

Part 2

Independent Writing

- Chapter 4 Brainstorming
- Chapter 5 Writing Thesis Statements and Topic Sentences
- Chapter 6 Making Ideas Flow
- Vocabulary Review 3
- Vocabulary Review 4

Chapter 4 Brainstorming

Necessary Skills

- Describing a personal experience
- Expressing an opinion on an issue and supporting it with concrete examples and details
- Organizing ideas in an effective way

Process	Strategy
Read the prompt and understand the task.	Be sure that you understand the prompt and what it requires you to do.
Brainstorm.	Try to take less than five minutes to brainstorm. Write down all the ideas you can think of to support your opinion. Think of ways to express those ideas in English. Do not try to organize these points. You will select major ideas and organize them in the next step.
Organize the ideas.	Select major ideas that can be developed into topics to support the thesis. Do NOT include ideas that are unconnected to the task or topics. Organize so that minor ideas act to support the major ideas. Select examples that clearly support the topics.

- Your organization may look like this:

Introduction

Restatement of the question
Thesis statement

Body

Supporting idea 1 + examples
Supporting idea 2 + examples
Supporting idea 3 + examples

Conclusion

Restatement of
the thesis

▶ Step 1

Read the prompt and think about your own experience. List some ideas about your experiences in the blanks.

Some people like to work in teams. Others prefer to work alone. Which do you prefer? Give specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Working in teams:

- encourages productivity
- members work off of each other's strengths
- forms relationships

Working alone:

- jobs get done faster
- everyone does their own work
- more flexible work schedule

▶ Step 2

Read the sample response below. Identify the thesis by drawing a box around it, and then underline the key supporting ideas for the thesis.

Although some people prefer to work alone, I believe it is much better to work in teams. The benefits of working with a team vastly exceed the convenience of working alone. In my opinion, there are three main advantages to working in teams over working alone.

First, I prefer working in teams because I feel that it encourages productivity. Teams require each person to be responsible for a portion of the work. A person's failure to do his or her work affects the entire team. Within this kind of situation, team members feel a personal responsibility to ensure that their work is done well and in a timely fashion. If a single member of the team does not fulfill his or her duty, the entire team is affected. This sense of social obligation to others is lost when working alone. Working in teams inspires people to do good work.

Additionally, working in a team allows each person to work off of one another's strengths. If, for instance, some people in a work team are bad at designing products but are good at building them, they can find someone else to do the design work while they focus on the building process. This allows each member of the team to do what he or she is skilled at doing, which results in productive work. For example, the last time I did a group project, we were required to film a short video. I am not comfortable in

productivity:

the effectiveness of an effort to create something, usually in an industry

ensure:

to make certain that something will be the case

timely:

occurring in an ideal amount of time

obligation:

something that you must do

design:

to decide upon the look and function of a particular object when creating it

outlook:

point of view

efficient:

working in an organized and mindful way

front of cameras, but I was interested in filming and editing. My partner enjoyed being filmed and did a great job of presenting it. Because we each focused on our strengths, we did well on our group project.

Finally, I think that working in a team allows people to form important relationships with others. After working with others for a period of time, it is likely that friendships will be formed within the team. These relationships improve communication. For instance, I met a student who is now a good friend through a class project we did together. We worked well together and remained friends after the semester ended. Working alone does not create friendship and, as such, one's motivation is lost when one chooses to work alone.

In my experience, I feel that teams produce the best work possible. Teams make people both happier and more efficient.

► Step 3

In complete sentences, answer the following questions about the thesis and topic of the response in Step 2.

1. What is the thesis statement of the essay?

2. What is the topic sentence of body paragraph 1?

3. What is the topic sentence of body paragraph 2?

4. What is the topic sentence of body paragraph 3?

► Step 4

In complete sentences, answer the following questions about the organization of the response in Step 2.

1. Which "side" of the prompt does this essay take?

2. How does the writer support the thesis statement?

3. Does the writer present a comment or idea from the other side in the conclusion? If so, what is the comment or idea?

4. What is the main idea of the conclusion?

Read the sample response presenting another possible answer to the prompt from Step 1.

Even though many people like working in teams, I prefer to work on projects by myself. Since working alone has so many advantages, it is obvious to me that working alone is a better way to complete a project.

First, I believe that working alone allows a person to finish a job more quickly. Team projects take a long time to complete because teams require each person to be responsible for only a small part of the entire project. As a result, individual members of a team must often wait for other people before they can complete their work. This makes working in teams a lot slower and less efficient than working alone.

