



Should it be mandatory to get a license to be a parent?

GETTING ORIENTED

The weekly passage discusses issues about families in the U.S. Here is some information that might be helpful to students less familiar with the issues raised.

Child Abuse

According to Childhelp, an organization founded in 1959 to help prevent and treat cases of child abuse, 3.3 million reports of child abuse are made in the United States every year. Child abuse or child neglect occurs most commonly in homes where parents are alcohol or drug abusers. Child abuse occurs at every socioeconomic level, across ethnic and cultural lines, within all religions, and at all levels of education.



Licenses

Some hobbies and activities are dangerous and could result in injury or even death if people don't know how to do them safely. Driving and hunting are good examples. Because of this danger, it is a law that people must get a license from the government that proves that they are qualified to carry a gun or drive a car. A license, or official permission, means that a person took classes or passed a test to prove he or she is able to safely do the activity. Teachers must have a license to teach. Doctors must have a license to treat patients.



Family History in the U.S.

When the United States was a new country, common law tradition determined that the male was head of the household and had the right to discipline as well as protect those who depended on him. He had to feed and provide shelter, but he was also allowed to control their behavior. Many people believed in severe or serious discipline when children misbehaved. When people began to notice that children were being injured due to this discipline, laws were made to protect them. At the same time, the laws were written so that parents can make decisions about how to discipline their children.





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EVIDENCE AND PERSPECTIVES

	<i>Some may have this view:</i>	<i>But others may think:</i>
Parents	Parents who have good parenting skills would find it easy to get a license. They would want to see all children treated as well as they treat their own children. Some may think that there are some things that they should learn before becoming parents and that the classes would help make the job of parenting easier.	Many might think that their parents were able to raise them without a license and think that there is no need for a new law. Parents who have non-traditional parenting approaches would probably be against this idea. They wouldn't want the government interfering with what they see as their own personal business. Some parents with good parenting skills would also be against this because they would see it as one more way the government tries to regulate or control life.
Children	Most children who are living in homes where abuse is going on may be too young to have an opinion on this. They might think it's a good idea when they get older and realize that perhaps their parents would have been more careful if some kind of license to care for them existed. They might see this as a way to help future children. Young people who haven't suffered abuse would probably see this as a good thing.	Abused children may be against a license for parents because they often still feel protective of their parents even if they weren't good parents. Other children who come from stable homes might be against it because they don't see a need for it. They might be opposed to or against some parts of a license and might support other aspects.
General Public	Some people might think this is a good idea for helping children who are involved in abuse cases. They might think it's worth trying anything to lower the numbers of child abuse cases in America.	Some people might be against a license because they wouldn't see how it would stop people from behaving any way they want in their own home. They might not like the idea that the government would be intruding and trying to regulate family life. They might think educating people or helping them financially when they have children would be a better way to improve the situation. Some people might be against parent licenses because they see it as too much government control.

- Children who experience child abuse and neglect are 59% more likely to be arrested as a juvenile, 28% more likely to be arrested as an adult, and 30% more likely to commit violent crime.
- 14% of all men and 36% of all women in prisons in the US were abused as children.
- The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University estimates in a 2005 report that substance abuse is a factor in at least 70% of all reported cases of child maltreatment.
- The following are the percentages of children who experienced maltreatment in 2005: Neglect: 62.8%, Physical abuse: 16.6%, Sexual abuse: 9.3%, Emotional/psychological abuse: 7.1%, Medical neglect: 2.0%, Other: 14.3%.

Type	Percentage
Neglect	62.8%
Physical Abuse	16.6%
Sexual Abuse	9.3%
Emotional/Psychological Abuse	7.1%
Medical Neglect	2.0%
Other	14.3%



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ANNOTATIONS FOR TEACHERS

Features of Academic Writing: *Elaboration and Clarification*

While Word Generation articles are shorter and more accessible than academic texts, they include many of the signal words found in academic writing.

These highlighted words and phrases indicate places where the writer needed to elaborate by adding additional reasons and examples. Most students have a hard time determining when they need to elaborate.

Ask students why they think the writer felt she needed to elaborate in each of these cases. How does the additional information following each of these signal words and phrases help the reader to understand the positions?

“Police!” shouted the officer, but no one answered. “Open up!” his partner shouted. Slowly, the door opened. Joel Steinberg was inside, carrying his nine-year-old daughter, Lisa. He had called 911 to say his daughter had gotten sick and stopped breathing, but Lisa had **visible** bruises and broken bones. Steinberg had beaten her to death. Although this terrible incident occurred in 1987, it is not an **isolated** event. An estimated four children die each day in the United States from abuse.

Some people say **mandatory** licensing for all parents could prevent such child abuse. With mandatory licensing, men and women would take parenting classes prior to becoming parents. They would learn what they should and should not do to raise children well. In the U.S., we mandate that people get licenses for activities that, if done incorrectly, could cause harm. For example, we license drivers, gun dealers, doctors, teachers, and plumbers. Why not license parents too?

Those in favor of licensing parents say that, in order to be prepared to be good parents, people need to know about children’s development and children’s developmental needs. License supporters point out that parenting can be very stressful. All parents need to acquire positive discipline strategies

and to learn where to get help when they need it. **Also**, parenting classes could improve parents’ behavior with their children. For example, after learning about the benefits of reading aloud to children, parents may decide to read to their children more frequently.

