

Grade 7 Argumentative Performance Task – Social Media

Task:

Social media and free speech has been a topic of discussion in our country. Social media are websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are examples of social media.

The U.S. Congress is holding hearings about free speech and social media. Your senator has asked middle school students to submit essays on the topic:

Should social media place greater limitations on free speech?

Selected students will read their argumentative essays before a committee of the U.S. Congress in Washington DC. As part of your initial research, you found five sources about free speech and/or social media.

After you have reviewed these sources, you will answer some questions about them. Briefly scan the sources and the three questions that follow. Then, go back and read the sources carefully so you will have the information you need to answer the questions and finalize your research. You may take notes on the information you find in the sources as you read.

- You will write an argumentative essay on this topic related to the sources.

Directions for Beginning:

You will now examine many sources. You can re-examine any of the print sources as often as you like.

Part 1

Sources for Performance Task:

Source #1: YouTube Video

You found a video, [Do Students Still Have Free Speech in School?](#) by Choice Media published on April 9, 2014.

Your teacher will show this video twice and will stop several times during the video for you to take notes.

Source #2

You found an article on students and free speech by David Wheeler from the Atlantic Monthly magazine.

Do Students Still Have Free Speech in School?

David Wheeler is a freelance writer based in Tampa, Florida, and an assistant professor of journalism at the University of Tampa.

April 7, 2014

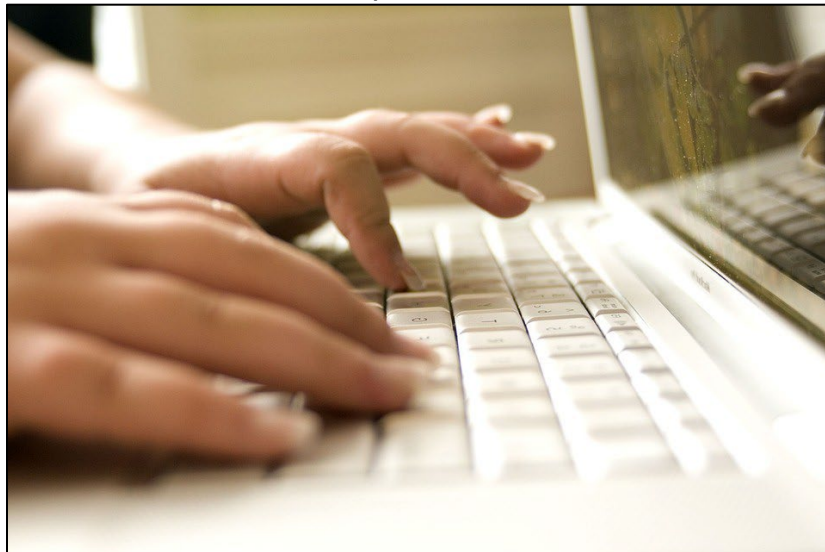


Photo: [Pixaby](#)

Social media has worn away young people's privacy. Supporters are trying to win it back.

In 1965, when Mary Beth Tinker was 13 years old, she wore a black armband to her junior high school to protest the Vietnam War. The school suspended her, but her protest led to a landmark Supreme Court case called *Tinker vs. Des Moines*. The court said Tinker was not guilty by saying students do not “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or

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expression at the schoolhouse gate.” The ruling brought in a new era of free speech rights for students. First Amendment supporters were happy about the *Tinker* decision for decades.

However, the Internet has complicated this ruling. Supporters now worry students’ rights to freedom of speech are again under attack. Schools regularly punish students for online comments, even if those comments are made away from school property and after school hours. Although some administrators target cyber-bullies, others punish students because they posted an online comment that the school doesn’t like.

There are a number of examples of schools punishing students for seemingly innocent online activity. In 2012, a Minnesota student wrote a Facebook post saying a hall monitor was “mean” to her. She was forced to turn over her Facebook password to school administrators with a sheriff’s deputy present. In Kansas, a high school class president was suspended for a Twitter post making fun of his school’s football team.

“You can’t equate online speech created on personal time with in-class speech, and it’s dangerous to try,” says Frank LoMonte, director of the Student Press Law Center. “Schools are so prone to censor and intimidate whistleblowers who complain about school conditions on school time.”

