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# DO PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES DESERVE MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR SALARIES?

Word Generation - Unit 2.04

## Focus Words

guarantee | contrast | parallel | industry | logical

## Weekly Passage

Salaries for well-known professional athletes are among the highest received in the United States. For example, in 2006-2007 LeBron James, a professional basketball player, earned \$5,828,090 and a seven-year shoe deal with Nike worth more \$90 million. Alex Rodriguez of the New York Yankees has a contract guaranteeing him \$252 million over ten years. In contrast, the average U.S. firefighter's salary ranges from \$40,000 to \$60,000. Even the President of the United States makes only \$400,000 per year. These professions carry more responsibility or greater risk, but they pay salaries that do not parallel those of athletes.

Also, many people think that athletes throw away their money on expensive houses, cars, and other possessions. Meanwhile, organizations that need money to help people are not getting enough. The Head Start program in Massachusetts, for example, receives about \$4.5 million from the federal government each year. This program gives preschoolers free schooling, food, and medical care. With this amount of money, the program can serve only about half of the eligible children in the state. Even a fraction of a single athlete's salary could help thousands of children.



On the other hand, athletes must work very hard to get into professional leagues. They train all year, and they put a great deal of strain on their bodies. They risk serious injury every time they play. Famous athletes help sports teams, television networks, and other professional sports organizations make a lot of money. Fans are willing to pay a lot to see A-Rod or LeBron James play. Many people believe that it is logical to give athletes a share of the money they help to bring in to the sports industry.

Do athletes really deserve multi-million dollar salaries? What do you think?

### TEACHER - Discussion Questions

- ▶ Why do some people think professional athletes make too much money?
- ▶ Contrast athletes' salaries with those of teachers, firefighters, and the President of the United States. Should any of these groups make more money than athletes?
- ▶ What are some reasons why athletes might deserve high salaries?
- ▶ Contrast athletes' salaries with government spending on Head Start. Should athletes have to pay higher taxes so that some of their money will help people who need it?
- ▶ Is it logical to pay athletes multi-million dollar salaries?

## Unit 2.04

# Do professional athletes deserve multi-million dollar salaries?

## Focus Word Chart - TEACHER VERSION

Word	Meaning	Forms			Related Words
		Inflectional	Basic Word Classes	Prefixes/ Suffixes	
guarantee	(v.) - promise	guarantees guaranteeing guaranteed guarantee (n.)		guarantor guaranty	warrant
contrast	(n.) - a comparison to show differences	contrasts (pl.) contrast (v.) contrasts contrasted		contrastable	contradict contravene
parallel	(v.) - to match; to equal	parallels paralleling paralleled parallel (n.) parallel (adj.)		parallelism unparalleled	parallelogram
industry	(n.) - general business activity	industries		industrious industrial	structure
logical	(adj.) - reasonable; based on clear thinking		logic	illogical logically logician	logistic

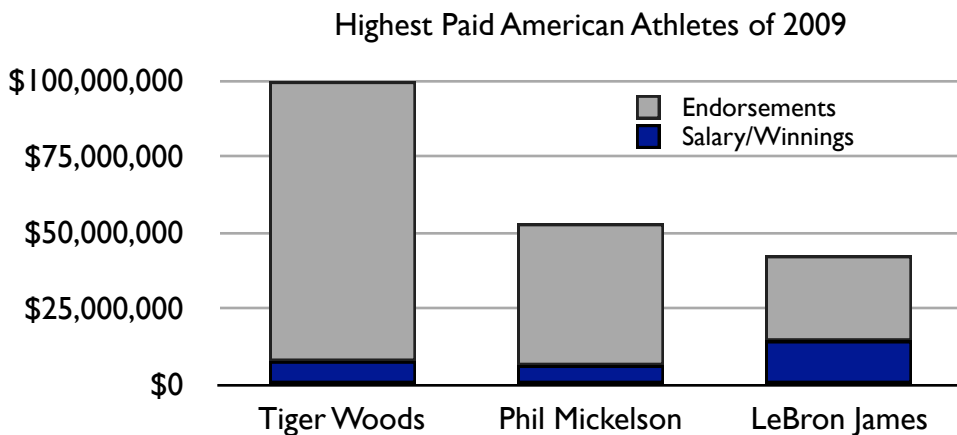
## Unit 2.04

# Do professional athletes deserve multi-million dollar salaries?

## Problem of the Week



According to *Sports Illustrated*, the highest paid American athletes in 2009 were Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson, and LeBron James. These athletes made most of their money promoting products. Companies in many different **industries**, from clothing to banking to oil, pay these superstars huge amounts. These companies believe it is **logical** to pay athletes to promote their products. Nike, for example, believes that paying LeBron James to wear Nike shoes **guarantees** high sales. Another example is that the **unparalleled** popularity of Tiger Woods guarantees that millions of people will know what phone he uses and what car he drives. Of course, when his extramarital affairs became public knowledge near the end of 2009, his image suffered. We can therefore expect a big **contrast** between Tiger's endorsement income in 2009 and his endorsement income in 2010.



### Tiger Woods (golf)

Salary/Winnings:

\$7,737,626

Endorsements:

\$92,000,000

**Total: \$99,737,626**

### Phil Mickelson (golf)

Salary/Winnings:

\$6,350,356

Endorsements:

\$46,600,000

**Total: \$52,950,356**

### LeBron James (basketball)

Salary/Winnings:

\$14,410,581

Endorsements:

\$28,000,000

**Total: \$42,410,581**

**Option 1:** For which athlete is the **contrast** between salary/winnings and endorsement income the greatest?

- A) Tiger Woods
- B) Phil Mickelson
- C) LeBron James

Freedman, J. (n.d.). The 50 highest-earning American athletes. *SI.com*. Retrieved on July 20, 2010 from <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/more/specials/fortunate50/2009/>

**Option 2:** In 2009, Tiger Woods earned \$99,737,626. If we divide this number by 365, we find that he earned \$273,253.77 each day. Write an algebraic expression that shows the difference between Tiger's daily earnings and some other person's. Let  $s$  = the other person's yearly salary.

