



OKLAHOMA Education

WRITING/CONSTRUCTED RESPONSE
ANCHOR PAPER EXEMPLARS
GRADE 8 INFORMATIVE



Writing Topic:

Write an informational paper that examines the topic of how people learn and how they can increase their brain power. Be sure to use information from both sources in your paper.

Before you begin planning and writing your paper, read the two passages:

1. "Changing Your Mind—One Thought at a Time"
2. "Our Brain: For Better or For Worse"

Changing Your Mind—One Thought at a Time

The Plastic Brain

- 1 Your brain is always changing. It will continue to transform throughout your entire life. Whether your brain changes for better or worse is up to you. This has not always been the popular belief, however.
- 2 Historically, it has been thought that the brain developed until a certain age and then became fixed. However, research over the last several years has shown that the brain is not rigid at all, but has the ability to be flexible, or plastic, and is able to change and learn throughout a person's lifetime. The official term for the brain's ability to grow, change, and learn is called plasticity.

Learning

- 3 Learning occurs when new knowledge is gained through instruction or experience. Memory is what allows this new knowledge to be remembered over time. Knowledge and experience, however, are not all that is involved in learning. Long ago, Albert Einstein made a statement about learning that science has only recently begun to understand. Einstein said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited."
- 4 Think of knowledge as a tool and imagination as the hand that uses the tool. The more tools the hand has to use, the more it can build. Using your imagination exercises your brain and increases its ability to use multiple tools for learning.



- 5 Some studies suggest that imagination plays a key role in memory, as well. In one study, people were asked to remember a list of words using several different strategies, imagination being one of them. Those asked to use imagination as a memory tool were told to imagine that they were acting out the word. Those that used this approach were able to better remember details than those who used other methods of recall.

A Library of Memories

- 6 Memory and learning go hand in hand. Understanding requires the use of memory: to understand something you must remember it. On the other hand, when something is understood, it also becomes easier to remember. It is important to have a sense of how memory works in order to recognize how memory and learning help each other.
- 7 Think of the human brain as a vast library. Instead of shelf after shelf of books, this library is full of memories. The hippocampus is the part of the brain that acts as a librarian. It is responsible for deciding what to do with short-term memories. It is also in charge of organizing and storing long-term memories. If the brain decides that new information stored in short-term memory is useful, it will deposit the memory into long-term storage. In other words, the brain's librarian will permanently "shelve" the memories your mind deems important enough to remember.
- 8 Not only does the brain store memories in the library of the mind for the use of learning, but it constantly redesigns the physical structure and organization of the library itself, creating pathways for quicker access to "important" information.

The Ability to Think

- 9 Humans have the ability to be aware of their own thoughts. Although the brain remembers information we do not always *choose* to remember, we can decide what information is important by being aware of our thoughts. Some scientists report that because of this, humans who pay attention to their thoughts should be able to *choose* which thoughts will become a part of their long-term memory. Not only can the brain decide which thoughts are worth keeping, but it can choose how it wants to organize its library.
- 10 The thoughts you think about *most* will create the dominant pathways on which the librarian of your brain will travel and build upon. Your thoughts create physical routes in your brain. The more you think a thought, the more you establish the path for that same thought to be more easily repeated. These thoughts are "stored on the shelves" of your long-term memory.



Grade 8 WRITING Section 1

Creating Awareness

- 11 Although we are often unaware of the pathways being built in our brain, the very act of being focused and purposeful about what we are thinking and learning can change the way our brain stores and uses information. In other words, we can give the libraries in our heads an upgrade by simply choosing to focus on what we want to think about.
- 12 How does this work? You have approximately 70,000 thoughts per day. Interestingly, many of those thoughts will be the same ones looping around again and again. The more you think “I can’t do this,” for example, the more likely that experience will become true for you. This is because thinking these thoughts over and over creates a route for easy access to the shelves that contain the memories of all the things you “cannot do.”
- 13 Learning how to exercise your mind and use tools to increase learning is therefore only a part of the learning process. Do you have what it takes to improve your brainpower? The first step is to simply believe that you can.



Our Brain: For Better or For Worse

INTRODUCTION

- 1 The human brain has been the topic of many studies, due to advancement in technology and medical science. Scientists at the American Research Institute of Human Learning want to know what influences the brain, for better or for worse. This study looks at three different experiments conducted throughout the country. The following is a brief summary of what was learned.

