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Word Generation - Unit 3.20

## Focus Words

scheme | subsequently | dominant | import | commission



### WEEKLY PASSAGE

In March 2007, Seung-Hui Cho, a 23-year-old college student at Virginia Tech, walked into a gun shop and bought a handgun. To purchase the gun, all he had to do was prove that he lived in Virginia and that he did not have a criminal record. This quick and easy process enabled him **subsequently** to carry out a terrible **scheme**. On April 16, 2007, Cho used the gun to kill 32 people on the Virginia Tech campus.

Some people believe we should have laws in our country that make it harder to obtain handguns. These people argue that a handgun's only purpose is hurting people. They think there might be fewer murders, armed robberies, and suicides if handguns were illegal.

They also note that people who keep guns in their houses sometimes shoot someone accidentally. Sometimes children find the handguns and think they are toys. Sometimes people use the guns to shoot each other when they are angry. Later, those people wish it had not been so easy to hurt or kill the other person.

The Supreme Court, however, has decided that Americans have the right to own handguns and to keep them in their homes. Some people think this was a good decision. They argue that people need handguns to defend themselves against criminals. This is one of the widespread and **dominant** arguments for handgun ownership. In addition, some people think that if guns were illegal, only criminals would have them. They remind us that even if handguns were made illegal in the US, criminals could **import** them from countries where handguns are allowed.

Some people argue that if it had been harder for Cho to get a handgun, perhaps the **commission** of all those murders could have been prevented. Others say that if Cho's professors and fellow students had been carrying their own handguns, they would have been able to protect themselves.

Should handguns be illegal? Or should Americans have the right to own them?

# Should handguns be illegal?

## FOCUS WORDS OF THE WEEK

**dominant** : (adjective) strong, forceful

FORMS:

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EXAMPLES OF USE:

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NOTES:

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**import** : (verb) to bring into a country from another country, usually merchandise or food

FORMS:

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EXAMPLES OF USE:

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NOTES:

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**scheme** : (noun) a plan

FORMS:

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EXAMPLES OF USE:

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NOTES:

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**commission** : (noun) an act of doing something deliberately (or with authority)

FORMS:

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EXAMPLES OF USE:

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NOTES:

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**subsequently** : (adverb) following in time, order, or place

FORMS:

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EXAMPLES OF USE:

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NOTES:

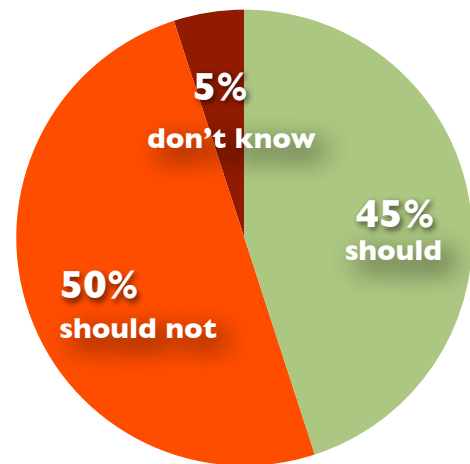
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# Should handguns be illegal?

## PROBLEM OF THE WEEK



**Option 1:** There are different views about handguns in different parts of the country. Some people think bans on handguns are reasonable. Others think that the government should not interfere with the constitutional right to bear arms. Still others think that it's okay for the government to regulate things like the **importation** of handguns but claim that any **scheme** to regulate personal ownership violates the Second Amendment. The Pew Research Center **commissioned** a poll on handgun control to find out what the **dominant** view was on gun control. **Subsequently**, it published the results. The pie chart shows what the center found.



Which of the following is true?

- A) more people support bans than oppose them
- B) more people oppose bans than support them
- C) there is no way to tell which view is dominant

Pew Research Center's question: *Should state/local governments be able to pass laws banning handguns?*

**Option 2:** Within the Democratic Party, the **dominant** feeling is that handguns should be regulated. Republicans are more likely to favor gun rights. A Republican strategist **commissioned** a study on gun control views in his home state. He found that 10% of Democrats were strong supporters of gun rights. He devised a **scheme** to **import** these gun-rights Democrats into his own party by appealing to their feelings about gun rights. **Subsequently**, his state would have more Republicans than Democrats. If  $r$  = the number of Republicans at the time of the poll and  $d$  = the number of Democrats, which inequality is true?

