English I Writing
Expository Prompt

Read the following quotation.

Take risks. Ask big questions. Don’t be afraid to make mistakes; if you don’t make mistakes, you’re not reaching far enough.

—David Packard,
co-founder of Hewlett-Packard

Taking a risk means acting without knowing whether the outcome will be good. Think carefully about this statement.

Write an essay explaining why it is sometimes necessary to take a chance.

Be sure to —

• clearly state your thesis
• organize and develop your ideas effectively
• choose your words carefully
• edit your writing for grammar, mechanics, and spelling
Score Point 3

The essay represents a satisfactory writing performance.

Organization/Progression

- The organizing structure of the essay is, for the most part, appropriate to the purpose and responsive to the specific demands of the prompt. The essay is clear because the writer uses organizational strategies that are adequately suited to the expository task.

- The writer establishes a clear thesis statement. Most ideas are related to the thesis and are focused on the topic specified in the prompt. The essay is coherent, though it may not always be unified due to minor lapses in focus.

- The writer’s progression of ideas is generally logical and controlled. For the most part, transitions are meaningful, and sentence-to-sentence connections are sufficient to support the flow of the essay and show the relationships among ideas.

Development of Ideas

- The development of ideas is sufficient because the writer uses details and examples that are specific and appropriate, adding some substance to the essay.

- The essay reflects some thoughtfulness. The writer’s response to the prompt is original rather than formulaic. The writer develops the essay in a manner that demonstrates a good understanding of the expository writing task.

Use of Language/Conventions

- The writer’s word choice is, for the most part, clear and specific. It reflects an awareness of the expository purpose and establishes a tone appropriate to the task. The word choice usually contributes to the quality and clarity of the essay.

- Sentences are varied and adequately controlled, for the most part contributing to the effectiveness of the essay.

- The writer demonstrates an adequate command of sentence boundaries and spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and usage conventions. Although some errors may be evident, they create few (if any) disruptions in the fluency of the writing, and they do not affect the clarity of the essay.
Taking risks is important to people’s success. Some risks may be dangerous, even life threatening, with an unknown outcome. Although taking chances can be harmful, they can certainly be beneficial as well. Risk-taking is an important strategy used by many successful people in the past and present. Benjamin Franklin took a risk by tying a small key to the end of a kite and flying it out into a severe thunderstorm. Lightning struck the kite and traveled down to the key. Benjamin Franklin had taken this risk, and although dangerous, had discovered electricity. If he hadn’t have taken that risk, we could still be using oil lanterns to light up a dark house.

Taking chances is an importance to success and progress. Although the outcome is unknown, and the process could be dangerous, it could greatly impact and positively change the lives of millions of people.

Score Point 3
The writer of this satisfactory essay establishes the clear thesis that while taking chances can be dangerous, it is important to the success and progress of humanity. This thesis is stated clearly in both the introductory and concluding paragraphs. Effectively using one historical example, the writer supports her thesis by providing a specific explanation of Benjamin Franklin’s work discovering electricity. Sufficient sentence-to-sentence connections help produce a clear explanation in this straightforward and pertinent example. The overall development of the explanation reflects some thoughtfulness. The student’s word choice helps establish an appropriate tone, and a good command of conventions strengthens the presentation.
In life, there are opportunities with opportunities come choices. And some choices may require taking a chance. Some people like to play it safe, but those people find that they will eventually have to take a chance.

People who don't step out of their comfort zones may become sheltered, and some might say "boring." Being shy is very popular in the general population, and some might even have social anxiety disorders. Society has grown into Campbell's soup cans—labeled. Everyone has some sort of label, which may boost or down-right mutilate someone's self esteem. Kids who may prefer to sit at home and read, play online games, or spend time with their family might be labeled as a "nerd" or a "geek." Those people's comfort zones are most likely just at home or at school.

In some situations, you **have** to step out of your comfort zone. I once read a quote saying, "To get something you've never had, you have to do something you've never done." Which is a very true quote. In 2010, I found out there were auditions for a children's Christmas play at a local community college. I took a chance by auditioning and got a part. Even though I only had four lines, I was still able to experience the magic of it all, helping me inch closer to my dream—becoming an actress.

Chances are necessary to be successful in life. It's good to stay sheltered and be comfortable, but it's better to take chances and play the wild card every once in a while.

