

STAAR Expository Writing: From Score 2 to 4

How do we improve?

Looking at your expository essays in order to improve
your writing.

STAAR Expository #1

Read the information in the box below.

In 1955 medical researcher Jonas Salk introduced an effective polio vaccine. At the time polio was considered the biggest threat to public health, yet Salk refused to profit by patenting the vaccine because he was more concerned with preventing disease than personal gain.

Think carefully about this statement.

Although many people work to benefit themselves, some people choose to put others first.

Prompt: Write an essay explaining whether people should be more concerned about others than themselves.

Characteristics from the simulation:

Score Point 2

- ❖ Too many ideas in 26 lines.
- ❖ No paragraph development.
- ❖ No in-depth example.
- ❖ Some tried to persuade the reader and not inform.
- ❖ Thoughts were unorganized or unfocused.
- ❖ Some, but not all, did not write about the topic of helping others. If you are off-topic from the beginning, **it is an automatic score point 1.**

Score Point 2 Example

People should be more concerned about others than themselves because we can all work together and everyone can benefit.

If everyone works together then we can all have a better world. Having a better world is important because it means the future will be better as well. But if we only work for ourselves, then not everyone would have things they need, and fighting and wars could break out. No one can work on their own and benefit as much as many people.

The effect of a well work society is a benefit for everyone. When everyone benefits, we all want to work for more and more in return. It's all a big cycle of work and profit, profit and work. And it can be cut off by one selfish person.

Working together and a benefit for everyone are two sides of the same coin. People should be more concerned about others, than concerned about themselves.

Characteristics of a Score Point 4

- ❖ Great word choice (diction) and sentence variety: mixes simple and complex sentences throughout paragraphs. Example—instead of “ran very fast,” you could use “sprinted,” “galloped,” “sped,” “jogged,” “raced,” etc.
- ❖ Gives specific and unique examples driven by the thesis statement.
- ❖ Comment from the STAAR Representative Victoria Young: “Students who give a **unique experience** that’s focused on the prompt generally get a 4” if everything else is strong.
- ❖ From the score point 2 example you just saw, let’s look at one way to revise it to become a high 3 or 4.

Revision to a Score Point 3+ or 4

People should be more concerned about others than themselves because there would be less war, giving the world an opportunity to come together as one.

In the book (and now movie) Lone Survivor, the main character, Marcus, was a Navy Seal on a mission against the Taliban in Iraq in the 1990s. When the mission went awry, he was stranded in a country whose people would almost certainly kill him when he was found. After his group of four Navy Seals was attacked, Marcus was the lone survivor, looking for a way to contact his unit for help. However, another Iraqi man, Shah, found and protected Marcus for days in his village, risking his and his family's lives to save Marcus. Taliban fighters came to the village to kill Marcus, but Shah prevented it in every way possible—while also nursing his severe wounds. Shah persuaded his entire village to stand behind Marcus to protect him from the Taliban. Marcus believes that if it weren't for Shah's bold sacrifice, he would have certainly died. Shah put Marcus's needs before himself as well as the beliefs of many in his own country to save the life of a foreigner.

Being concerned about others more than yourself not only may prevent actions of war but can also bring people together as “brothers” or family regardless of nationality. If more people were as selfless as Shah, lives could be saved in even the most severely war-torn countries around the world. Selfishness tears the world apart; but selflessness can bring the world together.

Revise your essay to become a Score Point 4

- ❖ Pull out your thesis statement and write it into your expository planner/graphic organizer.
- ❖ This time, take only one support point and develop a unique, specific, detailed example that illustrates (explains) that one point. Be sure it still supports your thesis statement; don't stray into a story that's not really about your thesis!
- ❖ Use an example that you know thoroughly—you did it, saw it first hand, have a close family member who did it; or something you learned from the news, a class, etc. It doesn't have to be heroic—just an example of a time you or someone did something that helped someone else but that also caused you to give up something—your time, rest, your pride, etc.
- ❖ Put yourself into your example situation; what would you see, hear, feel, etc. that could help make the example easy to understand? Use imagery (without making it sound like a story, though).
- ❖ Restate your thesis at the end—but without introducing new information or ideas.