

Secondary Level Grades 9 & 10  
Argument/Opinion Stimulus-Based Prompt  
Planning

## Introduction

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Think about the kind of person you are....are you someone, who jumps into action when presented with an opportunity, a project, or request? Or are you the kind of person, who needs to think and plan before you begin to take action? Are there advantages and disadvantages to both approaches? Was there a time when you succeeded because you felt your planning was the key to its completion? There are probably times when both approaches have brought you success. The passages you will read have two different takes on whether “planning” is or is not essential to the success of a particular project.

## Prompt

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You will now be asked to develop an argument based on the two texts you have read.

Using evidence from both of the texts, write an essay in which you develop an argument about whether it is wiser to plan thoroughly before launching a project, or to take action faster.

Passage One: ***Look before you Leap: How Proper Planning Prevents Problems and Assures Success***

- 1) The Chinese philosopher, Confucius said, “A man who does not plan long ahead will find trouble at his door.”
- 2) Alan Lakin, author of the book "How to Get Control of Your Time and your Life", said, “Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now.” He also famously quipped, “Failing to plan is planning to fail.”
- 3) President Dwight Eisenhower said simply: “Planning is everything.”
- 4) Throughout history, a lot has been said and written by important thinkers about the importance of planning, because it works.
- 5) A map shows you in advance how to get where you want to go. In the same way, planning ahead gives you confidence to move forward into new or unfamiliar territory. Your plan is invaluable at this beginning stage. A plan also helps in the middle of a project when you might otherwise feel lost.
- 6) It is even useful at the end of a project, so that you can look back and evaluate your real-life results in comparison with those that you planned in advance. That way, you can plan to do even better next time.
- 7) Having a solid plan allows you to know when you are off course. Instead of letting distractions steer you away from your goal, you can go back to your plan and decide to ignore or quickly address anything that does not help you get where you want to go.
- 8) Having a plan lets you be ready to better handle both expected and unexpected challenges. A person who has a plan to eat a more healthy diet might pack a small bag of carrots or eat an apple before going to a party where there will be a lot of tempting foods he wants to resist. Are you going somewhere that you know you will need to wait in line for a long time? A good plan might be to bring along something interesting to read.

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- 9) Planning can do a lot to make up for a weakness in an area. A student who may be less talented or skilled in a subject can outperform a more “capable” student by preparing better. With a better plan, a football team with slower or smaller players can still win against a stronger, faster opponent. Big companies often plan their business activities months or years in advance.
  
- 10) In virtually every activity, more planning yields better results. If you were trying to bake a cake without a recipe, build a house without creating or following a blueprint, or dance a tango without knowing or practicing your steps, you can imagine how dismal the outcomes would be.
  
- 11) Yet many people take great risks and fail miserably, when a bit more planning could have prevented it. For example, many small businesses such as restaurants fail the first or second year because of poor planning. With a bit of research, a shop owner could have discovered beforehand that there was not much foot traffic on the street where he was thinking of buying. With that planning, he could have chosen a different location, or planned to do more advertising to attract more customers, before having to close. A college student hoping to get work in a competitive industry could have planned summer internships during college. That way, a job could be waiting for her at one of the firms when she graduated.
  
- 12) Investing more time and thought before doing almost anything will yield significant rewards later.

**July 10, 2014 | By Lisa Rothstein**

Source: [How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life](#), Publisher: Signet; Paperback, February 7, 1989

Passage Two: ***Ready, Fire, Aim: Why Taking Imperfect Action NOW is the Best and Shortest Route to Success***

- 1) “Action is the foundational key to all success.” –Pablo Picasso (Artist)
- 2) “I never worry about action, but only inaction.” –Winston Churchill (British Prime Minister)
- 3) “Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action breeds confidence and courage. If you want to conquer fear, do not sit home and think about it. Go out and get busy.” –Dale Carnegie (Success Expert)
- 4) Planning matters, but there comes a point where only direct experience in the real world can give us the feedback we need about whether something will work or not. Sometimes people think and plan too long, and that research becomes a form of never-ending procrastination.
- 5) The longer one thinks about the future outcome during the planning stage, the more opportunity there is for doubt and fear to creep in and raise questions. What if something goes wrong? What if we don’t have “what it takes”? What if others laugh or reject t us? This doubt can paralyze people, but they can camouflage their fears and avoid risking failure by calling their inaction "research", “caution”, “prudence” and, of course, “planning.”
- 6) Another risk of too much planning is that one’s competition may swoop in and be first to market with the idea. Even an inferior product may win out in the marketplace by having been the first. Now the better planned product that is second to launch appears to be the imitator or follower instead of the leader.
- 7) A newer, better way to approach challenges and projects is with an approach called “Ready, Fire, Aim!” or “Take action, revise later.” These saying encourage people to stop planning and do things – even if they feel they are not quite ready. While this approach may seem risky and feel uncomfortable, the advantages are many.
- 8) First, you short-circuit the fear and doubt that might otherwise stop the whole project in its tracks or limit its chances of success. You also receive valuable practical feedback from

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others that you can use to improve your product or project. There are often unforeseen challenges that become evident once an idea is tested in the real world. This cannot happen when the whole idea is trapped on a piece of paper, in endless rounds of meetings and discussions, or inside one person’s head.

- 9) Third, you can often move forward much faster, even when having to make corrections along the way, than if you wait for absolutely everything to be planned out perfectly before taking any action.
- 10) The risk is also not what it once was. With today’s technology, many things such as books, reports, and other media can be revised easily and inexpensively. Many technology companies release an early version of their software, called a “beta test”, to a small group of customers so that the product’s flaws can be quickly discovered and fixed before the “real” roll out.
- 11) What is required to use this approach is to allow for mistakes and imperfections, and not punish people – or yourself – for them. In fact, some organizations encourage what they call “failing forward”, so that their employees can feel comfortable taking risks and making mistakes without fearing looking foolish. In this way of thinking, there is no failure, only learning. Someone who never fails might even be scolded for “playing it too safe”!
- 12) Planning can only take a person, an idea or a company so far. To truly succeed in today’s fast-moving world, action – even imperfect action – is necessary.

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Sources:

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<http://www.forbes.com/sites/martinzwilling/2012/11/17/6-right-times-to-be-a-ready-fire-aim-entrepreneur/>

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## Prompt

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## Prewriting Suggestions

1. Consider a time when you were presented with an important project.
2. How did you approach the completion of the project in order to make the presentation successful?
3. Use strong, rational examples to argue your position of whether planning or taking action without planning was the reason for its success.
4. Present your argument in a logical order that your reader can follow with examples and ideas that help support your points.

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## Editing and Revising Suggestions

- Have you organized your ideas in a logical way in order to clearly present your argument?
- Have you illustrated your points with clear examples?
- Do all of your paragraphs relate to this topic?
- Do you have an introduction and a logical conclusion?
- Are your sentences clear and complete?
- Have you used transition words or phrases, when needed, that clearly connect your ideas?
- Have you chosen the best words to express your ideas?
- Take time to check that your spelling, capitalization, grammar, and punctuation are all correct.