

TOPIC I:

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 reading.

Sample student essay with a score of 6:

In life there are few encounters and influences which have the power and ability to absolutely change our lives. These encounters might be with other individuals, experiences, and so on. But whether we wish to admit it or not, the most influential and life-changing relationship we will ever experience, on a human level, will be the one established with our parents. Whether positive or not, our parents have a great influence on us, their children. The lady in this prompt seems to be a single-parent raising four kids. Her argument is totally understandable, considering her circumstances. If there is no father present, then her role has significantly changed. She has become both mother and father. Therefore her perspective is quite different from those who have a spouse to help raise the children with. Her argument is both self-justified and understood and in many ways I do agree with her. However, in some areas I disagree.

The main argument of this working mother is that she feels that just because she isn't easily reachable, that does in no way label her a "non-involved" parent. In this argument I would agree. There are millions of parents who love their children and wish to ensure their future. These parents are concerned like any other parent and take steps to ensure that they themselves are involved in the nurturing and raising of their children. However, these parents are also faced with situations and circumstances which aren't common. Such as working one or more jobs, being a single parent, and various other "uncommon" circumstances. Their time is spent trying to provide for their families, and to say that they are anything less than a good and involved parent is absolutely wrong.

My mother works two jobs. She usually comes home about eight o'clock at night. Her time is consumed with work and trying to provide for me. She isn't always reachable at her job, but she has always been involved in my life and will continue to be. She is always there when I truly need her and has made it her goal to provide for me what she can. Despite how tired and weary she may be. To say my mother was a "non-involved" parent would be a total lie. Just because a parent isn't always reachable it has no indication on whether or not they are involved with their children's lives.

I would also agree with the ladies statement concerning about "always being there." "We cannot and should not orchestrate every moment in our children's lives..." This statement is so true. As we continue to grow and develop, part of these two processes is learning how to become independent. This isn't to say that we will never need help from anyone, but rather we need to learn how to survive in the game of life without that "help." We need to "spread our wings" as the popular cliché states. This ideal is totally relevant in my life. Next year I'll be going to college. I couldn't have made it this far without the help of both God and my mother. Nonetheless, I wouldn't be as prepared for living on my own if my mother had guided me every step of the way. Along this path of mine I had to break free from the grasp of my mother and learn some lessons of my own. These independent experiences are in truth the reason why I am able to grow and develop.

However, in one area of the ladies argument I would disagree with. The lady states: "There are even times they need to turn to someone else." To some extent this may be true, but to me it would seem that as a parent I would want to make sure that these other people were positive influences. I understand that parents do not have all the answers. Who does? And that in some cases children should seek other advice, but the problem with that is that this "other advice" might be the wrong advice. To combat this problem, I believe that this lady, and all parents in general, need to tell their children good advice and explain to them that they need to be careful about who tells them advice. Therefore, the child beforehand will have an idea about what to look for and what to not.

The argument of the mother is, in my opinion, totally understandable. To look at things from her perspective one must realize that raising four kids is hard. And if she is a single-parent, which I assume she is, the task can be even more difficult. Parents are the first teachers their children have. As parents their goal should be to at all times be there for their kids when they need them. However, because of the complexity of life this goal isn't always attainable. So in this case parents should try and do their best. A parents involvement shouldn't be based on time and availability, but rather the love, dedication, influence, and conditions of which the parent operates under and provides. Love is love in all respects.

Comment on the "6" essay: *This is an example of superior, confident writing. The essay is written in a fluent style, with clearly organized paragraphs and sentences. This writer clearly understands the passage and refers to its details frequently throughout his response. He agrees with most of the mother's opinions but delineates his area of disagreement with apt reasons and examples drawn from his own experience. He makes certain assumptions about the author (e.g., being a single parent) but clearly shows how his analysis is based on those assumptions.*

He specifies the degree to which parental involvement is important and when it might be too much. In concluding he makes the fine point that involvement should not be based solely on time and availability, but on the love and concern the parent has for the child.

The essay is not without some flaws--an occasional sentence fragment, missing commas, unmarked possessives, and several pronoun agreement problems. But these are not consistent errors and would probably be corrected in a second draft.

Sample student essay with a score of 5:

Being able to handle responsibility is one of the greatest feelings. A sense of accomplishment rushes through you as you complete a task by yourself when others run to their mom for help. The so-called "involved parent" is sometimes the one who steps back and lets their child discover the difficult tasks on their own. The same parent has the child who learns to conquer the obstacles and venture into the world aware of imperfections. Although some children may need their parents by their side, the best is for them to live life through their own eyes.

