

## Children Must be Independent

The woman referenced in the prompt is a mother of four who is complaining that she was made to feel guilty because she was not immediately responsive to phone calls from her child's school nurse. The unnamed mother states that her children actually need to learn responsibility and that if she is always accessible to her children and their needs, then her children will never learn how to take care of their own issues. She says that while she is in fact an involved parent, she also wants her kids to learn how to "think on their feet". The mother of four believes that in addition to learning patience, her children need to learn how to consult other people for assistance. I agree with this woman wholeheartedly. Life after high school is filled with a variety of paths: college, military, career, traveling, work and/or marriage. Children will eventually learn that they must make their own decisions and they can no longer rely on their parents for advice, guidance or excuses. The sooner a teenager learns to be independent, the better prepared he or she will be for the real world.

I paid for my own college education. I worked forty to sixty hours a week while I was in school and I typically took between fifteen to twenty-one units per semester. In addition to work and school, I participated on the speech and debate team, I wrote for my college newspaper, I completed two internships at a local television station and a local radio station, and I attempted to maintain a social life, which every college student should have. What did I learn from these experiences? I learned that sometimes, life is not easy, but with hard work and perseverance, I could reach my goals. How did I learn these lessons? My parents were extremely strict and had incredibly high expectations for my brother and for me. While they told us what to do on a regular basis, they expected us to solve our own problems – much like the woman who wrote the editorial. My brother and I learned at a young age that we were responsible for our successes and our own failures. The woman who wrote the editorial says that her children need to learn "...skills they need to succeed in the real world. There are times they need to ad lib." This means her kids needed to learn to adjust to any given situation and behave and act accordingly. As a teen and young adult, I had to learn how to behave and act accordingly. My life during college was busy and hectic. If I had to wait for my parents' advice or help whenever I experienced or encountered a problem, I would have been paralyzed in my tracks. Because I was able to think and respond appropriately, I was able to successfully navigate my way through college and life after college. This is what the woman who wrote the editorial wants for her children. She wants them to be strong and independent because she knows that she will not always be there to take care of them.

As a teacher, I estimate that I have had more than 3,000 high school students take a class with me. I have taught a variety of classes, electives as well as core, at all four grade levels. While I have worked with students who are incredibly responsible and confident, I have also seen students who do not know how to solve problems or organize their lives or obligations. I see parents who quickly come to their child's aid, but do not insist that the student learn to speak for him/herself, set goals and create some manageable paths to successfully reach those goals. It is my observation that students in the latter category struggle to simply graduate from high school. Part of their struggle comes from their fear of failure once they get out into the real world. How do I know this? I have had countless students share their fears with me. While some students relish that their parents take care of all of their mistakes, these same students recognize that they are unprepared for life and all of the potential problems that may occur after they graduate from high school. The woman mentioned in the editorial says, "We cannot and should not orchestrate every moment in our children's lives for them..." Again, this woman is correct. She understands that while her role as a parent is to help her children grow into healthy, successful, functioning members of society, part of her responsibility as a parent is to teach them how to think and succeed on their own. If this woman is always present and willing to solve her kids' problems, her children will never learn how to function independently and make their own decisions.

In the book *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch teaches his young children to think, inquire, listen and learn. He treats Jem and Scout like young adults and engages them in thoughtful dialogue. Atticus doesn't baby his offspring and he expects them to behave in a mature manner. Mr. Finch teaches his children to respect their elders, to respect the law and to respect each other. He is a model parent! He understands that in order for Jem and Scout to be productive members of society, they must learn to face life as well as the struggles that come with simply being alive. During the course of the book, Jem and Scout have some trepidation about their neighbor Boo Radley. They have lived in fear of this neighbor for quite some time because of rumors that have swirled around the community. By the end of the book, the children learn that Boo Radley is actually a good guy. In fact, Boo ends up saving Jem who was attacked by Bob Ewell. In that moment, Jem had no choice but to accept Boo's help – help from a man he once erroneously feared. In the editorial, the woman said that her children may even have, "...times they need to turn to someone else." If these were real characters, Jem and Scout would have learned that in difficult times, they could in fact turn to Boo if their father was unavailable. While it is important to be self-sufficient, it is also comforting to know that you can turn to a neighbor, family member or respected adult in a life-threatening situation. Yes, *To Kill a Mockingbird* is fiction, but there are times when children do need some assistance and if their parents are unavailable, they should also know the names and phone numbers of people to contact. Knowing whom to contact is still an act of independence. The children are not relying solely on their parents. They need to know that there are other people who can provide assistance.