EXPERIMENT 1: "What effect does exercise have on how the brain performs?"
Performed at NRC Laboratories in Spokane, Washington

Subjects and Procedure

- 2 The study included 80 subjects (40 females and 40 males between the ages of 30–40) of similar educational background and intelligence. The subjects were randomly assigned to Group A and Group B. There were 40 subjects in each group. Group A participated in 10 minutes of exercise on a treadmill before completing mazes of varying levels of difficulty within a given period of time. Group B did not exercise and was simply asked to complete the same mazes within the given time period.

Results and Discussion

- 3 Overall Group A performed better in successfully completing all levels of the mazes. Additionally, subjects in Group A reported greater satisfaction with the ability to focus. There was a significant difference in mental performance between the two groups.

EXPERIMENT 2: "What effect does sleep have on mental function?"
Performed at Sleep Research Studies in Hastings, Nebraska

Subjects and Procedure

- 4 The study included 20 subjects (10 females and 10 males between the ages of 20–30) of similar educational background and intelligence. All subjects reported they were good sleepers. The subjects stayed in the lab for four nights in a row. Ten (10) subjects were assigned to Group A. They continued to sleep their normal sleep schedule. Ten (10) subjects were assigned to Group B. They were allowed less sleep each night. Each day, subjects were asked to complete mental tasks of a similar level of difficulty.



Results and Discussion

- 5 Subjects in Group A received average scores on the daily tasks. Subjects in Group B scored below average. The more sleep lost by subjects in Group B, the longer it took them to complete the tasks and the less accurate their results were. Group A reported greater satisfaction with the ability to focus on the tasks.

EXPERIMENT 3: "What effect does positive or negative expectation have on academic performance?" Performed at Smith College in Northampton, Maine

Subjects and Procedure

- 6 The study included 500 subjects (250 females and 250 males between the ages of 17–19) entering their freshman year of college. Based on their high school grades and college entrance exams, the college used a formula to predict what each student's first year grades would be. The same students were given Expectation Tests to determine whether they thought positively or negatively. The tests also measured the way students explained the reasons for outcomes in their lives, both good and bad.

Results and Discussion

- 7 Those who scored higher on the "positive expectation" scale were overall more successful than their peers. The Expectation Tests better predicted student success than did the formulas used by the college. Additionally, those who explained failures as being "unavoidable" were less successful than those who described the same failures as being "lessons learned."



WRITING/CONSTRUCTED RESPONSE RUBRIC

OSTP Grade 8 Holistic Writing Rubric



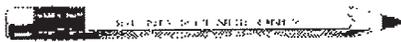
Score	Description
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content is well-suited for the audience and task/purpose and the writing maintains a clear focus; ideas are fully developed. For an argumentative response, at least one counterclaim is present. • Organization is strong and sustained, creating unity and coherence; contains an engaging introduction, an effective conclusion that follows logically, and smooth, effective transitions that contribute to logical sequencing. • Word choice is varied and conveys meaning; language is effective and connects to the audience. • Sentence structure is clear and correct, and the writing demonstrates a rich variety of structures, types, and lengths; any errors are minor. • The writing demonstrates appropriate control of grammar, usage, and mechanics; errors are minor and do not affect readability.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content is adequate for the audience and task/purpose and the writing has an evident focus; ideas are somewhat developed. • Organization is adequate, creating some unity and coherence; introduction and conclusion are appropriate, and sequencing is logical with limited transitions. • Word choice is general and includes some variety; language is adequate and attempts to connect to the audience. • Sentence structure is correct and the writing demonstrates an adequate variety of structures, types, and lengths; errors may be present but do not interfere with fluency. • The writing demonstrates adequate control of grammar, usage, and mechanics; errors are noticeable but do not significantly affect readability.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content is inconsistent for the audience and task/purpose and the writing has an unclear focus; ideas are minimally developed and may be listed. • Organization lacks clarity, demonstrating weak unity and coherence; introduction and conclusion are ineffective, there is little or random sequencing, and transitions are limited. • Word choice lacks precision and variety; language may be inappropriate, ineffective, simplistic, or vague. • Sentence structure lacks control and the writing demonstrates limited variety of structures, types, and lengths; errors interfere with fluency. • The writing demonstrates limited control of grammar, usage, and mechanics; errors are distracting and may interfere with readability.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content is irrelevant for the audience and task/purpose and the writing has a confusing focus; ideas are repetitive or lack development. • Organization lacks logical direction; there is no evidence of unity or coherence. • Word choice is extremely limited or inaccurate; language fails to communicate meaning. The writing may be too short to demonstrate variety. • Sentence structure is inappropriate and the writing demonstrates no variety of structures, types, and lengths; errors interfere with fluency. The writing may be too short to demonstrate control of sentence structures. • The writing demonstrates minimal control of grammar, usage, and mechanics; errors are numerous and impede readability.

