UNIT 1: Opinion Essay

Eye on the Environment
Opinion Essay

When you make a judgment about something, you have an opinion about it. You may feel that the library should be open for longer, or you may think that one song is better than another. Every day, you form opinions. Your friends may not share your opinion about the library or about which song is better.

**IN THIS UNIT,** you will learn how to write an opinion essay. Your essay will be based on your close reading and examination of sources. You will learn how to state an opinion and give strong reasons that support it. You’ll organize your essay in a clear way that makes sense to the reader.

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**Step 1**
**Analyze the Model**
Evaluate an opinion essay about whether or not people should use disposable bags.

**Step 2**
**Practice the Task**
Write an opinion essay about whether or not dogs should be allowed on the beach.

**Step 3**
**Perform the Task**
Write an opinion essay about whether or not plastic water bottles should be banned.
Should people use disposable bags?

You will read:
- A Magazine Editorial
  “Reduce” Is the New “Recycle”
- A Letter to the Editor
  from Anthony Murray

You will analyze:
- A Student Model
  Is Just Recycling Enough?
Not so long ago, recycling was all the rage. Sorting plastic bottles from the trash was all it took to be thought of as Earth-friendly. Now, however, some experts believe that recycling alone does not solve the problem of pollution. Mark Hader, founder of the organization Stop Buying Now, says recycling “doesn’t help as much as we think it does. The best way to stop creating trash and adding to current pollution levels is to stop making new things. Bring your own reusable bag with you when you shop. This would save valuable resources!”
Paper bags are made from trees. We only use paper bags for a short time, but it takes many years for one tree to grow. Is it worth cutting down something as beautiful as a tree so that we can use paper bags?

Plastic bags begin as petroleum, a nonrenewable resource. Petroleum is a fossil fuel. When we make bags, we pollute the air and waste fossil fuels. Once we use fossil fuels, they’re gone forever. Do we really want to waste them on bags?

So, what’s being done to discourage shoppers from using disposable bags? Some cities, including Los Angeles, have banned the use of plastic bags. Shoppers can pay 10¢ for a paper bag, but they won’t be offered plastic. Washington, DC, has taxed plastic bags since 2010.

Hopefully, these taxes and bans will encourage our city to take a closer look at our bag policy. We can surely find a way to reduce our bag usage.

**Discuss and Decide**

What are two ways that cities are reducing disposable bag use? Cite evidence from the article to support your answer.
Dear Ms. Amore,

I do not think that our city should ban or tax disposable bags. It may seem like the Earth-friendly thing to do, but it’s not. Reusable bags can be bad for the environment and for people, too!

Reusable bags aren’t meant to last forever. They wear out over time. They may not wear out after only a few uses, but they will eventually wear out. When they can no longer be used, they will end up in the trash, just like a disposable plastic bag.

Creating reusable bags also uses resources. They don’t appear out of thin air! An interesting fact that you may not know is that making plastic bags uses less energy than making paper bags. Our city doesn’t have a ban or tax on bags, so we can choose plastic. We should choose plastic over paper.
Another fact is that reusable bags can be bad for your health. Germs can stick around for quite awhile in those bags! Some people don’t wash their bags, and so germs grow and spread. Gross!

Some people need to know all of the facts before they support a ban or a tax on bags. I think these reusable bags just create problems for customers.

Sincerely,
Anthony Murray, a plastic bag user
Taniya Thomas
December 12

Is Just Recycling Enough?

Recycling is important, but we need to do more to help the environment. We can reduce what we use. One way we can reduce is by using reusable bags instead of disposable ones.

We use up resources to make plastic and paper bags. Yes, we use up resources when we make reusable bags once. People buy reusable bags to use again and again. Most people might not use a plastic or paper bag again. Plastic bags are not made to be used many times. They are too thin. They can rip in one trip if you have too many groceries!

Some might say that if we recycle paper or plastic bags, there is no problem. But how many people really recycle their disposable bags? We don’t know how many people really will recycle the bags they use. It is not always easy to remember to recycle.
Some people say that reusable bags are bad for your health. Germs can grow in them, but only if you don’t wash them! Washing these bags seems like a pretty easy thing to do. We can all take the time to wash a bag. We don’t have to be lazy!

Reusable bags eventually wear out. So does everything else. We can’t wear the same clothes forever. But we can use them over and over again before we have to get rid of them. If we reuse our clothes, it makes sense to me to reuse the bags we carry them in, too.