Additionally, requiring people to work alone helps the person in charge to ensure that everyone is doing his or her job. With group work, it is easy for team members to come up with an excuse when they fail to do the necessary work. This has happened to me many times when I was put into teams. Usually, I was the one forced to do most of the work. Yet

obvious:
easily understood;
self-explanatory

entire:
whole; no part left out

excuse:
a reason you give to explain
why you have not done
something or why you have
done something badly

discern:
to see or recognize
something

flexibility:
being easily modified or
altered to specific conditions

schedule:
a plan; a timetable for one's
day-to-day activities

since people who work alone are the only ones responsible for completing their work, it is easier to discern who is and is not completing their work on time.

preference:
a greater liking for one thing over another

Working alone also tends to give us far more flexibility in our work schedules. We all have different work preferences. Some people find that if they do work earlier in the morning, they are more productive. Others prefer to do work later in the day. People who work alone do not have to work around the schedules of others and can choose to work at a time that best suits them.

In conclusion, I feel that working alone is the best method to get work done. People should choose to work alone whenever possible.

► **Step 5**

After studying the two sample responses, give your own opinion on the prompt. Brainstorm your own ideas below. Then, write or type your essay.

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02

Experience

► Step 1

Read the prompt and think about your own experience. List some ideas about your experiences in the blanks.

Do you feel that people gain better knowledge in school or outside of school? Why do you feel this way? Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Outside of school:

- more practical knowledge
- appealing to employers
- students choose what to learn

In school:

- experts available to guide students
- meet others with similar interests
- exposed to many different views

► Step 2

Read the sample response below. Identify the thesis by drawing a box around it, and then underline the key supporting ideas for the thesis.

Many people believe that the best way to gain knowledge is through school. However, I disagree with this belief. In my opinion, a person will learn much more useful knowledge by pursuing options outside of a school environment.

The first reason why I think this is that experiences outside of school are more likely to give a person practical knowledge. The knowledge one tends to receive in school is not very practical. School involves learning about things like theories and experiments. In my experience, none of these has taught me anything about how the world actually works. Getting a job, traveling, and simply talking to ordinary people can produce knowledge that is more relevant than anything one will learn in school.

In addition, the knowledge one acquires outside of school can be more appealing to potential employers. A growing number of big business owners have explained that they would prefer to hire someone with "real world" experience instead of someone with a college degree. Someone who has started their own business, for instance, is likely to know more about business than someone with a degree in it.

Finally, gaining knowledge outside of school allows us to choose what we want to learn. Rather than having to obey the requirements of

option:
something that one can choose

practical:
involving real situations or events

theory:
one or more ideas that explain how something works

relevant:
important to what is being discussed

acquire:
to get something

curriculum:
a program of study

appealing:
attractive or interesting

a. standard college curriculum, learning outside of school allows us to study precisely what we want. This makes us more likely to remember what we have learned than if we had been forced to learn it in school. It also allows us to avoid wasting time studying subjects that we do not find appealing.

Not only is the knowledge outside of school more relevant, but it also may be more helpful to someone looking to get a job. For these reasons, life outside of school is likely to be far more rewarding to someone hoping to gain knowledge.

► Step 3

In complete sentences, answer the following questions about the thesis and topic of the response in Step 2.

1. What is the thesis statement of the essay?

2. What is the topic sentence of body paragraph 1?

3. What is the topic sentence of body paragraph 2?

4. What is the topic sentence of body paragraph 3?

► Step 4

In complete sentences, answer the following questions about the organization of the response in Step 2.

1. Which "side" of the prompt does this essay take?

2. How does the writer support the thesis statement?

3. Does the writer present a comment or idea from the opposing argument in the conclusion? If so, what is the comment or idea?

4. What is the main idea of the conclusion?

Read the sample response presenting another possible answer to the prompt from Step 1.

Even though some people feel like they learn more outside of school, most of the knowledge that I have acquired in my life has been through school. I firmly believe that attending school is the best way for a person to become educated.

The most obvious benefit of attending school is that there are many experts in various fields that can guide a student. Outside of school, it is difficult to find people as knowledgeable as the teachers you can find within schools. This lack of experts makes learning about anything outside of school difficult. The advantages of having teachers really become obvious when students begin to study subjects at advanced levels. For learning anything extensively, teachers are absolutely necessary.