In the landmark *Tinker* case, the Supreme Court warned schools that they could not forbid student expression simply because they wanted to avoid controversy. “A school must be able to show that its action was caused by something more than a mere desire to avoid the discomfort and unpleasantness that always accompany an unpopular viewpoint,” the court said.

Tinker says that the students of today, just like those from her generation, want to express themselves using peaceful, creative methods. “They are using all the tools available, including online speech, to make a positive contribution,” she says. “Today, students have more than armbands.”

Adapted from The Atlantic Monthly, Do Students Still have Free Speech in School?
<http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/04/do-students-still-have-free-speech-in-school/360266/>
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Source #3

You found an article on the website Social Media Examiner on free speech and social media.

How Free Speech and Social Media Fit Together *by Sara Hawkins, an attorney and blogger*

March 8, 2012

What Speech Is Protected by the First Amendment?

The right to free speech means that you are allowed to express yourself without interference or control by the government. The U.S. Supreme Court has been involved in this debate for

nearly a century and has determined that the government can limit both the content of speech and the ability to engage in speech as long as the government has a “substantial justification.”

What is NOT Protected Speech?

Fortunately, the U.S. Supreme Court over time has created a number of categories of speech that are not protected. What this means is that these types of speech can be stopped. Free speech doesn't mean free to say whatever comes to mind.

Prohibited Speech

- Fighting Words – speech that would encourage hatred or violence has been constitutionally prohibited for nearly 60 years.
- Recommending illegal activity – speech that would encourage others to engage in illegal activity is not protected.

Limitations Placed on Speech

- Obscenity (Indecency) – is regulated, and can be prohibited.
- Defamation – publishing a statement that is false, although offered as fact, that is harmful to the reputation of another person or organization.
- Profanity (Swear Words) – Profanity can be regulated if it is integrated into speech that is clearly prohibited.
- Copyright, trademark and patent – regulated by law and giving owners exclusive rights. Other people are prohibited from speech or expression that infringes on an owner's rights.

*Adapted from the website Social Media Examiner, How Free Speech and Social Media Fit Together
<http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/how-free-speech-and-social-media-fit-together/>
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Source #4

You found an article on Facebook policy on their website.

Facebook Policy

by Marne Levine, Vice President of Global Public Policy at Facebook

We want people to feel safe when using Facebook. For that reason, we've developed a set of Community Standards, outlined below. These policies will help you understand what type of sharing is allowed on Facebook, and what type of content may be reported to us and removed. Please keep in mind that something that may be disagreeable or disturbing to you may not violate our Community Standards.

Below are some of the limitations Facebook places on free speech.

Direct Threats: How we help people who feel threatened by others on Facebook.

We carefully review reports of threatening language to identify serious threats of harm to public and personal safety. We remove credible threats of physical harm to individuals. We also remove specific threats of theft, vandalism, or other financial harm.

Self-Injury: How we work to help prevent self-injury.

We don't allow the promotion of self-injury. We work with organizations around the world to provide assistance for people in distress.

Dangerous Organizations: What types of organizations we prohibit on Facebook.

We don't allow any organizations that are engaged in the following to have a presence on Facebook:

- Terrorist activity, or
- Organized criminal activity.

We also remove content that expresses support for groups that are involved in the violent or criminal behavior mentioned above. Supporting or praising leaders of those same organizations is not allowed.

Bullying and Harassment: How we respond to bullying and harassment.

We don't tolerate bullying or harassment. We allow you to speak freely on matters and people of public interest, but remove content that appears to purposefully target private individuals with the intention of degrading or shaming them. This content includes, but is not limited to:

- Pages that identify and shame private individuals
- Images altered to degrade private individuals
- Photos or videos of physical bullying posted to shame the victim
- Sharing personal information to blackmail or harass people
- Repeatedly targeting other people with unwanted friend requests or messages

Attacks on Public Figures: What protection public figures receive on Facebook.

We permit open and critical discussion of people who are in the news or have a large public audience based on their profession or chosen activities. We remove credible threats to public figures, as well as hate speech directed at them – just as we do for private individuals.

Criminal Activity: How we handle reports of criminal activity on Facebook.