Others oppose mandatory licensing of parents. They say licensing won’t ensure that children are safe any more than licensing drivers ensures that there will be no car accidents. **In other words**, if licensing drivers does not guarantee a good **outcome**, why should we believe that licensing parents will ensure better parenting outcomes? **In addition**, no class could teach parents everything they need to know.

Besides, licensing opponents argue, we all have a right to have children. If someone cannot take the classes, should he or she lose the right to be a parent? Those who oppose mandatory licensing also say the way we raise children should be left to each family’s **discretion**. **In addition, licensing parents is not practical**. **Even if** a licensing program is a good idea, it cannot be enforced.

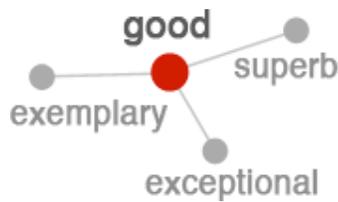
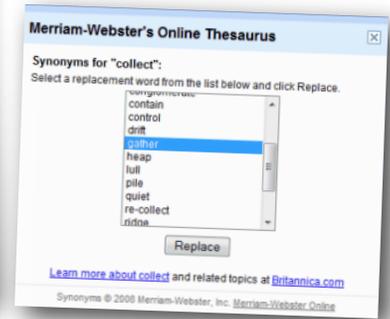
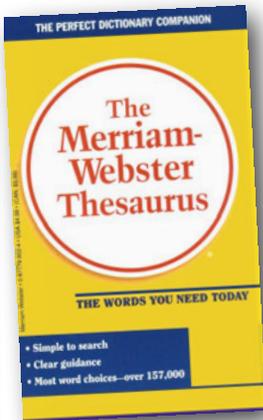
What do you think? Should it be mandatory to get a parent license?



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GENERATING WORDS

Using a Thesaurus



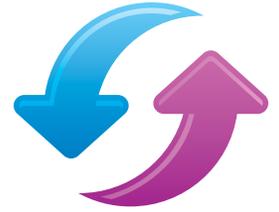
Before you start: A thesaurus is a book that contains a collection of words that mean the same as other words, or a collection of synonyms. Whereas a dictionary gives the definition of words, a thesaurus suggests other words that can be used. Sometimes if you are having difficulty understanding a word even after you have looked up the word in a dictionary, you may want to look it up in a thesaurus. The thesaurus may give you synonyms that are more recognizable to you.

You can buy a thesaurus just as you can buy a dictionary. You can also look up a thesaurus on-line and find the word you are looking for. When you type "thesaurus" into a search engine, you will see that there are many different web sites for this word. Try more than one of them and find which one works best for you.

Look up each of this week's words on an on-line thesaurus. Notice if any of the synonyms have roots or affixes you have learned in your vocabulary lessons.

Write two synonyms for each word and a sentence using the vocabulary word.

Focus Word	Synonym #1	Synonym #2	Sentence
mandatory	required	necessary	It is mandatory that I attend school.
isolated			
discretion			
visible			
outcomes			



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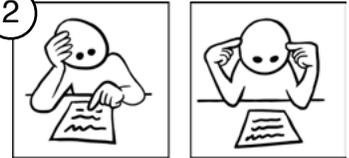
DEVELOPING DISCUSSIONS

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Step One: In a group of four, brainstorm as many **PRO** and **CON** reasons for the topic: *Should it be mandatory to get a license to be a parent?*

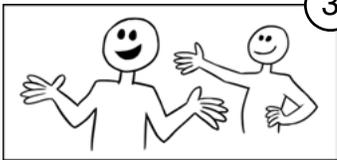
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Step Two: All group members memorize the list of pros and cons.



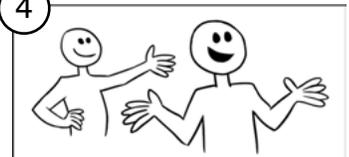
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Step Three: Divide the groups of four into pairs and have a discussion by doing the following:

1. One partner is the “director;” the other is the “actor.”
2. The director claps and says, “Debates in the classroom: **PRO!**”
3. The actor explains the pro reasons for supporting parenting licensing. The actor gives a reason or two.
4. The director claps and says “**CON!**” and the actor uses a transition like “*however...*,” “*on the other hand...*,” or “*then again...*,” and gives a reason or two for not supporting mandatory licenses for parenting.
5. The director claps again and says “**PRO!**” and the actor uses a different transition and gives more pro reasons. Repeat.
6. When finished, the director paraphrases what he or she heard and tries to guess what side the actor is really on.

4



Step Four: Switch roles and repeat process.

What the **ACTOR** might say:

- One reason for requiring a license for parenting is...
- Another reason is...
- Additionally, parental licenses would ensure that
- However, on the other hand...
- We should not require licenses for parents because...
- Furthermore, we should not have mandatory licenses due to...

What the **DIRECTOR** might say:

- Pro! or Con!
- What I heard you say is...
- I believe you said...
- Correct me if I’m wrong, but I thought I heard you say...
- Based on what I heard, I think that you really believe that...