

Notes

Practice with Hints

Use the Notes column to take notes and use SALSA™ strategies on this pair of letters to the editor. There are a few hints to get you started.

Letters to the Editor: Free Internet

Skim This sentence stands by itself, so it is probably important.

Look The author does not say who performed this survey, nor does she provide any other information about it.

Ask Based on the author's credentials, what viewpoint would you expect?

To the Editor:

How do we prepare ourselves and our children for the future?

There is a simple answer: free town-wide Internet access. Why provide free Internet access? First, it would help business and tourism. Just look at *Java Joe*, which is the only place in town with public Internet access. You can't get a table because so many people are using the cafe's computers or their own laptops. And Kevin Marcus, the owner of the *Sea Breeze Inn*, reports that more of his guests ask about Internet access than any other amenity.

Second, this access would help students. Through the Internet, students can instantly research any project. Through a series of websites approved by the Department of Education, they can access homework help, ask questions of librarians, or participate in enrichment projects. Yet, while our schools are wired for Internet access, many students do not have it at home. A recent survey revealed that only 46% of them have a computer at home, and only 34% are connected to the Internet.

Finally, the price is right. A series of wireless "hotspots" will provide the basic service. This is inexpensive, since they require no cables or complex installations to every user. But because not everyone is fortunate enough to own a laptop, we also need to install public computers at key hotspots, such as libraries, post offices, and other government buildings. That's more expensive, but just imagine this scenario. Next time you're waiting on line for a building permit or a driver's license, you could be working or surfing the Web instead of shuffling your feet. Independent consultants Pierson Partners estimate the project's cost at only \$200-300,000. That's less than we paid for our new street signage last year, and it's a better investment in our future.

Sincerely,

Kyra Dawson
Mount Rose Business Association

Notes

To the Editor:

The new Internet proposal is anything but free. However, “free Internet” sounds better than “taxpayer-subsidized Internet.”

It is perfectly reasonable to say that more students should have access to computers and the Internet. However, we don’t need to blanket the town to achieve that goal. Installing more computers and providing Internet access in each of our fine public libraries would do the job at a fraction of the cost.

It is also reasonable to say that business and tourism would benefit from free Internet access. They would also benefit from year-round sunshine. Should we also look into the cost of providing sunny days? If a business owner feels a service is worthwhile, she should make the investment to buy it. Is the cost to provide wireless Internet access throughout an inn prohibitively high?

The proposal is in good company. From towns as small as Orleans, Massachusetts, to cities as large as San Francisco and Philadelphia, there is a rush to provide subsidized municipal Internet access. However, Orleans received a grant of \$136,500 to help cover their costs. Will anyone step up to cover our costs?

Towns are also confronting the hidden costs of their noble experiments. From viruses to stolen credit-card numbers, wireless networks have security issues. Putting everyone in town on one public network is asking for trouble. Furthermore, the estimated project costs from Pierson Partners do not account for ongoing maintenance. When a “hotspot” grows cold on a Sunday morning, who will fix it, and how quickly? Who will replace or repair the computers as they wear out?

Advocates of the proposal compare the Internet to public utilities, such as water or power. These things, they say, are basic services that should be available to all. In contrast, what if we compare the Internet to television? Both are powerful providers of entertainment and information, but neither is critical to everyday life. Last time I checked, I could not get the town to buy a television for me, nor has it offered to pay my cable bill.

Sincerely,

Steven Cicero
Mount Rose Taxpayer

Solve What does taxpayer-subsidized mean?

Ask Why would the writer use the phrase noble experiments?

Assemble Compare the two letters and consider which one you find more effective.

- 1** Ms. Dawson’s entire letter uses the organizational pattern of—
- (A) explaining the cause of Internet problems and their effects.
 - (B) describing the Internet access proposal in depth.
 - (C) listing the steps the town must take to provide free Internet access.
 - (D) posing a question about the future and then providing an answer.



Hint—How does Ms. Dawson break her letter into paragraphs? How does she connect her ideas?

- 2** Which statement from Ms. Dawson’s letter is an OPINION?
- (F) “...they can access homework help...”
 - (G) “...and it’s a better investment in our future.”
 - (H) “...our schools are wired for Internet access...”
 - (J) “...wireless ‘hotspots’ will provide the basic service.”



Hint—What reference source could you use to verify each choice?

- 3** Why is it important that some of the websites for students are approved by the Department of Education?
- (A) They allow you to take classes from home.
 - (B) Many students do not have computers.
 - (C) What they write can be inspected for accuracy.
 - (D) It can be proven that they do not charge for their services.



Hint—Use *What You Know* to decide what would be most important to educators.

- 4** Which of the following details from Mr. Cicero’s letter BEST supports his argument?
- (F) The town of Orleans received a large grant to cover their expenses.
 - (G) The Internet, like television, is important but not vital to everyday living.
 - (H) The estimated project costs do not include the ongoing costs to keep the system running.
 - (J) The cost to an individual business that wants to provide Internet access is not overly high.



Hint—Identify the author’s main idea. Which choices are relevant and accurate ways to support it?

- 5** Which excerpt from Mr. Cicero’s letter signals an organizational pattern he uses?
- (A) “In contrast, what if we compare...”
 - (B) “It is perfectly reasonable to say that...”
 - (C) “...to cities as large as San Francisco and Philadelphia...”
 - (D) “Will anyone step up to cover our costs?”



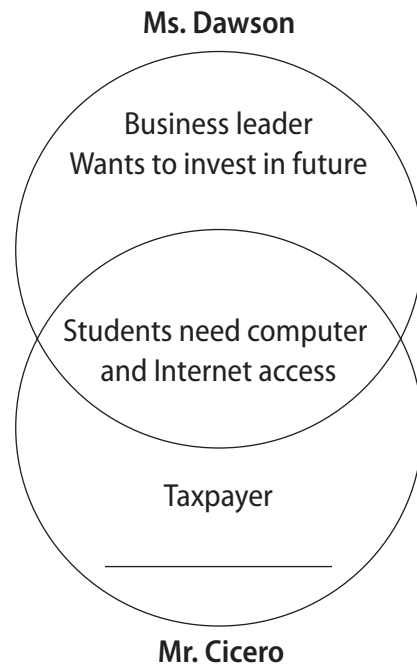
Hint—Make sure that the organizational pattern and the signal words and phrases match.

- 6** Mr. Cicero and Ms. Dawson would probably BOTH agree that—
- (F) broken Internet “hotspots” must be repaired immediately.
 - (G) hotel guests would not be willing to pay more for rooms with Internet access.
 - (H) the town’s libraries should receive much more funding than they do now.
 - (J) paying more than \$300,000 for new signs was not the best use of town money.



Hint—Consider what the authors write, and what their overall viewpoints seem to be.

- 7** Look at this chart of information from the letters.



Which choice belongs in the blank?

- (A) Wants town to subsidize televisions
- (B) Wants to control costs
- (C) Believes the Internet is unsafe
- (D) Wants to reduce crowding at *Java Joe*



Hint—What relationships does this type of chart demonstrate?