We prohibit the use of Facebook to facilitate or organize criminal activity that causes physical harm to people, businesses or animals, or financial damage to people or businesses. We work with law enforcement when we believe there is a genuine risk of physical harm or direct threats to public safety.

*Adapted from Facebook, Community Standards <https://www.facebook.com/communitystandards>
Permission granted.*

Source #5

You found an article on the American Civil Liberties Union of Vermont website on free speech and student rights.

Students Rights -- Free Speech

1. Do I have a right to freedom of speech while I am in school?

Yes. You do not surrender your constitutional rights when you enter school. In 1969, in the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark *Tinker vs. Des Moines Independent School District* decision, the court stated: "It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech . . . at the schoolhouse gate."

2. Can the school place limits and restrictions on expressive activities, such as speech?

Yes. First Amendment rights are not absolute. To prevent disruption, public schools can adopt reasonable rules to regulate when, where, and how students may exercise their free speech rights.

In some situations, speech can be restricted at school even if it would be protected if you were off school grounds. In the *Tinker vs. Des Moines* case, speech does not create a disruption just because a teacher does not like it. It must be a **real** disruption of the class or school activity.

3. What about a Web site?

Your right to express yourself applies in cyberspace too, whether you are writing e-mails, keeping a Web blog or posting in a chat-room. However, many school officials have tried to control what students can and cannot post or access online. The law in this area is still developing because the technology is new, but there are a few guidelines.

Internet Speech Inside School: If you are using a *school* computer, you should be prepared to follow the school's rules for the use of its equipment. Most schools have a handbook on "Internet use" stating what those restrictions are.

Internet Speech Outside School: Using a computer *outside* of school is a different matter. Schools' authority to limit student speech has generally *not* been extended to speech that takes place off-campus, but recent decisions have left this unclear. You should not be disciplined for posting on a Web blog, or a personal e-mail if it is sent from your personal account, on your own time, from a computer outside of school even if the content is school-related.

Adapted from the American Civil Liberties of Vermont website. Student Rights – Free Speech
https://acluvt.org/pubs/students_rights/speech.php
Permission granted.

Social Media Argumentative Performance Task

Directions:

You will now review your notes and sources, and plan, draft, revise, and edit your writing. You may use your notes and refer to the sources. Now read your assignment and the information about how your writing will be scored; then begin your work.

Your Assignment:

The U.S. Congress is holding hearings about free speech and social media. Your senator has asked middle school students to submit essays on the topic:

Should social media place greater limitations on free speech?

Selected students will read their argumentative essays before a committee of the U.S. Congress in Washington DC.

Your assignment is to use the research sources to write a multi-paragraph argumentative essay about free speech and social media. Make sure you establish an argumentative claim, address potential counterarguments, and support your claim from the sources you have read. Develop your ideas clearly and use your own words, except when quoting directly from the sources. Be sure to reference the sources by title or number when using details or facts directly from the sources.

Argumentative Essay Scoring:

Your argumentative essay will be scored using the following:

1. **Ideas** – How well did you state your claim and address opposing claims? How well did you support your ideas with relevant evidence?
2. **Organization** – How well did your ideas thoughtfully flow from beginning to end using effective transitions? How effective was your introduction and conclusion?
3. **Voice** – How well did you maintain a formal style?
4. **Word Choice** – How well did you clearly state ideas in your own words using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose?
5. **Sentence Fluency** – How well did you craft your sentences in order to provide variety in sentence beginnings, length and structure?
6. **Conventions** – How well did you follow the rules of grammar usage, punctuation, capitalization and spelling?
7. **Use of Sources** – How well did you integrate relevant and specific information from the sources? How well did you reference sources you used?

Use the scoring guide attached to this performance task to help you.

Now begin work on your argumentative essay. Make sure you:

- plan your multi-paragraph argumentative essay
- write your multi-paragraph argumentative essay
- revise and edit the final draft of your multi-paragraph argumentative essay

Word processing tools and spell check are available to you.

You are being asked to write a multi-paragraph argumentative essay, so please be as thorough as possible. Type your response on a separate document. Remember to check your notes and your prewriting/planning as you write and then revise and edit your argumentative essay.