The woman referenced in the editorial made some valid points. Children do in fact need to learn to be self-sufficient. Parents cannot and should not be expected to solve every miniscule problem for their child. At some point, children will grow into teenagers who graduate from high school. If parents have raised their kids well, these young adults will be able to face any of life's challenges, including, but not limited to school and work. They will know what to do in challenging situations but they will also know whom to contact in the event that they truly need some assistance.

## EAP Practice

The following comes from the website <http://www.calstate.edu/eap/about.shtml>:

### About the Early Assessment Program

The California State University (CSU), which draws its students from the top third of California's high school graduates, has long accommodated large numbers of incoming students who need remedial education in English and mathematics. While having well over half of incoming students requiring additional preparation is a common occurrence in all states, the CSU and public school leadership believe that an early intervention strategy will help increase the college readiness of high school students.

The CSU has worked with the State Board of Education (SBE) and the California Department of Education (CDE) to develop the Early Assessment Program (EAP). EAP incorporates the CSU's placement standards into existing high school standards tests in English and mathematics.

The benefits of EAP are many:

- Aligning school and CSU standards so that success in school means readiness for the CSU
- Giving more meaning and force to the California Standards Tests (CSTs)
- Giving high school students an early signal about their college readiness and adequate time to prepare before entering CSU
- Making the senior year a time for more direct and specific preparation for college
- Exempting CSU-ready students from taking CSU placement tests or the SAT or the ACT, thereby reducing testing time for the students

**Today, you will write a practice EAP essay. Below are the directions and the prompt. The junior team here at Vista wants to ascertain whether or not students can read and understand a prompt and write a cohesive five-paragraph essay. You have received a rubric. Refer to the rubric as you write this essay.**

**Directions:** You will have 45 minutes to plan and write an essay on the topic assigned below. Before you begin writing, read the passage carefully and plan what you will say. Your essay should be as well organized and as carefully written as you can make it.

In a recent editorial essay, a working mother of four laments being made to feel guilty for not "being there" every minute for her children. She notes, "The school nurse has taken me to task for not being immediately accessible, and my kids--who live in a world where instant gratification has become the norm--complain about my intermittent unreachability. To which I say, hey, deal with it. I'm not cavalier about my mothering responsibilities.... I'm an involved parent. We modern moms and dads are not only expected to make sure our kids are perfectly nourished, endlessly enriched, and absolutely safe at all times: now, with cell phones and pagers, we are also supposed to be instantly reachable and immediately responsive.... We cannot and should not orchestrate every moment in our children's lives for them--partly because the effort turns out to be futile, but more importantly because it prevents our kids from learning skills they need to succeed in the real world. There are times they need to ad lib. There are times they need to wait. There are even times they need to turn to someone else."

Explain the author's argument and discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with her views. Support your position by referring to the passage and by providing reasons and examples from your own experience, observations, or readings.

GROUP #1: Each group has a different set of questions that they have to answer. Be sure to write the names of all group members on your paper and write in blue or black pen. As juniors, your responses should be detailed and correctly formatted. **Staple this paper to your written responses.**

1. Review the introductory paragraph. What do you notice about the content of the paragraph?
2. Review the prompt. Did I summarize the argument? If so, what did I say?
3. Review the prompt. Did I agree or disagree or both? What does the prompt ask me to do? Based on your observations, did I respond appropriately in my introductory paragraph?

