

## Activity 11: Preparing to Write

### Considering the Writing Task

In “What is the Age of Responsibility?,” Alan Greenblatt observes, “In America, ‘adulthood’ already has its familiar compass points, 18 and 21. But what is the age of *responsibility*? And what if that age—the point when citizens are responsible enough to earn all of the rights a democracy confers upon its people—bears no resemblance to the ages already enshrined in law? Finding the answers to those questions is a more complicated task than simply choosing a milestone birthday.”

#### **Assignment**

What is the age of responsibility? That is, when should a person be considered to be an adult? Use your notes, readings, observations and experience to support your position.

In your response, be sure to consider all three “R’s” (rites, rights, and responsibilities) involved in becoming a mature person, an adult.

### Take a Stance—Quickwrite

Where would you draw the line to separate adulthood from childhood? Why? Do you think there is one age that could be established as the threshold for everything from drinking to driving to fighting in the military to watching an R-rated movie? Why or why not?

*Space for Quickwrite:*

### Formulating a Working Thesis

**Thesis Generator:** You will use this graphic organizer to generate a thesis. First, read the example below.. Then you will use the Thesis Generator to create a thesis for your own essay.

Example: *How is the relationship between teenagers and their parents affected by the age of responsibility?*

1. Identify the subject of your paper	<i>Relationships between teenagers and their parents</i>
2. Turn your subject into a guiding question	<i>How does the relationship between teenagers and their parents change?</i>
3. Answer your question with a statement	<i>As teens grow more independent, they resent and resist the limitations and expectations their parents impose on them.</i>
4. Refine this statement into a working thesis	<i>Conflict between teenagers and their parents is a difficult but necessary stage in kids' development.</i>

Real Topic: *What is the age of responsibility? That is, when should a person be considered an adult? Use your notes, readings, observations and experience to support your position.*

In your response, be sure to consider all three “R’s” (rites, rights, and responsibilities) involved in becoming a mature person, an adult.

1. Identify the subject of your paper	
2. Turn your subject into a guiding question	

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3. Answer your question with a statement	
4. Refine this statement into a working thesis	

You may also want to think about or write the answers to the following questions in order to generate your thesis:

1. What is your tentative thesis?
2. What support have you found for your thesis?
3. What evidence have you found for this support (e.g., facts, statistics, statements from authorities, personal experience, anecdotes, scenarios, and examples)?
4. How much background information do your readers need to understand your topic and thesis?
5. If readers were to disagree with your thesis or the validity of your support, what would they say? How would you address their concerns? (What would you say to them?)
6. Think about what most people know and think about the topic of your paper. If you want to change the opinions of the audience, you will need to think about persuasive techniques, both logical and emotional.

### **Considerations for Writers**

The following are considerations that you may want to take into account when organizing your texts:

#### **The Beginning or Introduction:**

- Directs readers' attention to the topic or issue the writing addresses
- Establishes the importance of the topic
- Provides background information that the audience may need
- Introduces the thesis, purpose, or main claim of the writing in order to suggest how the piece will be developed

#### **The Middle or Body:**

- Explains, illustrates, and develops the topic or issue
- Contains as many paragraphs as are necessary to develop the ideas
- Contains examples or arguments supported by evidence
- Often quotes, paraphrases, or summarizes other texts in support of the purpose of the writing
- May present and analyze data
- Often addresses counterarguments, alternative positions, or explanations
- Use sophisticated domain-specific words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied word order

#### **The Conclusion:**

- Connects the writing to some larger claim or idea
- Points the reader to next steps or new questions raised by the writing
- Identifies the conclusion the writer has reached and its significance
- Evaluates or analyzes the conclusions drawn
- Explains the implications of the major point of the writing

**Using the Words of Others (and Avoiding Plagiarism):**

You may be citing the Greenblatt article or other sources to support the claims in your persuasive essay. The following guide will help you correctly use those sources and properly document them:

One of the most important features of academic writing is the use of words and ideas from written sources to support your own points. Here are three ways to incorporate words and ideas from sources into your own writing:

1. **Direct quotation:** Alan Greenblatt says, “Practically from puberty, young people are bombarded with mixed signals about the scope of their rights and the depth of their responsibilities” (1).
2. **Paraphrase:** In “What is the Age of Responsibility?” Alan Greenblatt notes that starting in their early teens, adolescents receive contradictory messages about their rights and responsibilities (1).
3. **Summary:** In “What is the Age of Responsibility?” Alan Greenblatt cites statistics and examples from different sources to illustrate the range of societal opinions on when a young person matures and becomes an adult. According to the author, “the age of responsibility” is not so much an age as it is the result of a cyclical process of “learning lessons and applying them to real life” (1, 5).