



What's something interesting you've learned about self-improvement?

Assignment: In a three-page essay, connect one of our Unit One readings to your life. Answer this question: “what’s an idea about self-improvement (from our readings this unit) that you find interesting, and what’s your connection to it?”

Strive for a clear, well-organized, and well-supported essay based on one of our readings for this assignment. (Readings listed below)

In your essay,

- 1.) Summarize the author’s idea that you find interesting.
- 2.) Select and explain the author’s main support for that idea.
- 3.) Make connections between the author’s idea and your own experiences and/or observations.

READINGS (CHOOSE ONE):

- “The Case against Grades” by Kohn
- “The Student Fear Factor” by Cox
- “The Mindset of a Champion” by Dweck
- “Readiness for College” by Nagaoka, et. al.

MORE DETAILS:

1. Summarize the author’s idea that you find interesting and state your connection to it:

In this unit, we’ve read about how students’ motivation, behavior, and performance can be affected by many things: grading practices, mindsets, fear, and other non-cognitive issues.

Strive to be clear and direct about the idea you’ve selected and about your connection to it. Include this information briefly in your introduction, and expand on the author’s idea when you explain the support for his or her point.

Note: Please don’t feel limited by the word “idea”—aim for nice focus, but if you want to discuss *two* main ideas instead of one, or even want to discuss *a set of clearly related ideas*, that’s totally fine.

2. Select and explain the author’s main support:

- Look for parts where the author uses strong examples (such as experiments, research, statistics, experiences, observations, facts, hypothetical scenarios, quotes, etc.) to back his or her point.
- Choose the support that’s the most important to the author’s point.
- Explain the support clearly so the reader easily understands it.
- Mention the relevance of the support so the reader sees how it reinforces the author’s point.

3. Make connections:

-- Ask yourself, “How do I relate to this text?” --

Choose from your own experiences and/or observations--whether inside or outside the classroom--to make meaningful and engaging connections between yourself and the text you’ve selected.

- Experiences, of course, are personal examples from your life.
- Observations can be examples you’ve noticed in someone else’s life.

By following the author’s examples with related examples of your own, you’ll be reinforcing our understanding of key concepts and adding interest to them. Strive to make your examples engaging.

PRESENTATION:

- Include a title, introduction, and conclusion. These are important parts of an essay, and in class we'll discuss strategies to make them effective.
- Please keep audience in mind, especially since this assignment will include peer review. Specific details help make an essay interesting, but please don't include anything from your life that you don't want to be in an essay that will be evaluated or that would make you or others uncomfortable when shared. If you have any questions about this, please feel free to ask.

WRITING GOALS:

FOCUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain a clear focus through “sign-posting” and organization strategies. This means <i>signaling</i> key points clearly by presenting your main point (thesis) and topic sentences effectively. It also means having unified paragraphs that stay centered on one main idea. Organizational strategies for this particular essay will be offered in class.
FLOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use effective transitions to enhance organization as your essay moves from idea to idea.• Maintain tight connections by avoiding repetition and keeping related ideas together.• Handle quotes smoothly by using signal phrases to introduce them; avoid “dropped quotes.”
CONTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support your main points with developed body paragraphs. Include strong examples and select relevant details. To enhance support, illustrate points with vivid and engaging details—the kind of details readers remember.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Give added strength to support by including a minimum of two quotes from the author you select. Strategies on how to quote and cite accurately will be discussed in class.• Make your presentation engaging. Take advantage especially of the spots where engaging your readers matters the most: the title, the opening, and the conclusion. Create interest in the topic and leave readers feeling like the topic matters to them.
CLARITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish credibility by presenting academic-looking work. Make sure the type font, spacing, and margins are in MLA format, and be sure to carefully proofread your essay.

Avoid Plagiarism—don't let another source speak for you and rob you of a chance to express yourself; if you use outside sources, give them credit; acknowledge, quote, and cite them whenever necessary.

Evaluation Criteria: Papers will be evaluated on the effectiveness and clarity with which they address the assignment and meet its goals. See the online rubric for a checklist of goals for this essay.

Note: If you'd like to approach this assignment from a different angle, please talk with me beforehand.

Format: Three complete pages (approx. 1050 words), minimum. A little over three pages is fine. Use MLA style—that means typed, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1" margins, and double spaced.

Rough Draft: A rough draft for peer review is due before the final draft. Peer review includes two tasks:

- one out-of-class task credit earned for preparing two typed copies of a draft that's a minimum of two complete pages. Students need to be in class, on time, ready to share drafts for task credit.
- one in-class task credit earned for being in class and providing helpful peer review for two students. Without a draft, one can't participate in peer review since it leaves others without work to review.

Due Dates: See our Class Assignment Schedule.