Responses receive a score designation of “unscorable” and a performance level of "Below Standard" if they meet any of the following conditions:

- restatement of the task (prompt) or a refusal
- in a language other than English
- illegible, incomprehensible, or otherwise indecipherable
- about a topic different from the assigned task



WRITING/CONSTRUCTED RESPONSE
HOLISTIC ANCHOR PAPER
EXEMPLARS



Grade 8 WRITING Section 1

Writing Topic:

Write an informational paper that examines the topic of how people learn and how they can increase their brain power. Be sure to use information from both sources in your paper.

The brain itself is a "malleable" object. With the right tools, we can mold our brains to create a positive impact on our ability to learn, and strengthen our mindpower. These certain practices are memory and awareness, using your imagination, enough sleep and moderate exercise, and an overall positive mindset. With these tools, you can unleash the power of your mind.

To be able to remember what we learn is vital to expanding our knowledge. The more you remember something, the easier it is to be understood. And when something is understood, it is easier to remember. Being imaginative can exponentially make the ability to remember easier. In group studies, people were asked to use different skills to better remember things. The group that used imagination

better remembered the information provided.

Using imagination to remember can mean the difference between remembering or forgetting important knowledge.

Being aware of how we learn can be helpful in changing the way our brain stores and uses information. Being focused in

the learning process makes it easier for that knowledge to stick in our heads. Also,

when you have a purpose in mind, learning will come easier. When we think a certain

thought over and over again, it creates a "pathway"

in our minds. So if you constantly say, "I can't do it," then the result will be failure in

the end. Thinking more helpful thoughts will

ultimately lead to a positive outcome.

We can strengthen our minds with sleep

and exercise. Sleep is the time when our

brain recovers from the day's challenges. With the

proper amount of sleep, our minds will be able

to take on the day each morning. But, with

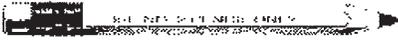


Grade 8 WRITING Section 1

lack of sleep, our minds will become sluggish and less productive. Tests have shown that those who got less sleep than usual performed mental tasks at a slower and less accurate rate than those who slept as they normally do. Exercise can increase clarity and productivity in daily tasks. Studies showed that people who participated in 10 minutes of moderate exercise performed better in tasks than those who didn't. Those who exercised claimed that they had more focus and clarity during these tasks. So, with proper amounts of sleep and exercise, our mind will be more focused and understanding with the task at hand.

Our mindsets also affect our learning ability. Having a positive look on things will increase the interest and efficiency of your work.

Being a so-called "negative nancy" will do no good in learning and/or strengthening your mind. The first step in learning is believing that you can. We can improve our brainpower by focusing on the task and believing we can



Writing Topic:

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Using your brain is something you do every single day. You could be wondering about what flavor of ice cream you should choose or if you should go over to Jimmy's house today. People can learn and enhance their power to think and to discover new things in many different ways. Three of those ways are by exercising, sleeping, and having higher expectations of themselves.

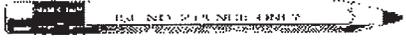
The first way you can enhance your brain power is by exercising your brain and body. By using your imagination you open up new pathways in your brain. Getting the gym will help you stay focused when learning too. Also, by learning new things, you can really increase your brain power.

The second way you can learn and

Increase your brain power is by getting more sleep. In an experiment, studies shown that people who got less sleep weren't able to think and took more time to do things. ~~Those~~ who got more sleep learned more and didn't take so long to do things.

The third and final way people can learn and enhance their brain power is by having higher expectations. In a recent study, freshmen's in college who had high expectations had better grades than those who had low expectations. When asked about their failures in their life, those who explained them as "unavoidable" were less successful than those who considered them "lessons learned."

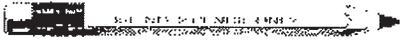
So if people would give their brain a workout, go to bed earlier, and would think more positively about themselves, they would increase their brainpower. Who knows? Maybe enhancing your brain's power might make you as smart as Albert Einstein. All anyone has



Grade 8 WRITING Section 1

to do is start thinking.

