

Join the national conversation!

SHOULD IT BE MANDATORY TO GET A LICENSE TO BE A PARENT?

Word Generation - Unit 3.24

Focus Words

visible | isolate | discretion | mandatory | outcome

Weekly Passage

“Police!” shouted the officer, but no one answered. “Open up!” his partner shouted. Slowly, the door opened. Joel Steinberg was inside, carrying his nine-year-old daughter, Lisa. He had called 911 to say his daughter had gotten sick and stopped breathing, but Lisa had visible bruises and broken bones. Steinberg had beaten her to death. Although this terrible incident occurred in 1987, it is not an isolated event. An estimated four children die each day in the United States from abuse.

Some people say mandatory licensing for all parents could prevent such child abuse. With mandatory licensing, men and women would take parenting classes prior to becoming parents. They would learn what they should and should not do to raise children well. In the U.S., we mandate that people get licenses for activities that, if done incorrectly, could cause harm. For example, we license drivers, gun dealers, doctors, teachers, and plumbers. Why not license parents too?

Those in favor of licensing parents say that, in order to be prepared to be good parents, people need to know about children’s development and children’s developmental needs. License supporters point out that parenting can be very stressful. All parents need to acquire positive discipline strategies and to learn where to get help when they need it. Also, parenting classes could improve parents’ behavior with their children. For example, after learning about the benefits of reading aloud to children, parents may decide to read to their children more frequently.

Others oppose mandatory licensing of parents. They say licensing won’t ensure that children are safe any more than licensing drivers ensures that there will be no car accidents. In other words, if licensing drivers does not guarantee a good outcome, why should we believe that licensing parents will ensure better parenting outcomes? In addition, no class could teach parents everything they need to know.

Besides, licensing opponents argue, we all have a right to have children. If someone cannot take the classes, should he or she lose the right to be a parent? Those who oppose mandatory licensing also say the way we raise children should be left to each family’s discretion. In addition, licensing parents is not practical. Even if a licensing program is a good idea, it cannot be enforced.

What do you think? Should it be mandatory to get a parent license?

TEACHER: Discussion Questions

- ▶ According to the passage, what are the arguments for mandatory licensing of parents?
- ▶ According to the passage, what are the arguments against mandatory licensing?
- ▶ What are some examples of activities that have mandatory licensing?
- ▶ Why do those opposed to mandatory licensing say it is unfair?



Unit 3.24 - Should it be mandatory to get a license to be a parent?

Focus Word Chart (teacher version)

Word	Meaning	Forms			Related Words
		Inflectional	Basic Word Classes	Prefixes/ Suffixes	
mandatory	(adj.) - required	mandatorily	mandate	mandator	command demand remand
isolated	(adj.) - set apart from others; confined	isolates (v.) isolated isolating isolate (n.)	isolate (v.)	isolator isolation	insulate peninsula
discretion	(n.) - individual choice			indiscretion discretionary	discreet
visible	(adj.) - capable of being seen			invisible visibly visiblence	visor vision visual
outcomes	(n.) - results	outcome	come		

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Problem of the Week

Option 1: Child abuse is a national tragedy. It damages and **isolates** its victims, and can lead to **outcomes** like depression and substance abuse. Parents use their own **discretion** to decide how to raise their children. Sadly, some of these parents use violence. This graph shows the number of young victims that die each day. Would **mandatory** parent licenses change these numbers?



Which years are **visible** on the graph?

- A) 1999 – 2004
- B) 1999 – 2003
- C) 1990 – 2000
- D) 1990 - 2004

Option 2: Making parent licenses **mandatory** would be a huge project. The scale of the project is **visible**: there are potential parents all around us! We would need to think hard about what makes a good or bad parent and **isolate** the most important criteria. Whose **discretion** could we trust to approve or reject people as parents? How would we fund a project of this size?

There are about 300 million people in the United States. Say that we need one Parent Licensing Officer for every thousand people. How many Parent Licensing Officers would we need? (Hint: use exponents!)

Answer:
$$\frac{300,000,000 \text{ (or } 3 \times 10^8\text{)}}{1,000 \text{ (or } 1 \times 10^3\text{)}} = 3 \times 10^5 \text{ or } 300,000$$

Math Discussion Question: People who support **mandatory** parent licenses want this **outcome**: happy, productive children who will become happy, productive adults. But good parenting is often **invisible**. It is difficult to **isolate** the parental decisions that make a child healthy, happy, and productive. What makes a good parent? If the question were left to your **discretion**, what would you say?

Should it be mandatory to get a license to be a parent?

Debating the Issue



GO!

1. Get ready...

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

A There should be mandatory licensing for parents. Licenses would protect children and educate parents.

B Parenting classes should be mandatory for very young parents, but parents over 20 should not be forced to get a license.

C Licensing for parents should be optional. Parents could choose whether or not to take classes to learn how to raise their children if they want to.

D There should not be mandatory licensing for parents. Everyone should be free to raise their children as they want.

E _____

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...

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:

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.

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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.

Physical abuse of children leaves **visible** marks, but it also can leave other hidden marks on how a child's brain develops. Abused children often feel **isolated** and lonely. Because abused children are used to seeing people angry, they may have trouble recognizing when people are happy. Being unable to recognize a happy face could create another negative **outcome** for abused children because they would be less able to respond to happy expressions. These children might even misinterpret the happy faces as angry because that is the expression they are used to seeing.

Question:

Does abuse make children less able to recognize facial expressions?

Hypothesis:

Children who have been physically abused will be less accurate in categorizing facial expressions than children who have not been abused.

Materials:

- ▶ Facial expression recognition tests

Procedure:

Children were asked to look at a series of photographs. The photographs showed people with different expressions: happy, sad, angry, and fearful. Children were asked to tell the researchers which expression was on each face.

Data:

	Happy Faces	Sad Faces	Angry Faces	Fearful Faces
Children with physical abuse	85% accurate 15% chose fearful	75% accurate 25% chose angry	100% accurate	80% accurate 20% chose sad
Children who were not abused	100% accurate	90% accurate 10% chose fearful	98% accurate 2% chose sad	88% accurate 12% chose fearful

Conclusion:

Is the hypothesis supported or not by the data?

Supported

What evidence supports your conclusion?

Children who were abused recognized happy faces, sad faces, and fearful faces less accurately than other children. Children who were abused recognized angry faces slightly more accurately than other children, but were less accurate overall.

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 it be mandatory to get a license to be a parent?

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

Focus Words

visible | isolate | discretion | mandatory | outcome

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

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.