



# Should Marijuana Be Allowed As a Medical Treatment?

## GETTING ORIENTED

The weekly passage introduces issues related to the use of marijuana as a medical treatment. Here is some information that might be helpful to students less familiar with the topic.

### AIDS

AIDS stands for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. HIV, the human immunodeficiency virus, causes this disease. The first known cases of AIDS were contracted in West Africa at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the illness was not identified and researched until the early 1980s. The disease is one that affects the immune system. This is a system in our bodies that helps protect us against other infections and diseases. When this system is not functioning properly, our bodies have difficulty resisting disease. Many people (over 30 million) have died as a result of contracting HIV/AIDS. Often, however, people who suffer from AIDS-related illnesses have a difficult time eating. Medical marijuana helps them to develop an appetite so that they will want to eat.



### Medical Marijuana Laws

Since marijuana is a drug, it is against the law to possess or have it. It is, however, considered by many, to be less dangerous than other drugs. It can cause people problems with physical coordination. Many people think the use of marijuana should be legalized so that there is not such a big demand for it with illegal drug traffickers. In some states, marijuana is legal when it is prescribed by a doctor. If a person has the doctor's certification, she receives an ID card that allows her to fill her prescription. This ID card must be renewed each year. In some states these people are allowed to cultivate or grow their own marijuana plants for medicinal use. Usually the laws do not allow people to smoke the marijuana in public.



### Leukemia

Leukemia is a kind of cancer that affects people's blood. The disease is found in our bone marrow where blood cells are made. The marrow is in the center of our bones. We have white blood cells in our bodies, which help us fight infection. We have red blood cells, which are responsible for carrying oxygen to all the parts of our bodies. We also have platelets, which help our blood to clot when we have a wound like a cut. These three things are made in our bone marrow. When someone gets leukemia, the bone marrow makes extra white blood cells that take over in the body and don't allow the other cells to do their jobs.

Researchers do not know what causes leukemia. They do know that some people who have leukemia have been exposed to radiation or toxic chemicals, knows for sure what causes the disease.





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## EVIDENCE AND PERSPECTIVES

	<i>Some may have this view:</i>	<i>But others may think:</i>
<b>Doctors</b>	Doctors who support the use of medicinal marijuana feel that marijuana should be treated like any other drug. They feel that their patients deserve to feel the best they can when they have painful diseases. They look at the research and see that the use of marijuana can be very helpful to ease pain and the anxiety that comes with many painful and life threatening diseases. They want to make these decisions with their patients and not have to consider all the controversy about the use of the drug.	Some doctors don't want to be involved with the use of marijuana because of all the laws surrounding it. They don't want to be held responsible if their patients abuse their access to the drug. They feel that there are other drugs that work equally well to control pain and nausea.
<b>Patients</b>	Sometimes people who are very ill have heard about how marijuana can be helpful in controlling pain and nausea. They want to try it to see if it helps them. They believe it should be treated as any other drug. There are, of course, others who have experienced the high of marijuana in recreational use and are excited about their doctors making it legal for patients to use the drug. These people are very supportive of the use of marijuana for many kinds of illnesses.	Some people are opposed to this drug because they don't want to worry about the laws around marijuana. They will try other drugs that the doctors might recommend. They believe that the research does not clearly show how harmful marijuana might be in other ways.
<b>General Public</b>	Many people have believed for a long time that marijuana should be legalized. They feel that enough research has been done to show that the drug is not that harmful. They argue that cigarette smoking is legal even though we know that it causes cancer, so why shouldn't marijuana be legal? They feel that if people want to self-medicate with marijuana, they should be allowed to do so. They say that we know alcohol can make us disoriented and has caused deaths on roads and highways and yet it is still legal to drink alcohol. They say we could make it illegal to smoke marijuana and drive just as we regulate alcohol use and driving.	Many people are opposed to the use of marijuana for any reason. They believe it sets a bad example for young people. They believe people will abuse the law and go to work or school under the influence of the drug. They believe more accidents will happen at work sites and on the roads. They don't trust that the general public will use good judgment with the use of the drug.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Seventeen states and the District of Columbia have enacted laws that remove criminal sanctions for the medical use of marijuana.</li> <li>✓ Restrictions on the use of marijuana began in 1860. Outright prohibitions of the drug began in the 1920s.</li> <li>✓ In 1925 a national conference argued that the buying and selling of narcotic drugs should have the same safeguards and the same regulation in all of the states.</li> <li>✓ Marijuana statistics indicate that nearly 39.8 percent of Americans have tried marijuana.</li> <li>✓ There have been over 7,000 published scientific and medical studies documenting the problems that marijuana poses. Not one study has shown marijuana to be safe.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Reaction time for motor skills, including those required for driving, is reduced by 41% after smoking one marijuana cigarette.</li> <li>✓ Marijuana is the fourth largest cash crop in America, with a value greater than tobacco, wheat, or cotton. Law enforcement spends over \$10 billion a year in an effort to outlaw the plant.</li> <li>✓ Approximately 730,000 people are currently medical marijuana patients in the United States. Approximately 24.8 million people are eligible patients.</li> <li>✓ The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is working to increase the number of states that have authorized the use of medical marijuana, and to dissuade the federal government from prosecuting people for using medical marijuana in compliance with state laws.</li> </ul> |
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## ANNOTATIONS FOR TEACHERS

### Features of Academic Text: *Use of semi-colons to combine sentences*

Academic writing will include many longer sentences. Writers will sometimes use a **semi-colon** when combining two sentences.

The two sentences will be closely related and balanced in importance.

In the highlighted sentence, the writers use a semi-colon to emphasize the stark contrast of two connected facts.