Even if people don’t want to use reusable bags, we can make people not want to get disposable bags. Some cities have a tax on bags. If customers take a reusable bag, they have to pay. Why would you want to pay if you can bring your own bag for free? Some cities have bans. They won’t let you have a bag, even if you ask! That will stop people from using disposable bags for sure!

I’m going to stop using disposable bags, and I hope you do, too!

Discuss and Decide
Does Taniya convince you that reusable bags are worthwhile? If so, cite evidence from her essay that makes you think so. If she doesn’t convince you, why not?
Be Clear!

When you write, always check your work. Did you write what you meant to say? In her essay, Taniya could have stated some of her ideas more clearly.

**Here is a confusing sentence from Taniya’s essay:**

Even if people don’t want to use reusable bags, we can make people not want to get disposable bags.

**How could Taniya make her ideas clearer? She could state them in a more simple way. Here’s an example:**

We can make rules so that people won’t want to use disposable bags, even if they did before.

**Remember These Tips When Writing!**

- Read a sentence out loud if you are not sure it sounds right. Would your teacher write it the way you wrote it?
- Have a friend look at what you wrote. Does your friend understand what you mean?

Look back through Taniya’s essay. Find one sentence that you could improve and underline it. Then rewrite the sentence so that it is more clear. Exchange your work with a partner. Ask your partner if what you wrote is easier to understand than what Taniya wrote.
Step 2  Practice the Task

Should dogs be allowed on the beach?

You will read:
- A Letter to the Editor
  from Amanda Evans
- A Petition
  from Dog-Owners’ Association of Monterey
- A Blog
  It Happened to Me!
- An Announcement
  Protecting the Snowy Plover

You will write:
- An Opinion Essay
  Should dogs be allowed on the beach?
Dear Editor,

I want to thank your magazine for organizing the “Adopt a Dog Day” campaign. It has changed my life and the life of my grandmother!

Grandma is 82 years old and a few months ago she had surgery on both knees. She mostly moved around using her wheelchair. The doctors told her that it would be good for her to walk a bit every day. I tried to get her out for short walks, but she didn’t feel like it. She was sad.

Then, one day, I saw that you were going to have “Adopt a Dog Day” in my local park. That’s how we found Riley, an adorable dog. Grandma loved Riley!

From that day on, every afternoon, Grandma and I started taking Riley to the beach. At the beginning, Grandma walked slowly and our visits to the beach
were short. But little by little, she started getting more secure in her walking and our walks were longer and longer.

Now I feel that I got my Grandma back! Thanks to Riley . . . and to Dog Journal magazine.

Sincerely,

Amanda Evans

P.S. - Look how happy Grandma is with Riley!

Close Read

Why does Amanda believe dogs should be allowed on the beach? Cite text evidence in your response.
Source 2: Petition

**AS YOU READ**  Analyze the petition. Make notes that help you decide where you stand on the issue: Should dogs be allowed on the beach?

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**Dog-Owners’ Association of Monterey**

98 Vista Avenue, #5
Monterey, CA 93940

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The Mayor
City Hall
580 Pacific Ave.
Monterey, CA 93940

Dear Mayor,

We do not agree with the ban of dogs on our local beaches. There are many dog-owners in our community and not enough dog parks. Our dogs need a place to run, exercise, and have fun. Many of us used to take our four-legged friends to one of the beaches nearby until the new law forbade it. Now we don’t have a place to take them!

While we understand peoples’ concerns, we believe this law is too harsh. There is a way for dogs to enjoy a walk on the beach while keeping members of the
community who don’t have pets happy. We think that there is room to compromise. Most dog owners walk their pets in the morning and in the evening, and not during the hours when the beach would be very busy. As long as we clean up after our dogs, we wouldn’t be bothering anybody. We are respectfully asking you to reconsider, and allow us again to take our dogs to the beach, during off-peak hours. We’ve collected over 120 signatures supporting this petition.

Sincerely,
Dog-Owners’ Association of Monterey

Close Read

What is the compromise that the Dog-Owners’ Association offers the Mayor?
Source 3: Blog

**AS YOU READ** Analyze the blog. Make notes that help you decide where you stand on the issue: Should dogs be allowed on the beach?

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**All Things Monterey**

*A Blog About Life In My Beautiful Town*

Saturday, May 31st

**It Happened to Me!**

Yes, I love dogs. But there’s a limit! Here’s what happened to me yesterday.