Personally, I can relate to this issue on many levels. I struggled through my childhood--being raised by nannies, neighbors and grandmas--this when the nannies were no longer affordable. My mother at work, and my father looking for work in other cities, left my older brother and I alone after school. I am living

truth that "what doesn't kill you, only makes you stronger." At a young age we learned to get by without my mother at our beck-and-call. Granted we had access to her while she was at work but that whole 15 minute drive home nowadays would be unbearable. On her way home we couldn't call her in a frenzy as to where our favorite toy was--we had to wait 15 minutes! A little ridiculous, but very true.

The author confesses that they aren't the "cavalier" parent--who is? She claims she's involved enough so that her children can depend on her but not at all hours of the day. I can relate. I succeed in school primarily because I learned to handle obstacles on my own. When some school assignment needed to be done, I did it. If I had questions, I asked. I took the initiative. Speaking from experience, I know that dependency on your parents is not effective--nor going to bring you to a University where so much is expected from you, not your parent. I hear stories nightly about my mom's boss--an attorney--with a sophomore son who still does homework with his mom, every night for five hours. The mother claims it will help him--meanwhile, he's learning nothing and still receiving C's and D's. Tell me then, what good is that mother at his beck and call, that runs to his school when he forgot an assignment? When will parents like that "let go" and let their children learn for themselves?

There are many views and definitions of a "good parent," the "ideal parent." One suggestion is the one who works hard for their family, there for them enough for the kids to know they're loved--beyond that the grey areas appear. As the school nurse claims--the parent must be "reachable." But what good is reachable when the kids have no sense of self-worth or accomplishment. What good is that when the child's accepted to a 4 year institution--because of their mother's work--and has no idea how to handle due dates, deadlines or to manage time?

In an ideal world--one which will never again exist--and for good reason--the mother could be home for their children. If the income was so that the mother didn't need to work two jobs, that would be great. If the women didn't feel the desire to get out of the house of bratty kids, that would be acceptable, but that's not how things are. I grew up with kids who had their mom home at every given moment. I think mine was the only one who worked. And while I was jealous for all those years of a mom that made cookies and snacks, I now realize that I'm a better person because of the lack of involvement from my mother. I have yearbook deadlines, school reports, two jobs. I can handle a lot more than other students--primarily because I've learned to accept responsibility.

She was always there for me. Whenever I had a bad day or needed to chat--I could always call her at her office. But I learned a lot from her working. She came home every night, cooked dinner, helped with homework and managed to remain sane, all while I took responsibility into my own hands and did what I needed to do. I'm now capable of overcoming the obstacles, strive to

achieve my full potential and accept that my parents were always there for me--in essence, and supported me every step of the way.

Comments on the "5" essay: *This is an example of strong writing. The writer provides a strong defense of the author's position and reinforces this defense with clearly expressed examples from her own experience. The essay shows some complexity of thought: the writer compares her positive experience with a mother similar to the author of the passage, and then contrasts this mother with the type of oversolicitous mother who has a detrimental effect on her child.*

The essay is generally well-organized and shows a clear understanding of the passage: the writer most often conveys this understanding through implication rather than summary or paraphrase of the passage. The essay is strengthened by its lively tone and personal examples.

There are some errors, but they are not serious enough to distract or confuse the reader.

Sample student essay with a score of 4:

The main point that the author is trying to bring up in the passage is that the parents are quite busy in today's world. She says that because of this they can't devote all of their time to their children. Also, she says that because they are busy, it should not be taken for granted that they don't love their children. She says that the nurse had blamed me for not being immediately available to their kids, and her kids complain that she is difficult to get in touch with.

I agree with the author's viewpoint. The children need to face the daily problems on their own. If the child is small, like three years old, then it is the sole responsibility of the parents to take their care, but as the child grows old they should try to take care of themselves. They should not run to their parents with every problem they come across. If they do this, they won't be able to create a niche for themselves in today's fast pace world. They wouldn't know how to tackle problems. Also, the children wouldn't be able to express themselves, either in school class or a business meeting.

I would like to present an example of my friend, who was solely dependant on his parents, and the parents didn't mind that. They never told him to do some work or do even homework without their help. When he was fourteen years old, his parents died in a car accident. Now, my friend was living with his grandparents, who were into their eighties. The whole responsibility of the house dropped on his shoulders. He had to run the house, make money, and to take care of his grandparents. It was because he was not independent, he was always looking around for someone who could help him. Sometimes, he trusted persons, who later robbed him of money and put him into trouble. Although, after

a couple of years he learnt how to handle problems, but his innocence had cost him a lot by that time.

It is very much clear from my real life experience that how interdependence can cost you a lot. I believe that the children need to face the world on their own. The author has put quite clearly in the passage that sometimes the children need to wait until their parents are available and sometimes they need to look for someone else for help.