The writer could have used the subordinating conjunction "whereas" to show the contrast. The choice to use the semi-colon emphasizes that the contrast is apparent and there is no need to use a signal word. In fact, the impact of using a semi-colon is that the reader may be more likely to pay attention to the stark contrast between the two facts.

Danny Miller was 14 years old when he was diagnosed with leukemia, a kind of cancer. He could not sleep or eat because of the pain. He had to take strong medicine to fight the cancer. The medicine made him vomit for hours on end. Danny lost his appetite and became dangerously thin. Doctors tried to make Danny more comfortable by giving him painkillers, but nothing seemed to work. Danny's mom was so concerned about Danny's nausea and weight loss that she suggested to her husband that they give Danny some marijuana. She had heard that it not only reduced nausea but helped give patients their appetites back. Danny's father was shocked. Using marijuana is illegal, and the doctors at the hospital might report them to the police. Danny's mother was so desperate that she sought out organizations that would help her acquire some marijuana without getting into trouble. She found such a group in Oregon.

Marijuana has been used as a medicine for about 4,000 years. The debate about the use of marijuana as a medicine is an ongoing one. Medicinal marijuana is legal in California and in a few countries like Canada, Holland, and Spain, but there are laws in these places

about its distribution. It generally requires a prescription from a doctor.

Supporters argue that both anecdotal evidence and research evidence show that medical marijuana is beneficial to some patients. They say that marijuana easily meets the government criteria that a medicine's "benefits to users will outweigh its risks." They say that marijuana can be used to ease the discomfort of many illnesses ranging from AIDS to cancer.

Supporters point out that some legal prescription drugs have caused the death of some patients; there have been no reported cases of medical marijuana causing death.

Organizations against the use of medical marijuana state that the government has not approved the drug because it is too dangerous. People who oppose medical marijuana also worry that even medicinal use of the drug sends the wrong message to kids. They say marijuana is addictive and can lead to other drug use. They remind us that marijuana injures the lungs and harms the immune system. They argue that the medical marijuana initiative is a front for people who are really just using marijuana for fun. They believe that other



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## GENERATING WORDS

### Irregular Verb Forms

**Remember:** The past tense of regular verbs in English is formed by adding **-ed**.

For example: I walked**ed** to school today. I waited**ed** for the bus.

HOWEVER, there are many irregular verbs in English that have a past tense that looks nothing like the present tense. One of the focus words this week is **sought**. This is the past tense of the verb **to seek**. In the text Danny's mother **sought** out organizations that would help her to acquire marijuana. She **looked for** organizations to help her.

Other verbs that use this same kind of irregular ending in English are:

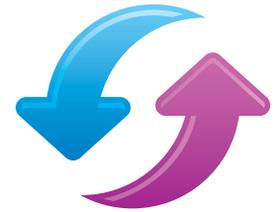
present tense	to think	to teach	to fight	to catch	to bring	to buy
wrong!	<del>thunked</del>	<del>teached</del>	<del>fighted</del>	<del>catched</del>	<del>broughted</del>	<del>boughted</del>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Correct form of the past tense	thought	taught	fought	caught	brought	bought

There is no particular reason that these verbs have these irregular forms. You have to memorize them. For pronunciation purposes, words that end in **-ought** and **-aught** sound the same. With a partner, choose a past tense from the above list to fit into the sentences below. One sentence will require the vocabulary word, **sought**.

- I caught six fish.
- My grandfather \_\_\_\_\_ in the Vietnam War.
- My teacher \_\_\_\_\_ us to use many irregular verb forms.
- Danny's mother \_\_\_\_\_ her son should be allowed to use marijuana.
- My father \_\_\_\_\_ some medicine at the pharmacy.
- I \_\_\_\_\_ cookies to school for other students on my birthday.
- I \_\_\_\_\_ the correct verb forms for these sentences.

Most of the Word Generation focus words that are verbs (action words) are regular verbs, which means that we add an -ed to make the past tense of the word. With a partner, try to use the past tense of all of the following verbs in a sentence. One of them is irregular.

- distribute
- undertake
- recite
- restrict
- illustrate



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## DEVELOPING DISCUSSIONS

### Perspective Cards

The state governor is looking for advice on the issue of medical marijuana in her state. She has asked government officials to have conversations with people who care about this issue. Here are the perspectives of two people who are about to have a conversation about medical marijuana. Read the cards to yourself and try to remember the perspectives of both people.



Here is the perspective of a patient who wants to use medical marijuana.

- ✓ “Marijuana is the safest and most effective medicine for many people.”
- ✓ “The benefits to patients like me outweigh the risks such as becoming addicted or lung injury.”
- ✓ “I deserve some comfort in life, just as other people enjoy.”
- ✓ “Marijuana is no more dangerous than alcohol or cigarettes.”

What are some additional things that this patient might say?

Here are a few things that official from the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) might say.

- ✓ “Many people lie about medical conditions to get prescription marijuana.”
- ✓ “Many people are killed over drug wars involving drugs like marijuana.”
- ✓ “Some organizations use medicinal marijuana sales as a front for other drug dealing.”

What are some additional things that a DEA official might say?

### Directions:

**Step One:** With a partner, decide who is going to be the DEA official and who is going to be the patient.

**Step Two:** Have a discussion with your partner from your assigned perspective. You can use the information from your card; however, try to not read from your card.



Words and phrases that both can use during discussion:

That is an important point, but does it outweigh...  
 But in the long run...  
 Then again...  
 Even though..., I believe that...  
 If it requires..., then...

Why is it important? Which is more important?  
 Yet what about the influences of...?  
 Tell me more about why...  
 How does that example support what you're saying?