Going to school also allows students to come into contact with others that have interests similar to their own. Having a group of peers that are

various:
assorted

knowledgeable:
knowing a lot about a subject or subjects

advanced:
more highly developed

peer:
a person of equal standing with another

structured:
organized in a clear way

expose:
to make something known

comprehensive:
including many details and aspects

studying the same topics can be an incredible resource for knowledge. For instance, these peers can provide the necessary help and support when a student has trouble learning about a difficult subject. I have had many experiences in school where my peers have helped me to understand a difficult concept.

Finally, going to school provides a structured environment where a person is exposed to a number of different viewpoints and subjects. Since students are required to take many different courses, they acquire a much broader understanding of a field. Those who choose to learn outside of a school are less likely to encounter views that differ from their own or to be exposed to new schools of thought.

For all of these reasons, I feel that going to school is really the best way to acquire knowledge. Ultimately, going to school offers a student a broader and more comprehensive knowledge of any given field.

► Step 5

After studying the two sample responses, give your own opinion on the prompt. Brainstorm your ideas below. Then, write or type your essay.

Blank writing area with horizontal lines for brainstorming and writing an essay.

03

Experience

► Step 1

Read the prompt and think about your own experience. List some ideas about your experiences in the blanks.

Some people believe that cities should spend more money to construct public transportation systems. Others believe that public transportation systems are inconvenient and should not be constructed in cities. Which do you believe? Give specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

For public transportation:

- better for the environment
- reduces petroleum
- automobile accidents decrease

Against public transportation:

- disruptive construction process
- only available in the cities
- overcrowded

► Step 2

Read the sample response below. Identify the thesis by drawing a box around it, and then underline the key supporting ideas for the thesis.

With concerns about pollution and oil shortages, many cities have begun to construct public transportation systems. However, I believe that cities that do not have public transportation systems should avoid constructing them. Constructing public transportation systems in large cities usually creates more problems than it solves.

My main reason for wanting to avoid constructing public transportation systems is because of all the disruption they cause. The construction of subways or train systems requires lots of money and the closing of central roads. It creates constant noise in surrounding areas. Plus, building these systems can take several years. Overall, they upset the flow of traffic and cause major delays in daily business.

Additionally, public transportation systems rarely cover the outskirts of cities. Lots of people today are buying homes outside of major cities. Yet, since most public transportation systems only run within city limits, many of the people that could use these systems never get to use them. As suburbs are becoming more popular, it is unclear how useful public transportation will be to the number of people that do not live in the city

construct:

to build something

disruption:

a problem that prevents something from continuing

subway:

a passenger railroad system that goes underground

flow:

a continuous movement in a stream

traffic:

the vehicles which are traveling in an area at a certain time

outskirts:

the outer parts of a city or town

suburb:

a district of a city located outside of its center

center.

Finally, public transportation systems around the world often suffer from overcrowding during peak hours. While they are often held up as a solution to congestion and the stress of traffic, the crowded environment of a public transportation system can be just as stressful as dealing with street traffic. For most people, traffic is preferred over being packed into a subway car with hundreds of other people.

Public transportation systems are not worth the effort. For this reason, large cities without a public transportation system would be wise to avoid building one. I feel that the money would be better spent improving roads and the way traffic moves in a city.

congestion:

the state of being blocked up or too full of something

► Step 3

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4. What is the main idea of the conclusion?

Read the sample response presenting another possible answer to the prompt from Step 1.

Public transportation systems have been a part of many European cities for over a hundred years. However, despite the benefits that Europe has received from its public transportation systems, many cities do not have these systems in place. I feel that it would be beneficial for all major cities to construct better mass public transportation systems.

First, studies show that public transportation systems are much better for the environment than automobiles. Individual cars produce a large amount of pollution within a city. This decreases the quality of the air and hurts public health. Public transportation helps reduce pollution because fewer vehicles are transporting more people. In fact, public transportation systems have actually been linked with improving the health of people that live in the city.

Furthermore, public transportation systems would decrease our use of

link:

to connect or associate something with another

shortage:

a lack of something

potential:

something that is possible or likely to occur

crisis:

an urgent or dangerous situation

minimize:

to reduce

injure:

to harm or damage

fatal:

causing death

petroleum. Many major cities will face a petroleum shortage in upcoming years. Soon it may not be financially possible for the average person to drive to work every day of the week. Constructing mass public transportation systems now, before a potential crisis occurs, can help minimize the impact that an oil shortage would have on our economy. This will increase the amount of time before severe shortages occur.