Comments on the "4" essay: *This essay is just adequate. It demonstrates a generally accurate understanding of the passage, but it does not explore the passage in much depth. There is little syntactic variety in the sentences: in paragraph 1, for example, the student begins three sentences with "She says...", repeating the author's words rather than conveying her ideas in his own words. The topic is also treated simplistically. Compared to the 5 and 6 papers, this essay is minimally developed and does not provide a range of examples.*

There are some errors that distract the reader, but they do not significantly obscure meaning. The writer generally demonstrates control of grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Sample student essay with a score of 3:

As for a young adult, which I strongly disagree with the author's point of view toward modern moms and dads. Even though the kids can take care of their own and play an important role in their parent's lives, they still need the love from parents. We as children cannot succeed in life with our parent showing the way to success.

As for me, I am an adult, I don't have cell phones or pagers, but I do have a car. My mother still support the fact that I'm going to go to a university. I wanted to move out when I go to college, which my mom refuse my decision. She thought that I wanted to move out, because I wish to get away from home. She shows me that, she loves me very much.

My two sisters and my beloved mother had purchase a 94 integra LS for me last year. The car was in excellent condition. I always wish to have a manuel car. That was one of the most happy moments of my teenage life. My two sisters, which I admire and love them eversince the day my mother gave birth to me. My inspiration and courage come from my beloved sisters. I admire the fact that they both got married at age seventeen. I inherited their bravery and as a leader.

My mother had taken a great care of me eversince I was born. She cook a splendid dinner every night. The essence of our chines recipe is delicious.

She a dish called "Lobster with ginger." This is a very spectacular dish that she had learned from restaurants. She is the greatest mom ever, and I like the fact that she is very nice and generous toward my friends. My mom treat my friends like their own sons.

My experience proved to be strongly disagree with the author's point of view. Nevertheless, no matter how the author shows that mother are careless and becoming irresponsible for their siblings, but my parents is the greatest.

Comments on the "3" essay: *The writer of this essay shows developing competence. The essay, though, has a number of weaknesses which keep it out of the adequate range. The student has limited control of the syntax of longer sentences, as in sentence one of the first paragraph. In the next two sentences, the meaning is not clear, and the reader has to guess the writer's intentions. In paragraphs three and four the writer utilizes short "primer" sentences with little complexity in language or syntax. The writer praises her mother's cooking and generosity in paragraph four, but these traits are not related to the passage, and the paragraph reveals a fundamental misreading of the passage.*

The essay has an accumulation of errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that sometimes interfere with meaning.

Sample student essay with a score of 2:

I agree with the mother view about the children, how the school nurse has taken her to task for not being immediately accessible, and her kids.

I feel about her point of view is that children should be taught perfectly by themselves because they have the responsibility to do why is right for them. If there is a problem where your kids need help, parents should say "sure" and parents should teach them the right way.

Parents should give love to their kids because if you don't they would turn you down. It's like when you have to train the dog how to sit and potty train. It's much easier train human because humans are more likely to understand what you are saying.

It's a good thing that parents care about kids because they would respect you back, the way you did.

I feel that parents would be the one for their children because when their children grow up they would do the same thing to their children. I would think children would understand what parents want them to do and when they do, they would stay out of trouble. Also children would get a good education in high school and even in college.

Comments on the "2" essay: *This essay is seriously flawed. The writer reveals a limited understanding of the passage and does not know how to develop a response. He cannot appropriately summarize the issues raised. The essay has a number of simplistic generalizations, such as "parents should teach them the right way." This writer is unable to draw upon examples from his own life or reading. Paragraphs of only one or two sentences are a sign of the student's inability to develop his ideas. Inadequate control of syntax, very limited vocabulary, and numerous basic grammatical errors frequently interfere with meaning.*

Sample student essay with a score of 1:

In the passage the author argues that the parents should not stay with their kids all the time. Sometimes they don't give the kids a chance to learn how to be alone and take care of themselves. The children also have their own life and friends. They need time for themselves. Of course, the parents can not leave their kids alone all the time but give them a phone call and talk to them when they need help. Nobody could be succes without practise, same as the kids. If the parents stay with the kid every minutes, and take care of everything for them, the kids might used to it. When there is problems, they won't know how to solve it, but call for help from their parents. Kids would never grow up if they have this kind of live. I am agree with her view. I think the parents should give their kid a chance to gain experience the parents actions do, to the kid are very effective.

Comments on the "1" essay: *This essay demonstrates fundamental deficiencies in writing skills. It suggests an inability to respond meaningfully to the topic. The essay is very brief, and largely made up of generalizations. While the essay does not contain the persistent errors in grammar or usage that mar some "1" papers, it is scored low because it does not provide a focused response, and it lapses into incoherence in the last sentences.*