

Join the national conversation!



Word Generation - Unit 3.20

Focus Words

scheme | subsequently | dominant | import | commission

Weekly Passage

In March 2007, Seung-Hui Cho, a 23-year-old college student at Virginia Tech, walked into a gun shop and bought a handgun. To purchase the gun, all he had to do was prove that he lived in Virginia and that he did not have a criminal record. This quick and easy process enabled him subsequently to carry out a terrible scheme. On April 16, 2007, Cho used the gun to kill 32 people on the Virginia Tech campus.

Some people believe we should have laws in our country that make it harder to obtain handguns. These people argue that a handgun's only purpose is hurting people. They think there might be fewer murders, armed robberies, and suicides if handguns were illegal.

They also note that people who keep guns in their houses sometimes shoot someone accidentally. Sometimes children find the handguns and think they are toys. Sometimes people use the guns to shoot each other when they are angry. Later, those people wish it had not been so easy to hurt or kill the other person.

The Supreme Court, however, has decided that Americans have the right to own handguns and to keep them in their homes.

Some people think this was a good decision. They argue that people need handguns to defend themselves against criminals. This is one of the widespread and dominant arguments for handgun ownership. In addition, some people think that if guns were illegal, only criminals would have them. They remind us that even if handguns were made illegal in the US, criminals could import them from countries where handguns are allowed.

Some people argue that if it had been harder for Cho to get a handgun, perhaps the commission of all those murders could have been prevented. Others say that if Cho's professors and fellow students had been carrying their own handguns, they would have been able to protect themselves.

Should handguns be illegal? Or should Americans have the right to own them?

TEACHER: Discussion Questions

- ▶ Why was it easy for Cho to get a gun?
- ▶ What crime did Cho commit with his gun?
- ▶ Why do some people believe that handguns should be illegal?
- ▶ Why do other people think handguns should be allowed?
- ▶ Do you think laws against owning handguns would have stopped Cho from carrying out his scheme?



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Focus Word Chart (teacher version)

Word	Meaning	Forms			Related Words
		Inflectional	Basic Word Classes	Prefixes/ Suffixes	
dominant	(adj.) - strong, forceful		dominate (v.)	predominant predominantly dominance	domain
import	(v.) - to bring into a country from another country, usually merchandise or food	imports imported importing import (n.)	port	importation importer importable	export (ant.) deport transport comport portfolio
scheme	(n.) - a plan	schemes (pl.) scheme (v.) schemed schemes (v.) scheming		schemer schematic schema schemata	
commission	(n.) - an act of doing something deliberately (or with authority)	commissions (pl.) commission (v.)	commit	commitment committal concomitant	permit submit remit
subsequently	(adv.) - following in time, order, or place	subsequent	sequence	subsequential sequel	consequence

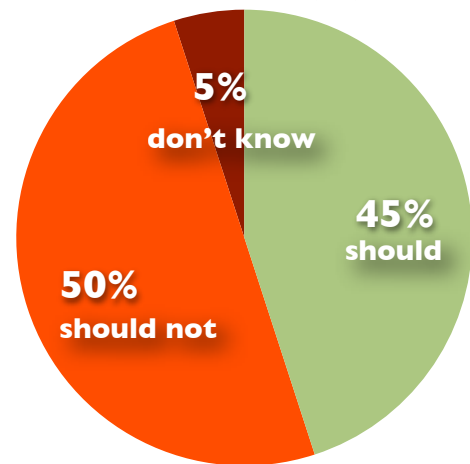
Unit 3.20 - Should handguns be illegal?

Problem of the Week

Option 1: There are different views about handguns in different parts of the country. Some people think bans on handguns are reasonable. Others think that the government should not interfere with the constitutional right to bear arms. Still others think that it's okay for the government to regulate things like the **importation** of handguns but claim that any **scheme** to regulate personal ownership violates the Second Amendment. The Pew Research Center **commissioned** a poll on handgun control to find out what the **dominant** view was on gun control. **Subsequently**, it published the results. The pie chart shows what the center found.

Which of the following is true?