I like to power-walk around the shore each morning, when the beach is deserted and the sun is starting to come out. It’s my favorite time of the day, and exercise helps me start the day with positive energy.

Yesterday, I went to the beach, put my headphones on, and started power-walking as small waves crashed softly against my ankles. Great feeling, right? Yes, until my naked feet stepped into a soft, fresh pile of . . . dog you-know-what! Ugh! Disgusting!

Our local laws don’t allow dogs on the beach, but some people think that it’s OK to take them early in the morning and late in the evening because the dogs don’t bother anybody. Maybe. But if you do, CLEAN UP AFTER YOUR DOG!!!
I alerted the local authorities and urged them to increase their presence in the beach area during off-peak hours. They said they’d do their best. We’ll see. One thing is for sure—I’m not walking barefoot on the beach any time soon!

**Who Is Roger Stevens?**

*I’ve lived in Monterey all my life. I know many things about this beautiful town and its community, and since people ask me questions about things around town and what’s going on all the time, I decided to start this blog. You can subscribe by clicking the button below.*

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**COMMENTS**

3

4 hours ago

**young324**

You have to calm down, man! It was an accident. No biggie!

10 hours ago

**Knowitall**

I agree with you, Roger. If there are no dogs allowed, there shouldn’t be exceptions!

22 hours ago

**PuppyAmy**

What if the thing you stepped in was brought by the waves?

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**Discuss and Decide**

Why did Roger write this blog post?
In March 1993, the western snowy plover was listed as a threatened species, protected under the Endangered Species Act. There are only 2,300 of these birds remaining on the Pacific Coast.

Snowy plovers use sandy beaches for breeding and resting. Their habitat is threatened by urban development, the spread of European dune grass, a higher number of predators in the area, and increased disturbances to their habitats from people and animals.

A snowy plover’s natural response is to run or fly from danger. Continuous or repeated disturbance uses up their stored energy reserves and may jeopardize future breeding.
You Can Help Protect the Snowy Plover

When you are in the snowy plover protection areas, you should:

- Keep your dog on a leash. Snowy plovers perceive dogs as predators.
- Walk, jog, or ride your horse on the wet sand away from the upper parts of the beach where snowy plovers are most likely to be found.
- Fly your kites, and throw balls or flying discs in areas close to the water, away from where snowy plovers rest.
- Dispose of garbage properly to avoid attracting predators.
- Leave kelp and driftwood on the beach—these provide resting and feeding areas for the snowy plover.

For more information, visit http://www.nps.gov/goga/planyourvisit/upload/sb-plight_web.pdf

Discuss and Decide

Why is it important to keep dogs on a leash near snowy plovers? Cite text evidence in your response.
Respond to Questions

These questions will help you analyze the sources you read. Use your notes and refer to the sources in order to answer the questions. Your answers to these questions will help you write your essay.

1. Which source(s) agree that dogs shouldn’t be allowed on the beach? How do you know? Make notes about reasons in the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Protecting the Snowy Plover</td>
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</table>
2 Prose Constructed-Response  What is one reason why dogs **should** be allowed on the beach? Cite text evidence in your response.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3 Prose Constructed-Response  What is one reason why dogs **shouldn’t** be allowed on the beach? Cite text evidence in your response.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Planning and Prewriting

Before you draft your essay, complete some important planning steps.

What’s Your Opinion?

Think about what you’ve read and respond below.

**Issue:** Should dogs be allowed on the beach?

**Your position on the issue:** □ yes □ no

**Your opinion:**

________________________

________________________

________________________

What Are Your Reasons?

Pick three sentences from the sources that helped you form your opinion. Write one sentence in each box below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
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</table>
Finalize Your Plan

You know what your opinion is on the issue. Now, it’s time to plan the structure of your essay. You will save time and create a more organized, logical essay by planning the structure before you start writing.

Use your responses on pages 20–22 to complete the graphic organizer.

- **Introduction**
  - Grab your reader’s attention with an interesting fact or story. Identify the issue and your opinion.

- **Reason**
  - State reasons that support your opinion.

- **Opposing Opinion**
  - Give the opposing opinion and how you will counter it.