- A)  $.1d + r > d$
- B)  $.1d + r > .9d$
- C)  $r \geq d$
- D)  $r - d = .1d$

**Math Discussion Question:** The Pew Research Center has been **commissioning** polls on hot topics, like handgun control, for many years. This long-term plan or **scheme** allows them to track changes over time regarding **dominant** views about controversial topics. Sometimes, **subsequent** to a major event like the Virginia Tech shooting, people's opinions change. What are some major events of your lifetime that may have affected people's feelings about gun control? Which of these events may have made people more likely to support handgun bans? Which of these events may have made people more likely to oppose handgun bans?

## Should handguns be illegal?

### THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY



Different countries have different attitudes and rules about citizens carrying guns. In some countries, it is illegal for citizens to own guns, and **importing** or exporting guns is also illegal. However, in the United States, the “right to bear arms” is part of our Constitution. Many people feel very strongly about their right to bear arms and suggest that the Second Amendment to the Constitution allows citizens to protect themselves from the **schemes** of dangerous criminals. Conversely, some people feel that more guns lead to more violence, and suggest that easy access to guns increases violent crime.

Mr. Seemy’s class was debating whether access to guns makes people more likely to **commit** violent crimes, like murder or armed robbery. The **dominant** opinion in the class was that when people have guns, legal or not, more crime and violence is the result.

Brianna cited the tragedy at Virginia Tech as evidence to support the view that more guns will result in more violence. “Seung-Hui Cho bought a gun in 2007 and **subsequently** murdered 32 people on a college campus. Those people might be alive today if guns were illegal!”

Despite being in the minority, Lisa and Anthony spoke up in support of gun ownership. “Think about this: those people might be alive today if one or more of them were carrying their own guns to defend themselves! More widespread gun possession could actually reduce gun murders.”

“A good scientist bases her conclusions on evidence and facts, not just opinions,” said Mr. Seemy. “Can you find some statistics that support your opinions?”

→ The next day, Brianna, Lisa, and Anthony brought in the data table below, made with information they had found on an FBI website. But all of them thought the table supported their own opinions. What do you think?

**Data: Murder by state & type of weapon, 2011**

State	Total number of murders	Number of murders committed by handgun	Percentage of murders committed by handgun
Alaska	29	5	
California	1,790	497	
Colorado	147	39	
Georgia	522	326	
Hawaii	7	0	
Illinois	452	364	
Louisiana	485	372	
Mississippi	187	121	
New York	774	394	
Texas	1,089	497	
Virginia	303	110	
Washington	161	58	

#### Questions:

- 1) Complete the third column in the data table by calculating the percentage of murders committed by handgun in each state.
- 2) Are handguns more commonly used in murders in some states than others? Cite data from the table.
- 3) Can you use data from this table to support Brianna’s opinion that more guns will result in more violence, or Lisa and Anthony’s opinion that more guns will result in less violence?
- 4) What problems can you identify with this data table? Could the information presented here be misleading? What other data would you need to make a decision about whether handguns result in more murders?
- 5) What do you think? Do you agree with Brianna or with Anthony and Lisa? Why?

# Should handguns be illegal?

## DEBATING THE ISSUE



# GO!

## 1. Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

**A** It should be illegal to own a handgun in this country. This would mean that America would subsequently have fewer murders and other violent crimes.

**B** It should be legal to own a handgun in this country. People should have the right to defend themselves against criminals.

**C** Handguns should be legal, but difficult to get. People should have to apply for a gun license and prove themselves competent to use a gun before they can buy one.

**D** Only a small number of people should be allowed to have handguns. These people should have to prove that they need the guns and can use them safely.

**E** \_\_\_\_\_  
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Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

*I think it's more accurate to say...*

*That's interesting - can you tell why you think that?*

*I think the evidence is contrary to what you're saying because. . .*

*Let me share something from the reading that will help us...*

## 2. Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

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Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples.  
Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

scheme | subsequently | dominant | import | commission

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