are always doing." Do we accomplish more if we are always doing something, or does inactivity also serve a purpose? Take a position on this question. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

It has been said that a positive attitude is the key to success in life. Do you agree or disagree with this statement about the importance of attitude? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

It has been said that first impressions are almost impossible to change. Based on your experiences, do you agree or disagree with this statement? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Author Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment." Do you agree or disagree with Emerson's statement about individuality? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

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Author Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow.” Based on your experiences, do you agree or disagree with Emerson’s statement? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Civil rights leader Mahatma Gandhi wrote, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” Do you agree or disagree with Gandhi’s statement about the importance of helping others as a way of discovering more about yourself? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Some people say that with dedication, persistence, and time, people can accomplish any goal. Others say that people are limited in what they can accomplish and need to be realistic when setting goals. Take a position on this issue. Use specific reasons and examples to support your ideas.

The great artist Michelangelo once said, “The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark.” Do you agree or disagree with Michelangelo’s statement? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with details and specific examples.

Imagine your school cafeteria plans to change to a new, healthier school lunch menu, which would eliminate some of the students’ favorite cafeteria foods. Take a position on this issue and write to convince your principal whether this change to the school menu is a good idea or a bad idea. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

It has been said, “Failure is not the worst thing in the world. The very worst is not to try.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Take a position on this issue. Use reasons and specific examples to support your opinion.

Some people believe that students should be required to take a music, a drama, or an art class. Should students be required to take a class in the arts, or should such classes be electives? Take a position on this issue. Use reasons and specific examples to support your position.

Think about the benefits of working with a group or working alone. Which do you feel is more beneficial? Write to convince your teacher of your preference, either to work with a group or to work alone. Support your position with reasons and specific examples.

Technology allows people to complete many tasks without having contact with others. People can check out books, shop, and play games without speaking to another person. Has the limitation of human contact due to the use of technology had positive or negative effects on people’s lives? Take a position on this question. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Some schools use cell phones in the classroom for educational purposes. Think about the effects of allowing students to have and use cell phones in classrooms. Take a position on this issue. Use reasons and specific examples to support your opinion.

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Some schools offer distance learning as an option for students to attend classes from home by way of online or video conferencing. Do you think students would benefit from being able to attend classes from home? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

To conserve energy and resources, some businesses have adopted a four-day work week, with each day consisting of ten hours. Should your school follow this model by extending the school day two hours? After considering the benefits and disadvantages to a four-day school week, take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

In some societies, students are expected to identify a career by the time they enter high school. Their courses of study in high school are selected to guide them toward a specific career. Do you think it is a good idea for students to commit to a career at a young age? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Some school districts offer programs that allow high school students to graduate in three years instead of the traditional four years. Most students who follow this plan must take courses during the summers or in the evenings or may not be able to take elective courses. Is it a good idea for students to finish high school in three years and enter college or the work force one year early? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Research has shown that teenagers experience a change in their internal sleep clocks so that waking up early and going to sleep early are difficult. Should high school classes begin later in the day and end later in the day to accommodate students' natural sleep clocks? Consider some of the benefits and disadvantages to starting school later in the day. Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Many students become involved in extracurricular activities to enrich their educational experiences, and some even become involved in so many activities that they have little time to study or complete homework assignments. Should schools control student involvement in extracurricular activities, or should the decision regarding extracurricular involvement be left to students and their families? Take a position on the issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Many people feel that American society is too competitive. Does competition lead to better products and results, or does it lead to a focus on winning at all costs? Is fierce competition a good idea or bad idea? Take a position on the issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Philosopher, physician, and humanitarian Albert Schweitzer said, "Example is not the main thing in influencing others; it is the only thing." Is setting a good example by your own behavior the best way to influence other people, or are there better ways to influence others? Take a position on the issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

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Most students enjoy summer vacation, but some educators feel that the summer break is too long and that students do not retain information as easily when they return in the fall. Some people argue that there should be year-round schools, where there would be a 3–4 week break in the summer, a longer winter break, and a week off in the spring and fall. Does this sound like a good idea to you? Why or why not? Take a position on the issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Some states have now made it illegal to drive while using a hand-held cell phone. Do you agree or disagree with this law? Why or why not? Take a position on the issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Most public places, including schools, have installed video cameras for surveillance. Is the installation of surveillance cameras the best way to provide security, or is it a privacy violation that would not deliver what it promises? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill once said that “success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.” Do you agree with Churchill’s statement about the important role that failure plays in the pursuit of success? Take a position on this question. Use reasons and specific examples to support your ideas.