- A) more people support bans than oppose them
- B) more people oppose bans than support them
- C) there is no way to tell which view is dominant



Pew Research Center's question: *Should state/local governments be able to pass laws banning handguns?*

Option 2: Within the Democratic Party, the **dominant** feeling is that handguns should be regulated. Republicans are more likely to favor gun rights. A Republican strategist **commissioned** a study on gun control views in his home state. He found that 10% of Democrats were strong supporters of gun rights. He devised a **scheme** to **import** these gun-rights Democrats into his own party by appealing to their feelings about gun rights. **Subsequently**, his state would have more Republicans than Democrats. If r = the number of Republicans at the time of the poll and d = the number of Democrats, which inequality is true?

- A) $.1d + r > d$
- B) $.1d + r > .9d$
- C) $r \geq d$
- D) $r - d = .1d$

Math Discussion Question: The Pew Research Center has been **commissioning** polls on hot topics, like handgun control, for many years. This long-term plan or **scheme** allows them to track changes over time regarding **dominant** views about controversial topics. Sometimes, **subsequent** to a major event like the Virginia Tech shooting, people's opinions change. What are some major events of your lifetime that may have affected people's feelings about gun control? Which of these events may have made people more likely to support handgun bans? Which of these events may have made people more likely to oppose handgun bans?

Pew Research Center Publications. (2010, March 23). Gun control splits America. Retrieved on May 19, 2010 from <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1535/poll-state-local-governments-laws-banning-sale-possession-handguns>

Should handguns be illegal?

Debating the Issue



GO!

1. Get ready...

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

A It should be illegal to own a handgun in this country. This would mean that America would subsequently have fewer murders and other violent crimes.

B It should be legal to own a handgun in this country. People should have the right to defend themselves against criminals.

C Handguns should be legal, but difficult to get. People should have to apply for a gun license and prove themselves competent to use a gun before they can buy one.

D Only a small number of people should be allowed to have handguns. These people should have to prove that they need the guns and can use them safely.

E _____

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:

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

I think it's more accurate to say...

That's interesting - can you tell why you think that?

I think the evidence is contrary to what you're saying because. . .

Let me share something from the reading that will help us...

TEACHER

Whatever debate format you use in your class, ask students to use academically productive talk in 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 also be encouraged to take their own positions on the issue at hand.

Unit 3.20 - Should handguns be illegal?

Science Activity

Countries have different views about citizens carrying guns. In some countries the **import** and export of guns is illegal, and no citizen can own a gun. But in other countries, the **dominant** feeling is that everyone should be able to own a gun for protection against the **schemes** of dangerous criminals. Professors Seemy and Kahn wondered if a country's laws about guns affect the odds that its citizens will **commit** acts of aggression.



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.

Question:

Are people more aggressive in countries that allow handguns?

Hypothesis:

Citizens of countries that allow handguns are more aggressive than citizens of countries that do not allow handguns.

Materials:

- ▶ Aggression Test

Procedure:

1000 adults in each of the following countries were given a 10-question quiz to see how likely they were to react aggressively to different types of conflicts. Scores on the quiz ranged from 10 (not aggressive) to 40 (very aggressive).

Data:

Average scores on aggression test	
Do not allow handguns:	
South Korea	17
Great Britain	15
China	22
Require a license to own a handgun:	
India	20
New Zealand	18
Massachusetts, USA	20
Allow most citizens to own handguns:	
Switzerland	25
Israel	33
Virginia, USA	35

Conclusion:

Is the hypothesis supported or not by the data?

Supported

What evidence supports your conclusion? →

The two lowest scores (15 and 17) are found in countries that do not allow handguns. The two highest scores (33 and 35) are found in countries that allow most citizens to own handguns. The average score was lowest in countries that do not allow handguns (18), slightly higher in countries that license handguns (19), and considerably higher in countries that allow most citizens to own handguns (31).

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.



Writing Prompt

Should handguns be illegal?

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

Focus Words

scheme | subsequently | dominant | import | commission

TEACHER

Ask students to write a response in which they argue a position on the weekly topic.

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.

A tool to help you think about your own writing!

Remember you can use focus words from any of the WG Units.

Check off what you accomplished:

Good Start

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

Pretty Good

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

Exemplary

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

Source References:

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