GROUP #2: Each group has a different set of questions that they have to answer. Be sure to write the names of all group members on your paper and write in blue or black pen. As juniors, your responses should be detailed and correctly formatted. **Staple this paper to your written responses.**

1. Review the first body paragraph. What do you notice about the content of the paragraph?
2. Review the prompt. Did I provide an example of an experience, an observation or a reading? If so, which one did I include and what did I say/write about it in my first body paragraph?
3. Review the prompt. What specific words did I use in my first body paragraph that show I connected the paragraph back to the prompt?
4. Did I support my analysis with an example from the prompt? If so, what did I say? Describe how my example supports or relates to my analysis.

GROUP #3: Each group has a different set of questions that they have to answer. Be sure to write the names of all group members on your paper and write in blue or black pen. As juniors, your responses should be detailed and correctly formatted. **Staple this paper to your written responses.**

1. Review the second body paragraph. What do you notice about the content of the paragraph?
2. Review the prompt. Did I provide an example of an experience, an observation or a reading? If so, which one did I include and what did I say/write about it in my second body paragraph?
3. Review the prompt. What specific words did I use in my second body paragraph that shows I connected the paragraph back to the prompt?
4. Did I support my analysis with an example from the prompt? If so, what did I say? Describe how my example supports or relates to my analysis.

GROUP #4: Each group has a different set of questions that they have to answer. Be sure to write the names of all group members on your paper and write in blue or black pen. As juniors, your responses should be detailed and correctly formatted. **Staple this paper to your written responses.**

1. Review the third body paragraph. What do you notice about the content of the paragraph?
2. Review the prompt. Did I provide an example of an experience, an observation or a reading? If so, which one did I include and what did I say/write about it in my third body paragraph?
3. Review the prompt. What specific words did I use in my third body paragraph that show I connected the paragraph back to the prompt?
4. Did I support my analysis with an example from the prompt? If so, what did I say? Describe how my example supports or relates to my analysis.

GROUP #5: Each group has a different set of questions that they have to answer. Be sure to write the names of all group members on your paper and write in blue or black pen. As juniors, your responses should be detailed and correctly formatted. This group will need to reread the entire essay to successfully complete your questions.

**Staple this paper to your written responses.**

1. Review the concluding paragraph. What do you notice about the content of the paragraph?
2. Did my concluding paragraph summarize the paper or touch on points that I made throughout the paper.
3. Did I agree or disagree once last time with the argument? What did I write so the reader would once again understand my viewpoint?

GROUP #6: Each group has a different set of questions that they have to answer. Be sure to write the names of all group members on your paper and write in blue or black pen. As juniors, your responses should be detailed and correctly formatted. This group will need to reread the entire essay to successfully complete your

questions. **Staple this paper to your written responses.**

1. Review the entire essay. What do you notice about the vocabulary I used? Identify five words that you and your group members do not recognize or know. Using context clues, what do these words mean?
2. What do you notice about my sentence structure throughout the essay?
3. In the introductory paragraph, did I summarize the argument? What did I say? Did I support my point of view throughout the essay?

GROUP #7: Each group has a different set of questions that they have to answer. Be sure to write the names of all group members on your paper and write in blue or black pen. As juniors, your responses should be detailed and correctly formatted. This group will need to reread the entire essay to successfully complete your questions. **Staple this paper to your written responses.**

1. Review the entire essay. Your group will evaluate my essay using the first three characteristics listed on the EAP rubric. Which category would you give me for "response to topic"? Why would you assign this score? Give specific examples.
2. Which category would you give me for "understanding and use of the passage"? Why would you assign this score? Give specific examples.
3. Which category would you give me for "quality and clarity of thought"? Why would you assign this score? Give specific examples.

GROUP #8: Each group has a different set of questions that they have to answer. Be sure to write the names of all group members on your paper and write in blue or black pen. As juniors, your responses should be detailed and correctly formatted. This group will need to reread the entire essay to successfully complete your questions. **Staple this paper to your written responses.**

1. Review the entire essay. Your group will evaluate my essay using the last three characteristics listed on the EAP rubric. Which category would you give me for "organization, development and support"? Why would you assign this score? Give specific examples.
2. Which category would you give me for "syntax and command of language"? Why would you assign this score? Give specific examples.
3. Which category would you give me for "grammar, usage and mechanics"? Why would you assign this score? Give specific examples.