

Problem-Solution Essay

In this unit, you learned how scientists, inventors, and many other people face problems. One good way to resolve situations that bother you is to write a problem-solution essay. To learn more, consult the **Writer's Road Map**.

WRITER'S ROAD MAP

Problem-Solution Essay

WRITING PROMPT 1

Writing for the Real World Choose a problem that really interests you. Write an essay in which you explain the problem, examine its causes, and explore possible solutions.

Problems to Explore

- stereotypes of teenagers
- environmental issues
- overcrowding in the school lunchroom
- cheating in professional sports

WRITING PROMPT 2

Writing from Literature Every selection in this unit deals with solving a problem. Choose one of the problems you read about in the unit. Write an essay identifying the problem and describing a solution.

Selections to Explore

- "The Spider Man Behind *Spider-Man*" (training insects)
- "Interview with a Songcatcher" (recording and preserving world music)
- "Robo-Legs" (providing mobility for amputees)



WRITING TOOLS

For prewriting, revision, and editing tools, visit the **Writing Center** at ClassZone.com.

KEY TRAITS

1. IDEAS

- States the **problem** in a clearly worded thesis
- Explains the **causes and effects** of the problem
- Discusses different **solutions**
- Gives **details** to help explain the solution to the problem

2. ORGANIZATION

- Makes the importance of the problem clear in the **introduction**
- Uses **transitions** to connect ideas
- **Concludes** by summing up the best solution

3. VOICE

- Maintains a **tone** that is suited to topic, audience, and purpose

4. WORD CHOICE

- Uses **precise words** to express the problem and solution

5. SENTENCE FLUENCY

- Varies **sentence beginnings**

6. CONVENTIONS

- Uses **correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation**



Part 1: Analyze a Student Model

Online

INTERACTIVE MODEL
CLASSZONE.COM

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Our Public Pool: Problem or Solution?

I always look forward to summer vacation, but this year, I'm even more excited than usual. Swimming is my favorite sport, and I just learned that the new public pool in Madison Park will be finished ahead of schedule. Best of all, it will open the day after school closes.

5 I was really excited until I learned that users have to pay an expensive membership fee. Unless we can find a way to make the pool available to the whole community, many of my friends and I will have a long, hot summer vacation.

10 According to the dictionary, the word *public* means "relating to people in general." To me, that definition means that a public pool should be open to everybody, not just to everybody who can pay the membership fee. The problem is not just what the pool is called, though. What the community needs is a pool that really is available to every citizen.

15 I know that building a pool is expensive. Once it is built, it has to be treated with chemicals and cleaned regularly to make sure the water is safe for people to swim in. Someone has to water and mow the grass in the sunbathing area. Then there are lifeguards, locker-room attendants, and snack-bar workers who must be paid. Our community needs to find
20 money to cover these expenses. However, charging the public a large fee to cover these expenses prevents many citizens from enjoying the pool.

A solution to this problem will have to satisfy both the people who want to use the pool and the ones who run it. One possibility would be for the town to raise taxes to cover the costs of operating the pool. If other
25 people are like my parents, though, they think their taxes are already much too high. For this reason, raising taxes probably wouldn't work.

KEY TRAITS IN ACTION

Introduction shows the importance of the topic. Highlighted thesis **states the problem**.

Varies **sentence beginnings** to hold the reader's interest.

Describes the **causes** of the problem (having a pool is expensive) and an important **effect** (the community must find a way to pay for it).

Presents a possible **solution**. Highlighted **transitions** help connect the ideas showing the disadvantages of this option.

Another option would be for the community government to sponsor fundraising events like car washes, bake sales, cleanup days, and concerts. People like to get together and donate their time for a good cause, so these fundraisers could be successful. They would be one-time events, however, and the pool would need money coming in regularly to stay open.

Proposes a second possible solution and gives **details** about its advantages and disadvantages.

Here's a better solution. The town could still charge a membership fee for those who can pay, but open the pool to everyone at certain times. Free swims could be scheduled one or two days a week, a few hours every day, or any time the temperature rises above a certain point. Community members who can afford the fee would probably feel good about giving other people the chance to use the pool, too. I know my friends and I would be thrilled.

Precise words make the third possible solution easy to understand. Matter-of-fact, honest **tone** is suited to the audience—the writer's classmates and neighbors.

There is a simple, effective solution to the problem of the new public pool—free swims. With your support, I know it will work. Just sign the petition posted outside the town hall and give everyone the chance to kick back, cool off, and float through the summer.

Concludes by summarizing the best solution, telling the reader how to help make it happen, and describing how enjoyable using the pool will be for everyone.

Part 2: Apply the Writing Process

PREWRITING

What Should I Do?

1. Choose a prompt.

Reread the prompts on page 944. Pick the one that interests you. Look it over carefully, circling all the details you need to cover in your essay.

What Does It Look Like?