**Score Point 3**

In this satisfactory piece, the writer provides the clear thesis that although it is good to remain comfortable, it is better to take chances because they are necessary for success in life. The student develops the idea that while social labels make people tentative about leaving their comfort zone, the writer's own experience taking a risk led her to her first small success as an actress. The inclusion of details and examples that are specific and appropriate adds some substance to the essay. The progression of ideas is generally logical and controlled, and the writer's word choice is clear and specific, helping establish a tone that is appropriate to the explanatory task.
There are many different types of personalities out there. Some are big and bold on the outside yet quiet and shy on the inside while some are very meek on the outside but inside is a vast wonderland of ideas and feelings yet to be expressed. Everybody has a little shyness in them and often a reluctance to be who they truly are. What people don’t realize is showing your true colors might be the best thing that has ever happened to you. Everyone who is successful in the music industry, acting, sports, art, and a name it has taken a risk to try. These people did not know if they would be popular or win games or if their prices would be displayed but they gave it a shot and that is what matters. Don’t misunderstand me though, I’m not saying people will love you everytime you put yourself out there because someone is always going to try and put you down but what shows character is if you get back up and keep going. If you fall three times, you get up four and never quit trying to make it to the top. Rejection is bound to happen but whether you receive success and acceptance or not is completely up to you. That is why the shy ones never get noticed even though they have so much potential and depth. Don’t sit on the sidelines watching the game, go play!

Score Point 3
The writer of this satisfactory essay establishes the clear thesis that taking a chance and showing your true colors may be the best thing that can ever happen to you. To support this thesis, the student links a general discussion about famous people to a philosophical example. The student creates an appropriate tone by using direct address. Demonstrating a good understanding of the expository task, the student uses sufficiently developed details to encourage others to push past rejection so that they can develop their own personalities.
In the final paragraph, the writer presents a clear thesis: taking a chance is not sometimes necessary; it’s always necessary. The writer effectively anchors the essay by posing rhetorical questions, speculating about what would have happened in our nation’s history had brave citizens not challenged the status quo. For the most part, the ideas progress logically, but there is wordiness at the beginning of the second paragraph. Although the essay is coherent, it is not always unified. The student provides two disparate ideas of the colonists fighting the Revolutionary War and the Wright Brothers attempting to fly but does not provide a transition or better development that would link these ideas together. Specific word choice, a cause/effect organizational strategy, and concrete details add some substance to this satisfactory expository essay.
Score Point 4

The essay represents an accomplished writing performance.

Organization/Progression

- The organizing structure of the essay is clearly appropriate to the purpose and responsive to the specific demands of the prompt. The essay is skillfully crafted because the writer uses organizational strategies that are particularly well suited to the expository task.
- The writer establishes a clear thesis statement. All ideas are strongly related to the thesis and are focused on the topic specified in the prompt. By sustaining this focus, the writer is able to create an essay that is unified and coherent.
- The writer’s progression of ideas is logical and well controlled. Meaningful transitions and strong sentence-to-sentence connections enhance the flow of the essay by clearly showing the relationships among ideas, making the writer’s train of thought easy to follow.

Development of Ideas

- The development of ideas is effective because the writer uses details and examples that are specific and well chosen, adding substance to the essay.
- The essay is thoughtful and engaging. The writer may choose to use his/her unique experiences or view of the world as a basis for writing or to connect ideas in interesting ways. The writer develops the essay in a manner that demonstrates a thorough understanding of the expository writing task.

Use of Language/Conventions

- The writer’s word choice is purposeful and precise. It reflects a keen awareness of the expository purpose and maintains a tone appropriate to the task. The word choice strongly contributes to the quality and clarity of the essay.
- Sentences are purposeful, varied, and well controlled, enhancing the effectiveness of the essay.
- The writer demonstrates a consistent command of sentence boundaries and spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and usage conventions. Although minor errors may be evident, they do not detract from the fluency of the writing or the clarity of the essay. The overall strength of the conventions contributes to the effectiveness of the essay.
There are many areas where it is necessary to take a chance. One such example is the field of medical research. In many cases, there is a treatment for whatever particular ailment a person is suffering from. For sinus infections, there are antibiotics. For pain, there are acetaminophens and NSADS. To prevent diseases, there are all kinds of vaccines. All of these medical breakthroughs were discovered because, at some point, someone took a risk. Even today, many medicines are the result of trial and error. Imagine this situation: People in a lab mix up a cocktail of compounds that they hypothesize may help cure or treat cancer. They take a chance and inject it into mice who have cancer. They observe the mice for while and some die, but most of the mice injected with the medicine begin to improve. Eventually, through tweaking the drug until its mortality rate of mice injected with it is lower, they get permission to do a clinical trial. The results of the trial support what they found with the mice; their medicine cures cancer. The drug is tested again and approved by the FDA. There is now a government-approved drug that cures cancer. This only was able to (hypothetically) happen because someone took a chance. They had no way of knowing whether or not it would work, but they tried it anyway. Without anyone taking a similar gamble and going through a similar process, many modern medicines would not be in existence and we would not be able to see their benefits.

