

Oakland Unified School District ♦ Process Writing Assessment
7th Grade Persuasive Essay: Is TV Good for Kids?

Introduction

How much TV do you watch? Do you know people who think that watching TV is bad? Do you know people who think watching TV is good? Watching TV is the topic of this *Process Writing Assessment*. In this assignment, you will have an opportunity to think, read, talk, develop your opinion, and write a persuasive essay to support your point of view. In persuasive writing, it is important to take a clear position and give convincing support for your position including response to the counterargument.

Getting Started

To begin, reread the topic of this essay: *Is TV Good for Kids?* Think about your experience watching TV and talk with a partner to answer these questions:

- How many hours a week do you watch TV?
- Which programs do you like to watch?
- What is good about the programs you watch?
- What is not good about the programs you watch?
- If you don't watch TV, why not?

Before you read an article, jot down some pros and cons of TV-watching in the chart below.

Is Watching TV Good for Kids?

| PROS <i>(these points support the idea)</i> | CONS <i>(these points oppose the idea)</i> |
|---|--|
| • | • |
| • | • |
| • | • |
| • | • |



Share what you jotted down with your classmates. Did you write similar points? Which points are different?

Before You Read

The letter you will read has several idiomatic expressions that might be hard to understand. As a whole class, discuss what these expressions mean before you begin reading.

- What does it mean to say something gets a “bum rap”?
- Why would someone call the television a “devil with rabbit ears?” (What do you think the devil refers to? Can you guess what the rabbit ears refer to?)
- Have you ever seen a bumper sticker that reads: *Kill Your TV*? What do you think the driver of that car would say about kids and TV?

Reading

Next, read *TV: Is It Good for Kids?* This article was written by a parent who is trying to persuade the reader that the advantages of kids watching TV outweigh the disadvantages. As you read, look for and use numbers to mark these elements of persuasive writing:

- 1 = the writer’s position
- 2 = ideas that support and develop this position
- 3 = the counterargument

TV: Is It Good for Kids?

Television gets an undue bum rap. Rather than being the devil with rabbit ears, it can be a useful tool. In fact, kids who watch some TV, even when they're very young and impressionable, do better in school than other children who don't watch TV--and this academic advantage lasts a long time. That's right: TV isn't all bad. Too much television is bad for kids but not enough TV is bad for kids too. TV watching is good for kids when there is a balance.

Kids who do not watch TV before they turn three, but who do watch it from ages three to five, actually benefit from watching. Long-term studies show that an appropriate “diet” of the right type of television programs in preschool years results in high performance in elementary school that continues into high school. University of Alabama Professor Jennings Bryant said programs like *Arthur*, *Sesame Street*, *Blue's Clues*, and *Dora the Explorer* can be helpful to children because they are designed with learning in mind. “Many of these programs have been developed by teachers,” he said. “They also receive considerable testing to validate their educational effectiveness.” My own personal experience supports this. When my preschool daughter’s class was studying shapes, the teacher told me: “Your child is a genius! We were just talking about triangles and circles, and she already knew what an octagon was.” I nodded and smiled, realizing that my daughter had learned this on *Blue's Clues*.

In addition to learning facts, TV can be a richer way to learn about the world than through descriptions in books. It's one thing to learn that kangaroos hop. It's another thing entirely to see them hopping in living color. What's more, some excellent storytelling is available on television, particularly for older kids. For example, *Veronica*

Mars is a series about a tough yet vulnerable high school detective. In each episode, Veronica solves complicated crimes. Along the way, she has conflicts with an assortment of characters, and she does things that are questionable, offering the viewer some things to think about. Each season contains a longer mystery to solve, challenging viewers to make sense of relatively complex narratives.

There are some problems with TV-watching. A 2004 study asserted that television shortens attention spans and is linked to ADHD. It said kids who watched a lot of TV between the ages of one and three were more likely to have attention problems. Other researchers have found that violence on TV is very harmful. Even though kids might know the violence they see on TV is not real, "their brains did not distinguish between fantasy and real violence," the report says. This could explain why kids who watch violent shows are more likely to act aggressively. The lesson here is to keep kids away from violent programs.

Even if kids aren't watching violent programming, though, too much TV can lead to other problems: obesity and stereotyped thinking. First, TV can cut into or replace more physical playtime. In addition, it can lead to snacking, and reduced consumption of healthy foods. A New York study showed that kids who watch TV during dinner and snack while watching TV eat fewer fruits and vegetables, and drink less milk. And finally, many television shows are full of racial and gender stereotypes. Children who watch these programs without guidance and discussion can grow up to be discriminatory and narrow-minded.

