

# ESSAYS FOR EXAMS: PART 1

## Brainstorming a Persuasive Essay

### Step 1: Choosing a question

Take a deep breath. Read over the questions. Which question do you have the strongest initial reaction to? Choose that question.

### Step 2: Read the question more than once

It may seem obvious, but reading the question more than once is a very important first step. Think about the key words in the question. When you write your thesis statement you will repeat those key words for clarity. For example, let's say you get this question:

Persuade readers that the legal age for drinking should be raised OR that it should not be raised.

As soon as you choose the question, you already know what half your thesis statement will look like, either:

1. The legal age for drinking should be raised because...  
OR
2. The legal age for drinking should not be raised because...

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*Exercise 1: Try to word half of a thesis statement for each of these questions.*

Persuade a reader that people should or should not be forced by law to wear a seatbelt.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

Persuade a reader that a family studies course is or is not necessary for all high school students.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2)\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 3: Figure out what your opinion is**

Do you have an opinion right away on the subject, or do you feel that both sides of the case can be argued? If you have an opinion right away, you can begin brainstorming. However, let's pretend that you are having trouble deciding. For example, imagine that you get this question:

Persuade readers that people should or should not keep exotic pets.

At first glance, you might think that both sides can be argued. This reaction is very common. However, if you go into writing the essay somewhat confused about where you stand, your argument won't be as persuasive as it could be.

If you feel indecisive about a question, try an “agree vs. disagree list.” It shouldn't take more than a few minutes, and it will help you define your view.

EX: People should keep exotic pets.

AGREE	DISAGREE
Personal enjoyment People will create safe environment for pet People will be sensitive to other environments Some are endangered (helps keep them alive) Some species of birds that are otherwise endangered Education for owner and public companionship	Kept in too confined a space Pets don't need safety Too big a price to pay for no freedom

As you can see, the agree side is beginning to win out. You've also generated some reasons for your essay through doing the agree vs. disagree list.

*Exercise 2: Write an agree vs. disagree list for the following thesis statement:*

Students should take a year off of school after high school.

AGREE	DISAGREE

**Step 4: Generate a list of reasons for why you feel the way you do**

Once you know what your opinion is, give yourself a few minutes to make a point-form list. To do this, take a blank sheet of paper, write your opinion at the top and begin jotting down reasons why someone should agree with you. This step is also called brainstorming. It is important to give yourself the freedom to write down anything, no matter how unformed or insignificant it may seem.

EX. People should keep exotic pets.

- personal enjoyment
- personal benefit
- people will create safe environment for pet
- iguanas more expensive than most lizards
- people will be sensitive to other environments
- pets kept in too confined a space
- some are endangered (helps keep them alive)

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- some species of birds that are otherwise endangered
- education for owner and public
- companionship

*Exercise 3: Make a list of reasons for the following thesis statements:*

Smoking should be banned.

Email is changing the way we communicate with each other.