Score Point 4
The writer uses the specific and well-chosen example of medical research to support the thesis that the benefits of modern medicines would not exist without someone being willing to take chances. The progression of ideas is logical and very well controlled as the writer provides a hypothetical explanation of the steps and research methodology that might occur when finding a cure for cancer. The writer connects ideas in interesting ways with strong sentence-to-sentence connections that enhance the flow of the essay by clearly showing the relationships among these ideas. The writer’s train of thought is easy to follow, and the word choice is purposeful and precise, reflecting a keen awareness of the expository purpose. This word choice strongly contributes to the quality and clarity of the piece. In addition, the writer demonstrates a consistent command of conventions with only minor errors evident. Overall, the essay represents an accomplished writing performance.
In a non-formulaic five-paragraph essay, the writer of this accomplished essay establishes the clear thesis that taking risks is essential to the development of humanity. To support this thesis, the writer utilizes three related examples—the exploration and discovery achieved by pioneers such as Columbus, medical researchers, and Bill Gates and Steve Jobs. Each of these well-chosen examples is conceptually relevant to the thesis and strongly supports the writer’s central idea. Meaningful transitions from paragraph to paragraph link the three examples and enhance the flow of the essay, making the writer’s train of thought easy to follow. Word choice is purposeful and precise, and the sentences are varied and well controlled.
In this accomplished piece, the writer skillfully employs a personal anecdote based on her experience as a reluctant member of the Lincoln-Douglas debate team. The writer provides a clear thesis in the form of a rhetorical question (if you don’t take chances, how will you ever learn or gain something new?). The anecdotal example is well chosen because its details serve as solid support for the thesis. The writer’s logical progression of thought is strengthened by strong sentence-to-sentence connections, enhancing the flow of the essay. Sentences are varied and well controlled, and the writer’s word choice is precise and purposeful. In addition, the writer demonstrates a consistent command of conventions, contributing to the effectiveness of the essay.
A lot of people struggle with the concept of taking chances in their lives. Sometimes people think that if they don’t know what the outcome of their actions will be, then it is not worth taking the chance. However, there will be a time in everyone’s life where taking a risk is the best choice because it could end up making all the difference, and potentially change your future.

Some people go through life with a very clear idea of what they should be doing, and how everything should fall into place. Others go through life without a care in the world, always taking chances no matter how risky the situation may be. It is important to find a healthy balance between these two personalities. You shouldn’t be afraid to take risks because the outcome may not be what you wanted. Meanwhile, you shouldn’t constantly take huge risks without having a reasonable motive behind your actions. When you do take a chance, it should be on something that you are willing to take a risk for, and it should mean a lot to you. Living in fear of failing at something is not the way to look at life. If you never take a chance, you never see what could have been. There have been countless instances in history where hugely successful people have had to take a risk to get to where they are today. An important time in your life to take risks would be when deciding what you want to do for the rest of your life. For example, if it is your dream to go to Harvard and become a lawyer, but you are too nervous to apply because you may not get in, apply anyway. You never know what could happen, and in that situation, you have nothing to lose by at least trying.

When it comes down to what your future holds, that is an ideal opportunity to take chances. Sometimes taking a risk could change the course of your life for the better, and that is when taking chances truly pays off.

Score Point 4
The final sentence of the opening paragraph serves as a clear thesis and a philosophical focal point in this accomplished writing performance. The writer mixes a slightly persuasive tone with a strongly philosophical explanation focused on the positive potential that exists for everyone in risk-taking. The writer sustains focus on this central idea throughout the essay and effectively develops support by using philosophical examples that are well chosen. The piece is unified and coherent because strong sentence-to-sentence connections make the writer’s train of thought evident and easy to follow.