Therefore, kids have to be aware not only of how much TV they watch but also of what type of content they see. Despite the ways TV can be harmful for kids, if viewing is balanced and programs are carefully selected, the people with "Kill Your TV" bumper stickers might be attacking not just an innocent piece of technology, but an important teacher.

Based on an article by Martha Brockenbrough

Thinking and Talking

Work with a partner to complete this exercise.

1. Go back to the article and review where you wrote
 - **1** (where the writer states the position)
 - **2** (where the writing supports and develops this position)
 - **3** (the counterargument.) Did you agree with your partner?
2. How many arguments does the writer use to support the position? ____ What are they?
3. Check the persuasive strategies the writer uses to persuade the reader.
 - ____ personal experience
 - ____ outside expert knowledge
 - ____ a counterargument
4. Does the writer persuade you to agree with her? Why or why not?

Planning and Organizing

Now go back to your chart from the *Getting Started* section and add to your list of PROs and CONs. Decide which position you will take in writing your essay. Plan your essay by using this graphic organizer. In your planning, make sure your arguments are supported by reasons, examples, and/or facts. A convincing essay will include a response to a counterargument.

| |
|--|
| Position: What's your opinion? Is TV good for kids? |
| |

| |
|---|
| Reason: Why should readers accept your position? |
| |
| |
| |
| |

| Evidence to support your position | | |
|--|---|----------------------|
| First reason: | Second Reason: | Third Reason: |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Counterargument | | |
| Acknowledge other perspectives on the subject | Respond to other perspectives on the subject | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Writing

Here's the prompt:

Is TV Good for Kids?

Teachers are interested in learning if you think TV-watching is good for kids. Write a persuasive essay in which you argue that TV is or isn't good for kids. Support your position by using a variety of persuasive strategies, including addressing a counterargument. Use convincing reasons and language to persuade your reader. You may use notes from any of your prewriting activities.

Writing Reminders:

As you write, keep the following points in mind since you won't have time to rewrite.

- ___ Begin in an interesting way that leads to the thesis or controlling idea of your essay.
- ___ Choose strong arguments to support your opinion.
- ___ Develop your arguments by including specific information through explanation, personal experiences, examples, and/or statistics.
- ___ Show in your writing that you know both sides of the issue and why you disagree with the other point of view.
- ___ Use language and vocabulary that is persuasive, precise, and lively.
- ___ Organize the main sections of your essay into paragraphs so that the reader can follow your ideas.
- ___ End with a confident conclusion that restates your main point.

After You Write (Editing)

After you write, take time to review the items below. You may make changes right on your paper.

- ___ Give the essay a title. (You can choose your title before or after you write the essay.)
- ___ Check your punctuation. Use capital letters, commas, periods, quotation marks where they belong.
- ___ Check your spelling.

Persuasive Writing Scoring Guide

Five Features in Persuasive Writing

- **Clarity of Position:** States a Position
- **Organization and Development:** Arrangement and Support of Position
- **Audience Awareness:** Response to Reader Questions and Counterarguments
- **Language:** Sentence Structure & Vocabulary
- **Conventions:** Spelling, Grammar, & Punctuation

4 • ADVANCED

- Writing presents a clear position throughout; presentation is entertaining, engaging or original
- Reasons for position are fully developed; arguments are well supported by organized appropriate examples, details and anecdotes
- Writing shows reader awareness through strategic and convincing support for position and thorough response to counterargument
- Language is persuasive, precise and lively; sentences are varied and vocabulary adds to the persuasiveness of the writing
- Writing shows clear control of writing conventions though there may be a few errors that are “first-draft” in nature

3 • PROFICIENT

- Writing states a position; presentation is straightforward
- Reasons, examples and/or anecdotes support and develop the position. Arguments are supported and organized; ideas are clear; opinions may be presented as facts
- Writing shows reader awareness through support for position and attempt at response to counterargument
- Language is clear; sentence types are varied; vocabulary is specific
- Writing shows control of writing conventions; errors do not interfere with meaning

2 • DEVELOPING

- Writing states position but presentation may be brief, vague, or confusing
- Reasons and examples insufficiently support the position. Development is incomplete; middle and/or conclusion may be abrupt or missing
- Writing may show reader awareness and may not acknowledge counterargument
- Language is simple; sentence types are mostly simple or the repetitive; vocabulary is general
- Errors may interfere with meaning.

1 • EMERGING

- Position is difficult to identify or absent; presentation may be brief, vague, or confusing
- Limited development of arguments; support is brief or incoherent
- Reader awareness is difficult to identify
- Language is general and vague; sentences may be incomplete or run-on
- Errors in conventions interfere with meaning or make writing difficult to understand

OT • Off Topic

NR • No Response