People who value self-reliance define it as the need for each individual to follow his or her own instincts and ideas. Should people make their own decisions, or should they seek guidance from experts and authorities about life’s important matters? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Some schools require students to complete summer projects to assure they continue learning during their break. Should these summer projects be teacher-designed or student-designed? Take a position on this question. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Some people believe in praising a student’s work to build self-esteem, even if the work is not the student’s best effort. They believe that students must be self-confident in order to learn. Others believe that praise given for deficient work undermines learning by lowering standards. They believe that the source of true self-esteem is achievement. Does true self-esteem come from praise or does it come from achievement? Take a position on this issue. Use reasons and specific examples to support your ideas.

Many people enjoy the freedom of using cell phones wherever they go. Some people argue, however, that cell phone use should be limited because it may disturb others. Should people be allowed to use cell phones in places like stores, restaurants, and movie theaters, or should cell phone use in such places be banned? Take a position on this question. Use reasons and specific examples to support your views.

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A city council is debating the adoption of a 10 P.M. weekday curfew and a midnight weekend curfew for teenagers. If the curfew is adopted, teenagers on the streets after those hours would be breaking the law. Do curfews keep teenagers out of trouble, or do they unfairly interfere in young people's lives? Take a position on this question. Use reasons and specific examples to support your views.

Some people say that most teenagers are careless and do not think about the consequences of their actions. Do you agree or disagree with this idea? Take a position on this question. Use reasons and specific examples to support your opinion.

Additional prompts eligible for use on the Virginia Standards of Learning End-of-Course Writing test based on the *2010 Writing Standards of Learning* beginning in the fall 2014 test administration:

It has been said that actions speak louder than words. Based on your experiences, do you agree or disagree with this saying? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

In his book *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, Robert Fulghum lists these simple lessons: put things back where you found them, play and work some every day, hold hands and stick together. Do you agree or disagree that these lessons apply to life today? Or is life too complicated for such simplicity? Take a position on the issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Many occupations have dress codes for employees. Write to convince business leaders that dress codes should or should not be required. Support your position with reasons and specific examples.

Some educators argue that every child in school should have access to computers. Others believe that too much importance is placed on computers and that they may actually interfere with the learning process. In your opinion, how important are computers in the classroom? Take a position on the issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Many cities have issues with air pollution and traffic jams because there are too many cars on the roads. Some people feel that cities should restrict the use of cars and require people to walk, bike, or use public transportation, such as buses or trains. Do you think this proposal is a good idea? Why or why not? Take a position on the issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Some schools do not use a typical grading system focused on homework, quizzes, and tests. Instead, students are given a long-term assignment and must produce a project and oral presentation to show what they have learned. Do you believe this grading system is a more effective way for a teacher to evaluate student learning than traditional grades? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

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Most employers are looking for specific characteristics in a potential employee. For example, they look for someone who is responsible and hard-working, and often they look for a person who has experience. Write to persuade a future employer that, even though you may not have experience in the type of work you seek, you are a good candidate to hire. Use reasons and specific examples to support your response.

Many schools have partnerships with companies that allow students to explore certain occupations through internships and shadowing opportunities to discover whether they are interested in pursuing that type of employment. Write to convince a manager of a business to select you to visit and learn about the work that interests you.

Consider the type of job that would best suit you. It might be a job working outdoors or in an office, or somewhere else. Write to convince an employer that you possess the qualities required to do well at the job that most interests you. Use specific examples to support your reasons.

Many believe that in democratic societies a free education is each citizen's right. Others see education as a privilege, one that must be earned. In the United States, should education be considered a right or a privilege? Take a position on this question. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Companies market products to children, especially through television commercials shown with children's programming. Designed to appeal to children, these advertisements promote products like toys and snack foods. Should companies be permitted to market to children, or should children be protected from the influence of advertising? Take a position on this issue. Use reasons and specific examples to support your ideas.