

RAFT Writing Strategy: Executive Order Example

PART 1: THE PROMPT

RAFT Writing Assignment — The Executive Order

Using the RAFT writing strategy, you will write a presidential executive order addressing a significant domestic policy problem in the United States.

Before you begin drafting, complete the RAFT planning worksheet below. Your planning notes do not need to be polished — they are your thinking space. Your final executive order, however, should be formally structured and reflect serious engagement with the issue.

R — Role: President of the United States

A — Audience: The American public, federal agencies, Congress, and the courts

F — Format: Presidential Executive Order (formal government document with numbered sections, whereas/therefore language, and agency directives)

T — Topic: The United States is experiencing a severe shortage of affordable housing, particularly for low- and middle-income Americans. Rental costs have risen dramatically in most major cities, homeownership rates among people under 40 are at historic lows, and homelessness has increased for several consecutive years. As president, you are signing an executive order to address this crisis.

Your Task:

1. Complete the RAFT Planning Worksheet
2. Write a full Executive Order on the housing affordability crisis

Your executive order should include:

- A title
- A preamble explaining *why* this action is necessary
- At least 4 numbered policy sections with specific directives
- A closing section on implementation and effective date

Think critically: What are the real causes of the housing shortage? What levers does a president actually have? Who would push back on this, and why?

EXAMPLE OF STUDENT RAFT PLANNING WORKSHEET

(Example of student work — planning/brainstorming stage)

Student Name: Jxxxxx M. **Date:** Spring 2026 **Assignment:** RAFT Executive Order — Housing Affordability

R — Who am I as the writer? What is my role?

I am the President of the United States. That means I have executive power — I can direct federal agencies and sign executive orders, but I can't actually pass laws or spend money that Congress hasn't approved. I need to remember this because I can't just say "give everyone cheap housing" — I have to work within what a president can actually do. I can direct agencies like HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development), I can change how federal land is used, and I can set priorities for how existing programs are run.

A — Who is my audience? What do they need from me?

My audience is kind of multiple groups at once, which makes this complicated:

- **The American public** — especially renters and young people who feel like they'll never be able to afford a home. They want to know I understand the problem and am doing something real, not just symbolic.
- **Federal agencies** (HUD, Treasury, FHFA, etc.) — they need clear, specific directives. Vague orders don't help them.
- **Congress** — they might push back if I'm overstepping, and they control the actual budget. I need to signal cooperation.
- **The courts** — executive orders can be challenged. I need to make sure I'm acting within my legal authority or it could get struck down.
- **Housing developers and local governments** — these are the people actually building (or not building) housing. They're affected by zoning laws, which are mostly local, so I have limited power here.

The tone needs to be formal and authoritative, but also show I understand the real human cost of this crisis.

F — What format am I writing in? What are the conventions?

Executive orders have a very specific look and feel. I looked up some real ones and noticed:

- They start with "By the authority vested in me as President of the United States..."
- They use "WHEREAS" or "BY THE AUTHORITY" preamble language
- Numbered sections (Section 1, Section 2, etc.)
- They name specific agencies and tell them specifically what to do
- There's always a section on "General Provisions" that limits legal liability and clarifies this doesn't create new rights
- They end with a date and presidential signature block

The language is formal and declarative — not persuasive, not conversational. It's not asking, it's directing.

One thing I'm not sure about: do executive orders ever explain the reasoning behind them, or is it just directives? I think they do have a "whereas" section that explains the context/justification.

T — What is my topic? What do I actually know and need to figure out?

What I know:

- Housing prices and rents have gone up a LOT in recent years, especially after COVID
- There aren't enough homes being built — this is called a "supply shortage"
- Zoning laws (local rules about what can be built where) are a big part of the problem — a lot of cities only allow single-family homes, so you can't build apartments
- The federal government owns a lot of land — could some of it be used for housing?
- There are federal programs like Section 8 vouchers and the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) that help with affordable housing
- Interest rates affect whether people can afford mortgages

What I need to think about more:

- The president can't change local zoning laws — that's a state/local issue. So how do I address the supply problem without overstepping?

- *Idea: tie federal funding to zoning reform? Like, cities that want federal grants have to allow more dense housing?*
- What about homelessness specifically — is that different from general housing affordability?
 - *I think it is — homelessness involves mental health and substance abuse issues too, not just cost*
- Who would be AGAINST this executive order?
 - Homeowners who don't want more apartments in their neighborhood ("not in my backyard" — NIMBY)
 - Some local governments who don't want federal pressure on zoning
 - Real estate developers who benefit from high prices
 - People who think this is government overreach

My main policy ideas:

1. Use federal land for affordable housing construction
2. Reform federal permitting to make it faster/cheaper to build near transit
3. Expand housing vouchers through HUD
4. Create incentives for cities that change their zoning to allow more housing
5. Direct the Treasury to look at tax policies that discourage holding empty properties

I'll probably cut #5 because it feels like it needs Congress, not just an executive order.

Pre-Draft Notes & Outline

Title idea: "Executive Order on Expanding Access to Affordable Housing for American Families" — *Maybe too long? But executive order titles are usually pretty long.*

Sections I want:

- Section 1: Statement of purpose / why this matters
- Section 2: Federal land — direct agencies to identify surplus federal land for housing
- Section 3: Streamline permitting on federal projects
- Section 4: Reform and expand HUD programs / vouchers
- Section 5: Incentivize local zoning reform through grant conditions
- Section 6: Interagency task force to coordinate all of this

- Section 7: General provisions (standard legal language)

Things I want to say in the preamble:

- Housing costs have risen significantly
- Millions of Americans spend more than 30% of income on housing (that's the threshold for "cost burdened")
- This is a national crisis affecting economic mobility, family stability, health outcomes
- The federal government has a responsibility and the tools to act

Concerns I have going into the draft:

- Am I being realistic about what a president can actually do?
- Will this feel like a real executive order or just an essay in disguise?
- I need to be specific — name real agencies, real programs, real timelines