- **Concluding Section**
  - Restate your opinion.
Draft Your Essay

As you write, think about:

▶ **Purpose**  *what you want to communicate*
▶ **Clarity**  *ideas that are straightforward and understandable*
▶ **Support**  *examples from the sources that support your opinion*
▶ **Organization**  *the logical structure for your essay*
▶ **Connecting Words**  *words that link your ideas*
▶ **Academic Vocabulary**  *words used in writing about a particular topic*

Revision Checklist: Self-Evaluation

Use the checklist below to guide your self-evaluation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ask Yourself</strong></th>
<th><strong>Make It Better</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Does your introduction grab the audience’s attention?</td>
<td>A great introduction hooks your audience. Ask a question, create a vivid image, or tell a personal story. Make sure you clearly state your opinion up front.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Do the reasons support your opinion?</td>
<td>In the body of your essay, give three reasons that support your opinion. Give details or examples to support these reasons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Do connecting words help organize and link ideas in your essay?</td>
<td>Connecting words link ideas together. Use connecting words to signal differences of opinion, explain how two ideas relate, or shift from one paragraph of your essay to the next.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Does the essay explain and counter an opposing opinion?</td>
<td>Ask yourself, “What would someone who disagrees with my opinion say about my reasons?” Include an opposing viewpoint and explain how you counter it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Does the last section restate your opinion?</td>
<td>In wrapping up your essay, restate your opinion and provide a summary of the reasons you gave to support your opinion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Revision Checklist: Peer Review

Exchange your essay with a classmate, or read it out loud to your partner. As you read and comment on your partner’s essay, focus on organization and evidence. You do not need to agree with your partner’s opinion. Help your partner find parts of the draft that need to be revised.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What To Look For</th>
<th>Notes for My Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Does the introduction grab the audience’s attention?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Do the reasons support the stated opinion?</td>
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</table>
Use Connecting Words

Review Your Use of Connecting Words

To make your essay read smoothly and to link your ideas, use connecting words. Connecting words show how two things or ideas are related.

These sentences are choppy and interrupt the flow of ideas:
The plovers do not nest on the beach. The plovers do spend ten months there.

This sentence is smooth and links both ideas together:
Although the plovers do not nest on the beach, they do spend ten months there.

Use Connecting Words!

Here are some connecting words that you might use when you revise your essay.

although  even though  in addition
because   for example  since
but      for instance  therefore
even if  in order to  while

Edit

Edit your essay to correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.
Should plastic water bottles be banned?

You will read:
- An Editorial
  Ban the Bans on Plastic Water Bottles
- An Infographic
  Problems with Plastic
- A Graphic Feature
  Out of Every 100 Plastic Bottles Made in 2012 . . .

You will write:
- An Opinion Essay
  Should plastic water bottles be banned?
Ban the Bans on Plastic Water Bottles

By Ruth Amnell

Plastic water bottles are a necessary part of modern life. They are the easiest way to access water when we’re on the go. But they’re getting a bad reputation. The town of Concord, Massachusetts, has even banned the sale of some types of plastic bottles. Environmentalists want to get rid of plastic bottles, but they might see things differently if they consider the points below.

People in favor of plastic bottle bans say that we can get water from water fountains. When was the last time you saw a water fountain? It’s probably been a long time. Water fountains are a thing of the past. If you want a sip of water while you’re out, don’t expect to find a water fountain.

Even if you could find a water fountain, you wouldn’t want to drink from it! Water fountains are covered in germs. People put their mouths on the spout, spreading whatever germs they might have. The bacteria that collects can make people sick.

Why take that chance when you can use a water bottle? Grabbing a plastic water bottle before you leave the house can help you avoid these germ-filled sources of water.
Some parts of the world don’t have clean water to drink. If you are traveling to a place where the water isn’t safe to drink, a plastic water bottle is the best way to get water. You could boil the water, but only if you have access to a stove. How likely is that? When health is involved, you don’t want to risk drinking water that isn’t safe.

If water bottles are banned from indoor and outdoor events, other healthy drink options need to be made available. Most of these bans are directed at plastic bottles that contain water, but the bans don’t apply to plastic soda bottles! If you want to buy a beverage from a food truck vendor, for example, soda will be the only option. If you don’t want to drink soda, you’re out of luck.

What about the chemicals in plastic water bottles? Yes, there are some. But there are no cases of people getting sick from those chemicals. There are chemicals in many items that we use every day. So don’t worry about it!

Plastic water bottle bans have not been adopted by many cities yet. Perhaps, if the decision to ban these bottles is carefully considered, no other cities will institute the ban.

**Close Read**

What example supports the author’s point about needing plastic water bottles at indoor and outdoor events?
Problems with Plastic

Where does the water in bottled water actually come from? The pictures of mountains and fresh lakes on some water bottles may make us think that the water in those bottles comes from these places, but that may not be the case. The water in your plastic bottle may actually be tap water. Here are some other bottled water facts.

