



Should everyone have access to medical marijuana?

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.

Medical Marijuana Laws

It is against federal law to possess, or have, marijuana, even for medical use. However, as of 2019, 33 states and the District of Columbia had passed laws allowing for medical marijuana use, and 16 more states had laws that allowed for very restricted medical marijuana use. Even in states where medical marijuana is legal, though, patients must get a prescription from a doctor and a special ID card to fill the prescription. Often, there are rules that do not allow people to smoke the marijuana in public or that restrict driving after using marijuana. Some people consider marijuana less dangerous than other drugs and say the use of marijuana should be legalized, so that there is not such a big demand for it with illegal drug traffickers. Other people worry that there is not enough evidence that marijuana is medically helpful and that users may develop long-term health problems or behave in unsafe ways while using marijuana. By 2019, 10 states had passed laws that allowed people to use marijuana without special medical permission, for recreational reasons.



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 20th century, but the illness was not identified and researched until the early 1980s. The disease is one that affects the immune system, a system in our bodies that helps protect us against 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. People who suffer from AIDS-related illnesses often have a difficult time eating, which weakens their bodies. Medical marijuana helps them to develop an appetite so that they will want to eat.

Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a chronic disorder that occurs when nerve cells in the brain are not functioning properly, causing seizures and other neurological problems. There are many types of seizures, ranging in length of time and severity. A mild seizure may consist of simply staring blankly for a few seconds, while a more serious seizure could involve full body convulsions or lack of consciousness. Epilepsy can be caused by a variety of things, including genetics, head trauma, and infectious diseases. However, more than half of epilepsy cases have no identifiable cause. Having a seizure does not necessarily mean you have epilepsy. Generally, the disorder is not diagnosed unless you've had more than one seizure. About 1 in 26 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with epilepsy, most commonly children and the elderly. To treat epilepsy, people usually take daily medication and sometimes undergo surgery. Current treatment methods are able to control seizures for about 80 percent of people with epilepsy. While people are able to live with epilepsy, the disorder impacts many aspects of daily life.



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EVIDENCE AND PERSPECTIVES

	<i>Some may have this view:</i>	<i>But others may think:</i>
Doctors	Doctors who support the use of medicinal marijuana feel that marijuana should be treated like a medical 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 medical marijuana because of the laws surrounding it. They don't want to be held responsible if their patients abuse their access to it. They might feel there are other drugs that work equally well to control pain and nausea. They may worry about patients suffering from damaging side effects and want to wait for more research.
Patients	Sometimes people who are very ill hear about how marijuana can be helpful in controlling pain and nausea. They want to try it to see if it helps. They believe it should be treated as any other drug. These people may be 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.
General Public	Many people have believed for a long time that marijuana should be legalized for medical and recreational purposes. 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 may believe that, if people want to self-medicate with marijuana, they should be allowed to do so. They say it could still be illegal to smoke marijuana and drive, just as we regulate alcohol use and driving.	Many people are opposed to the use of marijuana for medical purposes. They believe it sets a bad example for young people and worry it will lead to addiction or to using other drugs. They believe people will abuse the law and go to work or school under the influence of the drug. They may worry 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.

Additional Information

- In 1906, the Pure Food and Drug Act made it a requirement to label any marijuana put in over-the-counter medicines.
- The Marijuana Tax Act of 1937 effectively criminalized marijuana throughout the U.S.
- 47 states and the District of Columbia have enacted laws that allow some type of medical marijuana use.
- Marijuana statistics indicate that 41.9 percent of Americans have tried marijuana.
- Reaction time for motor skills, including those required for driving, is slowed by 41% after smoking one marijuana cigarette.
- There have been over twelve million marijuana arrests in the United States since 1996.

Timeline of Marijuana Regulation

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/dope/etc/cron.html>

Marijuana Legalization

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legality_of_cannabis_by_U.S._jurisdiction

Drug Use Survey

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/nationwide-trends>

Medical Marijuana Facts

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/marijuana-medicine>

Marijuana and Crime

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cannabis_in_the_United_States#Crime



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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 writer uses a semi-colon to emphasize the strong connection between two facts.

The writer could have used the subordinating conjunction “in fact” to show the connection. The choice to use the semi-colon emphasizes that the connection is apparent, and there is no need to use a signal word. Using a semi-colon may actually cause the reader to pay closer attention to the strong connection between the two facts.

Anna Conte was diagnosed with a rare form of epilepsy before she turned one. Each day, she would suffer from hundreds of seizures. Over the years, her parents **sought** access to the latest medications, but nothing seemed to help. Her parents decided they wanted to try medical marijuana because **anecdotal** evidence suggested it had helped other patients with similar conditions. However, the Contes lived in New York where medical marijuana was illegal.

The Contes succeeded in pressuring New York legislators to change the law, but their success came too late. New York approved medical marijuana in June 2014, just a month before Anna died at the age of 9. Later, Anna’s mother said no one should die “because of a ZIP code.”

Anna’s story is not unique. In Colorado, where medical marijuana is legal, there are over 3,000 patients on a waiting list to receive Charlotte’s Web, a kind of marijuana that reduces epileptic seizures but does not make the patient feel “high.” **Distribution** has been slow due to high demand. **Many families have moved to Colorado just to have access to medical marijuana; Anna’s parents had started the process as well when they lost her.**

About half of U.S. states permit medical marijuana, but even in those states it is still controversial. Some physicians believe that evidence for the benefits of marijuana is purely anecdotal and refuse to prescribe it. Critics of medical marijuana believe that it will cause more crime and is just a **front** for people who want to use marijuana for fun. They also say marijuana is addictive and can lead to using harder

drugs. Finally, critics argue that smoking is bad for your health and that seeing marijuana as a medicine sends the wrong message to kids.

Other doctors believe the benefits of marijuana **outweigh** the risks of using it. Supporters cite the range of illnesses that can be eased by marijuana—from nausea associated with chemotherapy to post-traumatic stress disorder. They argue that marijuana has been used as a medicine for over 4,000 years and that other countries such as Canada and Italy allow medical marijuana. Also, supporters argue that allowing medical distribution will decrease crime since those seeking to help loved ones will not have to purchase marijuana illegally.

Should everyone have access to medical marijuana regardless of their age or location? What do you think?



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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** to school today. I **waited** 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, Anna's parents **sought** out organizations that would help them to acquire marijuana. They **looked for** organizations to help them.

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!	thinked	teached	fighted	catched	briinged	bayed
<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

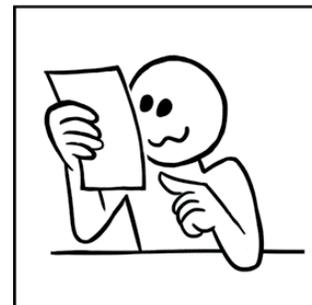


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DEVELOPING DISCUSSIONS

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.

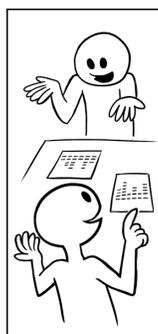
- ✓ "Marijuana is the safest and most effective medicine for many people."
- ✓ "The benefits to patients like me outweigh the risks, such as becoming addicted or lung injury."
- ✓ "I deserve some comfort in life, just as other people enjoy."
- ✓ "Marijuana is no more dangerous than alcohol or cigarettes."

What are some additional things that this patient might say?

Here are things an official from the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) might say.

- ✓ "Some 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, but 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?