

Grade 7 Writing Prompt

Write an essay for your health class arguing whether or not naps are generally good for people. Your essay must be based on ideas, concepts, and information from the “Napping” passage set. Manage your time carefully so you can

- plan your essay;
- write your essay; and
- revise and edit your essay.

Be sure to

- include a claim;
- address counterclaims;
- use evidence from multiple sources.

Do not over rely on one source. Type your answer in the space provided.

How Much Sleep Is Enough?

The amount of sleep you need each day will change over the course of your life. Although sleep needs vary from person to person, the chart below shows general recommendations for different age groups.

Age	Recommended Amount of Sleep
Newborns	16–18 hours a day
Preschool-aged children	11–12 hours a day
School-aged children	At least 10 hours a day
Teens	9–10 hours a day
Adults (including the elderly)	7–8 hours a day

Written by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and adapted for instructional use by the Utah State Office of Education

The Importance of Sleep

If you routinely lose sleep or choose to sleep less than needed, the sleep loss adds up. The total sleep lost is called your “sleep debt.” For example, if you lose 2 hours of sleep each night, you'll have a sleep debt of 14 hours after a week.

Some people nap as a way to deal with sleepiness. Naps may provide a short-term boost in alertness and performance. However, napping doesn't provide all of the other benefits of night-time sleep. Thus, you can't really make up for lost sleep; you just keep your sleep deficiency. “People accumulate sleep debt surreptitiously¹,” says psychiatrist William C. Dement, founder of the Stanford University Sleep Clinic. Studies show that such short-term sleep deprivation leads to a foggy brain, worsened vision, impaired driving, and trouble remembering. Long-term effects include obesity, insulin resistance, and heart disease.

Some people sleep more on their days off than on work days. They also may go to bed later and get up later on days off. Sleeping more on days off might be a sign that you aren't getting enough sleep. Although extra sleep on days off might help you feel better, it can upset your body's sleep-wake rhythm.

If you're worried about whether you're getting enough sleep, try using a sleep diary for a couple of weeks. Write down how much you sleep each night, how alert and rested you feel in the morning, and how sleepy you feel during the day.

Sleeping when your body is ready to sleep also is very important. Sleep deficiency can affect people even when they sleep the total number of hours recommended for their age group.

For example, people whose sleep is out of sync with their body clocks (such as shift workers) or routinely interrupted (such as caregivers or emergency responders) might need to pay special attention to their sleep needs.

¹surreptitiously: in an unnoticed manner

The Secret Truth about Napping

Napping: Only for Kids?

In general, Americans regard napping as an unproductive habit. They think that only little children should take naps. However, there is evidence that napping can benefit people of all ages.

Famous Nappers

Many famous historical figures have been nappers. American presidents John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton all took frequent naps to help them deal with the pressures of leading a powerful nation. Napoleon Bonaparte, a French emperor, often gave rousing speeches at a moment's notice. Perhaps this was due to his habit of taking frequent naps.

Winston Churchill, who helped lead the Allied Powers to victory during World War II, slept for at least an hour every afternoon. He stated that a nap could renew a person's energy.

Other famous historical nappers include the brilliant scientist Albert Einstein and the world-changing inventor Thomas Edison. The amazing artist Leonardo Da Vinci also took naps. They all had unusual sleep patterns that allowed them to work in a focused and creative way. Maybe if Edison had skipped his naps, he would never have invented the light bulb. Maybe Leonardo would have been too sleepy to paint the Mona Lisa.

Naps for Certain Careers

Scientific studies show the benefits that naps can provide for individuals with unusual work schedules. Examples include astronauts and certain medical personnel. The human body operates according to an internal clock. This clock operates in relation to the Earth's pattern of darkness at night and bright light during the day. When a person's internal clock is in sync with her or his habits, the person can most likely sleep well at night and remain awake and alert all day. But if the person's job makes for interrupted sleep—or sleep at odd hours—the internal clock can become confused. Then the person has trouble getting enough sleep.

Astronauts traveling in space are not exposed to regular patterns of light and darkness. As a result, astronauts average two hours less sleep than usual during every night they spend in space. They often have trouble concentrating. They also become grumpy. NASA decided to study whether astronauts should take naps. They did research with volunteers. The researchers found that napping improved memory, but not alertness. NASA researchers also concluded that longer naps worked better than shorter ones.

Doctors in training, known as residents, work very long hours. As a result, they are often sleep-deprived. Emergency-room doctors working at night also have problems sleeping. Sleep experts recommend that these health workers take short naps on the job. A team of researchers led by David F. Dinges, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, found that letting subjects nap for as little as 24 minutes improved their cognitive performance. So even short naps can reduce the number of mistakes a tired person makes.

The main take away seems to be that a deep sleep, whether it is nighttime sleep or a day-time nap, primes the brain to function at a higher level, allowing us to come up with better ideas, find solutions to puzzles more quickly, identify patterns faster and recall information more accurately.

Siesta Tradition

There is a word in the Spanish language to describe the habit of taking a nap in the mid-afternoon: siesta. However, taking a midday nap is not only common in Spain. In Greece, for example, people have traditionally

taken a break in the middle of the day. They have eaten a large meal and then taken a nap.

It is not the big noontime meal that makes Greeks sleepy. Evidence suggests that most people become drowsy between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. In fast-paced America, workers and students usually fight to stay awake during this so-called “nap zone.”

After a nap, people tend to be happier and more alert. They do better work and avoid mistakes. Nappers may even have better long-term health than non-nappers.

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