

Brainstorming Phrases Practice – Improving Education

Good and bad education discussion questions

Discuss the questions below, starting at the top:

What was your favourite subject at school? What did you like about how that was taught?

Who was your favourite teacher at school? What did you like about that person's lessons?

What were your least favourite subject and teacher at school? What did you dislike about those two? What could have been done to make you like them more?

Did you have any extra classes, e.g. go to cram school, have online lessons or have a private tutor? Which lessons were better, your regular school ones or the others? Why?

Would you say the standard of teaching when you were at school was generally high? Why/ Why not? What about the school facilities and teaching materials, e.g. computer equipment and textbooks?

Have you ever studied abroad? Would you like to? How do you think it is different to studying in your own country? How are schools and universities in your country different from those in other countries?

How has education in your country changed in the last 20 years? Which of those changes are improvements?

How could education in your country be improved?

Discuss the last question as a class



Brainstorming Phrases Practice on the Topic of Education

Quickly choose one way in which education in your country could be improved and then prepare to justify your choice using the stages below in pairs or small groups.

Stage 1 – Brainstorming

Brainstorm reasons why the thing you have chosen might be the best way to improve education in your country.

Useful language

“Any more ideas?”

“I think we need three or four more”

“Let’s just get all our ideas down and discuss them later”

“That’s probably not true, but let’s write it down anyway”

Stage 2 – Organisation

Try to group your ideas from above together, adding any more ideas that come up as you are doing so

Useful language

“I think these two are related.”

“These are both/ all kinds of...”

“Another example of that is...”

Stage 3 – Choose the best ideas/ Edit the ideas down

Useful language

“This one is a bit weak.”

“This one doesn’t fit in anywhere.”

Stage 4 - Add support

Useful language

“An example of this is...”

“This is true/ important because...”

“We can support this one by saying...”

“Someone once said.../ “My mother always says...”

“There’s a proverb which goes...”

“Logically,...”

“In my experience.../ “I have found that.../ “I once...”

Stage 5 - Anticipate the other side’s counterarguments

Useful language

“They might say..., but we can argue that...”

Stage 6 - Anticipate the other side’s arguments in support of the view they are giving

Change pairs and try to persuade your new partner(s) that the way of improving education that you choose would be more effective than their ideas.

Without looking back at the previous page, brainstorm phrases to do these things:

Asking for ideas (when brainstorming together)

Organising the ideas/ Putting the ideas into order/ Putting the ideas into categories

Editing down the ideas/ Choosing the best ideas/ Getting rid of weak ideas

Adding support for your ideas

Anticipating the other side's counterarguments



Suggested answers

Asking for ideas

“Do you have any more ideas (at all)?”

“I think we need a couple more”

“Let’s just write all our ideas down and discuss them later”

“That’s probably not true, but let’s write it down anyway”

“What about...?”

“Can we write anything else here/ in this category?”

Organising the ideas/ Putting the ideas into order/ Putting the ideas into categories

“I think these two are related to each other/ linked by...”

“These are both/ all kinds of...”

“Another example of this is...”

“We can put these together because...”

“These are similar in terms of...”

Editing down the ideas/ Choosing the best ideas/ Getting rid of weak ideas

“This one doesn’t seem to link to any of the others”

“This one isn’t very convincing”

“This one doesn’t fit in with any of the others”

“These two are too similar”

“I think this is true, but I can’t explain why”

“Can I cross this one off?”

“I think we can eliminate this one because...”

Adding support for your ideas

“A good example of this is...”

“This is true/ important because...”

“We can support this one by saying...”

“The best argument for this is...”

“The proof for this is...”

“If they are not convinced, we can say that...”

“I read/ saw something about this which said...”

Anticipating the other side’s counterarguments

“They might say..., but we can argue that...”

“If I was them, I’d say...”

“If they say..., we can argue that...”

“If they argue that..., the best counterargument is...”

“If they notice the weakness in this argument, we can say...”



Brainstorming ideas tasks

Choose at least one of the topics below and brainstorm ideas to support it using language like that above

- Reasons why education should/ shouldn't be free
- One way to improve English language education in schools
- Reasons why a gap year is/ isn't a good idea
- Reasons why starting English lessons very young is/ isn't a good idea
- The main strength/ weakness of this country's education system
- One way in which educational institutions could respond to a falling birth rate
- One thing which should be taught (more) in schools
- Reasons for giving school children more choice/ less choice
- Reasons for having interviews/ not having interviews to enter university
- One way of stopping students skipping school (= bunking off school)
- One way of revising English vocabulary
- Reasons for living at home/ not living at home during university
- Reasons for co-ed (=coeducational/ mixed sex)/ single sex schools
- A suitable punishment for school children
- A way of really testing English ability
- Reasons for having/ not having continuous assessment

Brainstorming language tasks

Do the same with these education language-based brainstorming tasks. You will get one point for each correct word or phrase that isn't in the answer key.

Educational institutions

Qualifications

Punishments

Rooms and buildings

Things connected to money

People

Collocations with “test” and “exam”

Things which are different in British and American English (including because the educational systems are different)

Abbreviations (= short forms) of education vocabulary

Opposites

Words which have similar but different meanings



Answer key

Educational institutions

cram school, primary school, kindergarten/ nursery/ pre-school/ playschool, uni, grad school, (technical/ vocational/ junior/ two year/ 6th form) college

Qualifications

school leaving certificate, BA/ BSc/ bachelor's degree/ first degree/ four year degree/ university degree/ undergraduate degree, junior college degree/ two year degree, master's degree/ master's/ MA/ MSc/ MPhil/ MBA, postgraduate degree, PhD/ doctorate, post-doc,

Punishments

lines, detention, physical punishment/ corporal punishment (e.g. caning), extra homework

Rooms and buildings

cafeteria, lab(oratory), students' union, dorm/ student halls

Things connected to money

grant, scholarship, fees, living expenses

People

pupil, professor, lecturer, lab assistant, student, mature student, postgrad student

Collocations with “test” and “exam”

take, retake, fail/ flunk, pass with flying colours, scrape through, entrance, end of term, final, open book, multiple choice, national, school leaving, essay-based, oral

Different in British/ American English

secondary school/ junior high school, grad school, term/ semester, revise/ review, junior/ second year student, sophomore – third/ final year student, senior, three year degree/ four year degree, fresher/ freshman, Oxbridge/ Ivy league, redbrick universities, the meaning of public school

Abbreviations

BA, BSc, MA, MSc, MBA, PhD, post-doc, SAT, uni, finals, co-ed, PTA, Oxbridge, lab, postgrad, dorm, grad school

Opposites

pass – fail, undergraduate – postgraduate, attend – skip, major – minor, co-ed – single sex, fresher/ first year student/ freshman – final year student/ senior

Words which have similar but different meanings

pupil/ student, quiz/ test/ exam, essay/ dissertation, university/ college, freshman/ new recruit, lecture/ lesson, lecturer/ professor, grant/ scholarship, certificate/ qualification, academic year/ calendar year, hearing test/ listening test, BA/ BSc

What are the differences between the things in the last category above?

What do the abbreviations stand for?