Moreover, public transportation systems help reduce the number of automobile accidents. Large numbers of people are injured or killed in automobile accidents each year. Public transportation systems are extremely safe compared to automobiles, since fatal accidents are incredibly uncommon in public transports. As such, public transportation can actually make citizens of a city safer.

All of these reasons support the creation of better mass public transportation systems in major cities. As a result, I believe that cities should take every measure possible to begin constructing them.

measure:
a plan or course of action with a specific purpose in mind

► Step 5

After studying the two sample responses, give your own opinion on the prompt. Brainstorm your ideas below. Then, write or type your essay.

Blank writing area with horizontal lines for brainstorming and writing an essay.

04 Experience

► Step 1

Read the prompt and think about your own experience. List some ideas about your experiences in the blanks.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Schools should focus more on science and mathematics than on humanities courses. Give specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

More focus on math and sciences:

- useful for many purposes
- easier to find a job
- better prepared for adult world

Same amount of focus on humanities:

- valuable for society
- attractive to many businesses
- students more involved with community

► Step 2

Read the sample response below. Identify the thesis by drawing a box around it, and then underline the key supporting ideas for the thesis.

In this changing world, math and science are becoming increasingly important. As a result, I think it is a good idea for schools to shift their attention away from the humanities and begin to concentrate more on math and science. There are a number of reasons why schools should encourage this change.

First, math and science are disciplines that can be used for a number of purposes. Unlike subjects such as philosophy, which are focused on abstract arguments and rarely have any effect on reality, science and math clearly benefit the society immediately around us. Math and science are necessary to build bridges, create new sources of energy, and invent new devices. They play a key role in nearly all parts of our day-to-day lives.

Students that are educated in math and science are also more likely to find jobs than students who have studied the humanities. There are countless jobs which involve math, research, and science principles. Thus, there are many job opportunities for students who have studied math and science. The number of jobs in the humanities, on the other hand, is relatively small. By focusing on math and science, a school can help its students find employment after graduation.

shift:

to change the emphasis or direction

discipline:

a subject that people study

abstract:

existing as an idea, but not existing physically

key:

important

employment:

the condition of being paid for work

finances:

the management of money

yield :

to produce or provide something

Moreover, students educated in math and science tend to be better able to deal with the adult world. An understanding of math, for instance, prepares a person for the real world by giving them the tools needed to understand and handle their finances. The humanities, by and large, do not yield knowledge that is immediately useful in everyday activities.

A shift away from the humanities and toward math and science will not only help students, but the society around them as well. These reasons provide a compelling argument for schools to begin shifting their attention away from the humanities.

► Step 3

In complete sentences, answer the following questions about the thesis and topic of the response in Step 2.

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► Step 4

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4. What is the main idea of the conclusion?

Read the sample response presenting another possible answer to the prompt from Step 1.

Recently, there has been talk of shifting our schools' focus from humanities to the disciplines of math and science. However, I disagree with the idea that schools should shift away from studying the humanities. I feel that there are benefits to studying the humanities which should not be overlooked.

Firstly, the study of humanities can be incredibly valuable to a society. The humanities provide insight into cultural trends, which can actually be quite practical. The study of history, for instance, can help world leaders understand the reasons behind conflicts between nations. This historical understanding is absolutely necessary in solving conflicts and creating peace. This is just one example of where an understanding in the humanities is important.

Secondly, in the past several years, many businesses have had a renewed interest in people who study the humanities. Those who learn

humanities:

subjects such as history, literature, and philosophy; subjects that are based on the study of human culture

insight:

the capacity to gain a strong understanding of something

conflict:

serious disagreement or fight between two or more groups

renew:

to happen again after a pause, and with more enthusiasm than before

behavior:

the way in which a person acts

about the humanities have made the study of humans and human behavior a central part of their understanding of the world. Math and science simply focus on memorizing basic rules on how the physical world works. Yet the humanities pay special attention to how people think and behave. This can be an important part of running a successful business.

Finally, students who study humanities are more likely to be involved with their community. In my experience, I have found that students who study the humanities are more likely to vote and volunteer because they understand the way society and culture works.

By encouraging a focus on humanities, colleges can help produce responsible citizens.

memorize:
to remember something

civic:
of or relating to a community or group

► Step 5

After studying the two sample responses, give your own opinion on the prompt. Brainstorm your ideas below. Then, write or type your essay.

Blank writing area with horizontal lines for brainstorming ideas.