**Answer:**  $273,253.77 - (s / 365)$

**Discussion Question:** In America, the sports **industry** is huge. It employs millions of people, from coaches to hot dog vendors. While many industry employees make very little, celebrity athletes make millions. And while celebrities have endorsed products for many years, today's endorsement contracts are **unparalleled**. Is it fair that some people get paid so much? In sports like basketball and baseball, players have contracts. Whether they win or lose, their salaries are **guaranteed**. In **contrast**, the players in golf and tennis are paid to win. Is this a more **logical** system? Should LeBron James get paid per win? Why or why not?

# Do professional athletes deserve multi-million dollar salaries?

## Debating the Issue



# GO!

## 1. Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

**A** Athletes deserve high salaries because they work very hard and generate a lot of money for the sports industry.

**B** Athletes do not deserve high salaries because their jobs are not as important as those of teachers, firefighters, or the President of the United States.

**C** Athletes deserve high salaries, but they should be required to pay high taxes so some of their money will go to people who need it.

**D** Athletes deserve high salaries only if they volunteer or do other things to give back to the community.

**E** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

*I believe that...*

*I agree with you because. . .*

*You make a good point, but have you considered...*

*Can you show me evidence in the text that supports what you said?*

## 2. Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

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### TEACHER

Whatever the debate format, ask students to use academically productive talk when arguing their positions. In particular, students should provide reasons and evidence to back up their assertions. It may be helpful to read these sample positions to illustrate some possibilities, but students should be encouraged to take their own positions about the issue at hand.

## Unit 2.04

# Do professional athletes deserve multi-million dollar salaries?

### Science Activity



This activity is designed to help you practice thinking like a scientist and to use this week's focus words. Sometimes the data are based on real research, but they should never be considered true or factual.

Professor Kahn's class is discussing LeBron James's 60 million dollar contract.

"Pro basketball is a multi-billion dollar **industry**," says Rachel. "A big star like LeBron **guarantees** fans will spend money. It's **logical** to pay him a big salary."

"But what good does LeBron James do for society?" asks Shefali. "Think about the **contrast** between his job and a firefighter's job. The importance of making baskets doesn't **parallel** saving lives! It should be illegal for athletes to make millions each year."

"It shouldn't be illegal for anyone to make millions!" says Rachel. "That's un-American!"

"Un-American?" wonders Professor Kahn. "Let's find out!"

### Question:

How many Americans think the government should limit athletes' salaries?

### Hypothesis:

Most Americans will agree with this statement:  
The U.S. government should limit athletes' salaries to \$1 million/year.

### Materials:

- ▶ A group of American subjects

### TEACHER

#### Real Research:

-The data for this WG experiment is taken from an actual poll conducted by Rasmussen Reports. In the actual poll, people were asked if they supported a \$1 million pay cap for athletes and actors, not just athletes. The article cited below describes the poll and the results.

Rasmussen Reports. (2009, March 26). 30% say government should limit pay for athletes and movie stars. Retrieved on January 23, 2010 from

[http://www.rasmussenreports.com/public\\_content/politics/general\\_politics/march\\_2009/30\\_say\\_government\\_should\\_limit\\_pay\\_for\\_athletes\\_and\\_movie\\_stars](http://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/general_politics/march_2009/30_say_government_should_limit_pay_for_athletes_and_movie_stars)

**Procedure:**

1. Ask each person to agree or disagree with this statement: The U.S. government should limit athletes' salaries to \$1 million/year.
2. Calculate the percentage of people who agreed, disagreed, or were undecided.

**Data:**

	Agree	Disagree	Undecided
"The U.S. government should limit athletes' salaries to \$1 million/year."	30%	59%	11%

**Conclusion:**

Is the hypothesis supported or not by the data?

Not supported

What evidence supports your conclusion?

Only 30% agree with the statement; "most" is more than 50%.

How would you make this a better experiment?

Encourage students to consider sample size, number of trials, control of variables, whether the procedure is a true measure of the question, whether the experiment can be repeated by other scientists, data collection and recording systems, and other potential explanations for the outcome. Students should understand that these simple experiments represent the beginning of an exploration, not the end. If time permits, have students suggest how the experiment could be strengthened, emphasizing the use of the target words in the discussion.



Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

guarantee | contrast | parallel | industry | logical

Check off what you accomplished:

- ☐ Stated my own position
- ☐ Included 1 focus word

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1-2 focus words

- ☐ Stated my own position clearly
- ☐ Included 1-2 arguments
- ☐ Included 1 counterargument
- ☐ Used 2-5 focus words

Put the writing prompt on the overhead projector (or the board) so that everyone can see it. Remind students to refer to the word lists in their Word Generation notebooks as needed.

## Unit 2.04

### Source References:

- » [www.askmen.com/sports/business/23\\_sports\\_business.html](http://www.askmen.com/sports/business/23_sports_business.html)
- » Find Articles: [www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_moepf/is\\_n4\\_v96/ai\\_18724915](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_moepf/is_n4_v96/ai_18724915) » The Prometheus Institute: [www.theprometheusinstitute.com](http://www.theprometheusinstitute.com)
- » [www.payscale.com/research/US/job=fire\\_fighter/salary](http://www.payscale.com/research/US/job=fire_fighter/salary)
- » [www.bu.edu/com/statehouse](http://www.bu.edu/com/statehouse)