- **WRITING PROMPT** Choose a problem that really interests you. Write an essay in which you explain the problem, examine its causes, and explore possible solutions.

I can think of many interesting problems, but I need to write about one that really can be solved.

2. Focus on a problem.

Make a list of problems from your life or from something that you have read. Group them in categories to help you come up with ideas. Underline the problem that will be the focus of your essay.

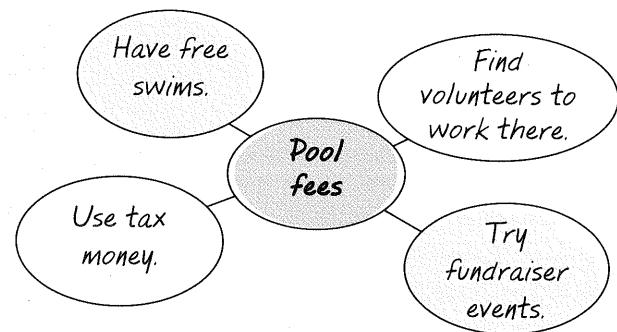
►

Family	Community	Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> arguments with parents too many chores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>new public pool requires fee</u> ban on certain dog breeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> litter in parks West Nile virus

3. Try out a variety of solutions.

Think about the problem you have chosen. Alone or with a friend, brainstorm possible solutions. Consider the advantages and disadvantages of each.

TIP If you have trouble thinking of solutions that will work, choose another problem to write about.



4. Find support for your best solution.

It's not enough to tell your reader, "I'm sure my solution will work." For Prompt 1, list facts, reasons, and other details that show why the solution you propose is the best one. For Prompt 2, find evidence in the literature that explains why the solution was successful or unsuccessful.

- **Have free swims at certain times.**
- Town will get the fees it needs from people who can pay.
 - People will feel good about helping others.
 - Everybody will be able to enjoy the pool.
 - BUT ... how would free swims work?

DRAFTING

What Should I Do?

1. Spell out the problem and its importance.

Before you can propose a solution, you need to make sure that your reader understands exactly what the problem is and why it matters.

What Does It Look Like?

I was really excited about the new public pool until I learned that users have to pay an expensive membership fee. Unless we can find a way to make the pool available to the whole community, many of my friends and I will have a long, hot summer vacation.

2. Explain the problem's causes and effects.

Write about factors that led to the problem and results of those factors. Make sure that there are logical connections between causes and effects.

Building and maintaining a pool is expensive. As a result, our community needs to find money to cover those expenses. However, charging the public a large fee prevents many citizens from enjoying the pool.

3. Describe several possible solutions.

Think about the solutions you came up with when you were brainstorming. Choose two or three and describe them for your reader.

One possibility would be for the town to raise taxes to cover the costs of operating the pool.

Possible solution

If other people are like my parents, though, they think their taxes are already much too high.

Why it won't work

4. Decide on a structure for your essay.

Make an informal outline of your key points. Describe the problem first. Then you can discuss possible solutions and end with the one you think is best, as this writer did. Or, if you prefer, explain the best solution first and then address the ones that you believe are not as strong.

Problem: *Fee prevents everybody from using public pool.*

Possible solution A: *Raise taxes (but they are too high already).*

Possible solution B: *Hold fund-raisers (but they wouldn't be a regular source of money).*

Proposed solution C: *Have free swims (the best solution because money comes in from people who can afford it, and everybody gets a chance to use the pool).*

REVISING AND EDITING

What Should I Do?

1. Clarify with transitions.

- Ask a peer reader to underline sentences that don't seem to be connected logically.
- If your essay has underlines, add a transition or other information to show the logical relationship between ideas.

See page 950: Ask a Peer Reader

What Does It Look Like?

People like to get together and donate their time for a good cause, and also ^{so} these fund-raisers could be successful.
They would be one-time events, and the pool would need money coming in regularly to stay open.

however,

2. Strengthen supporting details.

- Draw a box around statements that lack details or that contain information not connected to your key ideas.
- Replace with information that makes your case stronger.

Lots of people work at the pool.

The pool has to be treated with chemicals and cleaned regularly to make sure the water is safe for people to swim in. Someone has to water and mow the grass in the sunbathing area. Then there are lifeguards, locker-room attendants, and snack-bar workers who must be paid. Our community needs to find money to cover these expenses.

3. Be on the lookout for vague statements.

- Circle statements such as "Something has to be done," "This is really important," or "It's a serious problem."
- Revise using specific words that explain your ideas clearly.

It just doesn't make sense.

What the community needs is a pool that really is available to every citizen.

4. Make your conclusion complete.

- Be sure that your conclusion sums up the problem and reiterates the solution that you believe is best.
- Depending on your topic, you may want to add a call to action. That's when you tell your reader what to do about the problem.

There is a simple, effective solution to the problem of the new public pool—free swims. With your support, I know it will work. Just sign the petition posted outside the town hall and give everyone the chance to kick back, cool off, and float through the summer.