Score Point 3 ID: 1571856374
The content is appropriate for the audience and purpose. The topic is evident and somewhat developed: "People can learn and enhance that power. . . . Three of those ways are by exercising, sleeping, and having higher expectations of themselves." Ideas are examined using text-based facts, concrete details, and examples in support of the writer's ideas. The response demonstrates general organization and coherence through chronological transitions. The introduction and conclusion are appropriate and functional. Word choice is general and appropriate: "Hitting the gym will help you stay focused when learning too." Sentence structure is correct, and the writing demonstrates adequate control of grammar, usage, and mechanics; errors are minor and do not affect readability.



Grade 8 WRITING Section 1

Writing Topic:

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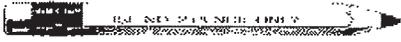
Your brain can do outstanding things, things that you would never think it could do. Our brains are designed to make decisions, accomplish task, and do the unthinkable. Even scientist make observations almost everyday to find out what we are capable of.

Do you remember what time you got up this morning? What about what you ate for breakfast. See this is the difference between short-term memory and long-term memory. You most likely forgot what time you got up this morning because you didn't find it important. You

probably remember what you had for breakfast though. But in about five to ten days this will become short-term memory, because it will most likely become useless information. Humans have approximately 70,000 thoughts in just one day. But what are all these thoughts? Believe it or not they are just the same thoughts looping through your mind. It is amazing how much information we can store in our brain.

Humans make decisions in everyday life. It can go from little decisions such as, choosing what you want to wear that day. To big decisions such as, what you're going to write on your exam for school. The choices that you make are all decided with the help of your brain.

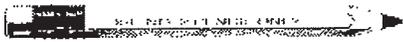
Whether you choose to exercise or



Grade 8 WRITING Section 1

sleep, your are still helping your brain. Remember to always stay positive and have a wonderful imagination. Like Einstein said "Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited."

Score Point 2 ID: 1570673136
The content is inconsistent for the purpose for writing. Questions/statements are posed in a manner that creates unclear focus as ideas are minimally developed from the text with few concrete details and examples. For example, "Whether you choose to exercise or sleep, your are still helping your brain." The expression of ideas is incomplete: How does exercise affect my brain? Why sleep? The writing demonstrates weak unity; the introduction of the topic is overly long, a little sequencing of ideas in the main body paragraph serves to examine the task, and the paper concludes abruptly. Sentence structures and types are mostly correct and varied. Grammar, usage, and mechanics show limited control; errors ("your are") and missed punctuation are noticeable.



Grade 8 WRITING Section 1

Writing Topic:

Write an informational paper that examines the topic of how people learn and how they can increase their brain power. Be sure to use information from both sources in your paper.

How people learn is by what they want to do. They can goof off and do what they want. I mean people do stuff then when they think there like what have I done I should of did this and this. But now i cant go back they have to use the brain before they go on. You always need to plan a goal Before they graduate High school. People have to increase there brain by writing down on a piece of paper.

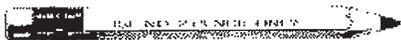
What you going to do in just think its called imagination you can see the images in your head. All of the fun things you can do Before messing up. Always make a

goal, and Always make good choices.

Always take your time and do stuff. Your brain will change during life when your little to grown up. Being good in school is good you have to remember things the teachers say and study for things like tests. Use your brain slow down and think of how your going to do this.

When you go to college make good choice get a good job in life make good money use your brain. think what your going to do when you get out of college.

When you get out of college or if you want to stay remember you always want to make good choice on what your going to do make good decisions. Always want to have a



Grade 8 WRITING Section 1

goal to do when your in
Highschool and Imagining what your
going to do when you graduate
Highschool. Always make good choices.

Score Point 1 ID: 1570676045
The response has a confusing focus to the task. The content is inappropriate for the purpose of explaining how people learn and how they can increase their brain power. The topic is unclear; “people learn is by what they want to do.” No evidence is elicited from the text, and ideas lack development and perspective: “People have to increase there brain by writing down on a piece of paper.” The response shows no evidence of organization. The introductory sentence is unclear and ineffective, and there is no evidence of unity or a conclusion. The word choice is extremely limited; vocabulary is weak, and there is a lack of concrete words, word relationships, and topic-specific language. The writing demonstrates no variety of sentence structures and minimal control of grammar, usage, and mechanics. Errors interfere with fluency and impede readability.