Plastic bottles can take many hundreds of years to break down.

In 2009, Bundanoon, a city in Australia, became the first city in the world to ban bottled water from stores. Water fountains were put up around the city.

In 2013, Concord, Massachusetts became the first town in the United States to ban plastic water bottles.
It takes three liters of water to produce each one-liter bottle of water.

In 2011, sales of bottled water in the United States totaled $21.7 billion. Americans buy 29 billion bottles of water a year.

A 60-watt light bulb can be powered for six hours with the energy saved from recycling one plastic bottle.

For every six water bottles we use, only one is recycled. The rest are sent to landfills.

Discuss and Decide
What effects do plastic bottles have on the environment?

22% of bottled water brands tested contained chemicals above state health limits.
Out of every 100 plastic bottles made in 2012...

69 were thrown in the trash and 31 were recycled.

If we had recycled these 69 bottles, we could have made:

- a sweater
- or 5 square feet of carpet.

The recycled plastic from these 31 bottles makes fiber for:

- 2 extra-large t-shirts
- or the fill for 2 ski jackets.

Discuss and Decide

What happens to recycled plastic bottles?
Respond to Questions

These questions will help you think about the sources you’ve read. Use your notes and refer to the sources to answer the questions. Your answers to these questions will help you write your essay.

1. According to the sources, which of the following is a reason to ban bottled water?
   a. There are chemicals in plastic water bottles. (Source 1)
   b. Plastic water bottles can help you avoid drinking unsafe water. (Source 1)
   c. Some bottled water is tap water. (Source 2)
   d. In 2012, 31% of plastic bottles were recycled. (Source 3)

2. According to Source 1, why should people avoid using water fountains?
   a. The water that comes from fountains is dirty.
   b. Water fountains have been banned in some cities.
   c. Bacteria can collect on water fountains.
   d. There are harmful chemicals in water fountains.

3. Which sentence best supports your answer to Question 2?
   a. “People put their mouths on the spout, spreading whatever germs they might have.” (lines 17–18)
   b. “When health is involved, you don’t want to risk drinking water that isn’t safe.” (lines 29–30)
   c. “If you don’t want to drink soda, you’re out of luck.” (lines 37–38)
   d. “There are chemicals in many items that we use every day.” (lines 41–42)
Which sentence best supports the idea that banning plastic water bottles may have harmful consequences?

a. “When health is involved, you don’t want to risk drinking water that isn’t safe.” (Source 1)

b. “Plastic water bottle bans have not been adopted by many cities yet.” (Source 1)

c. “Plastic bottles can take many hundreds of years to break down.” (Source 2)

d. “The recycled plastic from these 31 bottles makes fiber for 2 extra-large t-shirts.” (Source 3)

Which source(s) agree that plastic water bottles should be banned? How do you know? Record your reasons in the chart.

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Prose-Constructed Response What information in Source 3 can support the writer’s opinion on plastic water bottles in Source 1? Cite evidence from the text in your response.
Write the Essay
Read the assignment.

Plan
Use the graphic organizer to help you outline the structure of your opinion essay.

Assignment
You have read about the use of plastic water bottles. Now write an opinion essay explaining why you agree or disagree with the ban of plastic water bottles. Support your opinion with details from what you have read.

Introduction

Reason
Reason
Reason

Opposing Opinion

Concluding Section

- Grab your reader’s attention with an interesting fact or personal story. Identify the issue and your opinion.
- State reasons that support your opinion.
- Give the opposing opinion and how you will counter it.
- Restate your opinion.
Draft

Use your notes and completed graphic organizer to write a first draft of your opinion essay.

Revise and Edit

Look back over your essay and compare it to the Evaluation Criteria. Revise your essay and edit it to correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.

Evaluation Criteria

Your teacher will be looking for:

1. **Statement of purpose**
   - Is your opinion stated clearly?
   - Did you support your opinion with reasons?
   - Did you mention an opposing opinion?

2. **Organization**
   - Are the sections of your essay organized in a way that makes sense?
   - Is there a smooth flow from beginning to end?
   - Did you use connecting words?
   - Is there a clear conclusion?

3. **Reasons**
   - Do your reasons support your opinion?
   - Are your reasons convincing?

4. **Vocabulary**
   - Did you use academic vocabulary?

5. **Conventions**
   - Did you use proper punctuation, capitalization, and spelling?