

SRSD Writing Strategy

Self-Regulated Strategy Development: POW + TREE

Student example — completed as if by a college freshman or sophomore. Written with genuine effort but not perfect in every detail.

NAME	PROMPT / POLITICAL QUESTION	DATE
Alex M.	Should the Electoral College be eliminated?	April 10, 2025

P

P — Pick Your Idea

Write your position in one sentence before you do anything else.

My position on this question is:

The Electoral College should be abolished because it is fundamentally undemocratic and allows a candidate to become president without winning the most votes from the American people.

T

T — Topic Sentence

State your claim directly — not a question, not “I think,” not a description of the topic.

The Electoral College should be eliminated and replaced with a national popular vote because it violates the democratic principle of equal representation and has allowed presidential candidates to win the White House while losing the popular vote.

I almost wrote “I believe the Electoral College is unfair” but the instructions said not to say ‘I think’ so I rewrote it to just state the position directly.

R**R — Reasons**

Give at least two reasons that support your claim. Each should be a separate point.

Reason 1:

The winner-take-all system used by 48 states means that millions of votes cast in non-competitive states are effectively ignored in the final outcome.

Reason 2:

The Electoral College gives citizens in small states disproportionately more influence per person than citizens in large states, so not every vote counts equally.

Reason 3 (optional):

Presidential candidates only campaign in a small number of “swing states” and basically ignore voters in states that always go the same way, which means most Americans don't really get a say in who campaigns to them.

Not totally sure if Reason 3 is strong enough — my professor might say it's about campaign strategy, not the Electoral College itself. I'll keep it but I might cut it if I'm running short on space.

E**E — Explanations**

Explain HOW each reason proves your claim. Use: “This demonstrates that...” / “This matters because...”

How does Reason 1 prove your claim?

This matters because a system in which your vote only counts if you live in a competitive state is not really a democracy — it is a system where geography determines whether your voice is heard. In 2020, for example, millions of Republican voters in California and Democratic voters in Texas cast ballots that had zero effect on the Electoral College result. A national popular vote would ensure that every vote, no matter where it is cast, contributes to the final outcome.

How does Reason 2 prove your claim?

This demonstrates that the Electoral College does not treat all Americans as political equals. Wyoming has about 580,000 people and 3 electoral votes, which means roughly one electoral vote per 190,000 residents. California has about 39 million people and 54 electoral votes, which works out to one electoral vote per 720,000 residents. This means a Wyoming voter has almost four times the electoral influence of a California voter, which directly contradicts the democratic ideal of “one person, one vote.”

I looked up those numbers but I'm not 100% sure they're exactly right — the math is close though. I should double-check before turning in a final paper.

E**E — Ending**

Restate your position in new words — then explain why this argument matters beyond the classroom.

The Electoral College was designed for an era when travel was slow, communication was limited, and the founders were not yet sure ordinary citizens could be trusted to choose their own president. Those conditions no longer exist. In a modern democracy founded on the principle that all people are created equal, the president should be chosen by whoever receives the most votes from the most Americans — full stop. Abolishing the Electoral College is not just a policy preference; it is a question of whether the United States will live up to the democratic values it claims to represent.

G**My Specific Goal for This Response**

Write this before you draft — be specific and measurable.

I will include:

A topic sentence that states a clear, arguable claim without saying “I think.” At least two reasons that are specific, not just general opinions. An explanation for each reason that uses the phrase “This demonstrates that...” or “This matters because...” A conclusion that restates my position in new words and connects it to a democratic principle.

W**W — Write Your Draft**

Use your TREE organizer — say more than you think you need to.

The Electoral College should be eliminated and replaced with a national popular vote because it violates the democratic principle of equal representation and has allowed presidential candidates to win the White House while losing the popular vote.

The most obvious problem with the Electoral College is the winner-take-all system used by nearly every state. Under this system, a candidate who wins a state by a single vote receives all of that state's electoral votes, and every vote cast for the losing candidate disappears from the final count. This matters because a system in which your vote only counts if you live in a competitive state is not really a democracy — it is a system where your zip code determines whether your voice is heard. A national popular vote would ensure that every ballot, no matter where it is cast, contributes to the final result.

A second and equally serious problem is that the Electoral College does not treat all Americans as political equals. Wyoming has roughly 580,000 residents and 3 electoral votes, while California has approximately 39 million residents and 54 electoral votes. The math reveals a striking imbalance: a Wyoming voter carries nearly four times the electoral weight of a California voter. This directly contradicts the foundational democratic principle of “one person, one vote” that the United States applies in every other election it holds.

The Electoral College was created in a very different era, when the founders were uncertain whether ordinary citizens could reliably choose a president and when the physical realities of communication and travel made a direct popular vote seem impractical. Neither of those conditions applies today. In a modern democracy that claims to represent all its citizens equally, the presidency should go to the candidate who receives the most votes from the most Americans. Abolishing the Electoral College is not just a matter of updating an old system — it is a question of whether the country will finally honor the democratic values written into its founding documents.

I feel like this draft is pretty solid. The middle two paragraphs are stronger than the conclusion, which felt a little rushed. I want to revise the last sentence — “written into its founding documents” is a bit vague.



Self-Monitoring Checklist

Check before submitting — this is your revision.

- | | |
|--|---|
| ✓ My topic sentence states a clear, arguable claim | ✓ I included at least two distinct reasons |
| ✓ Reason 1 is explained — not just listed | ✓ Reason 2 is explained — not just listed |
| ✓ I paraphrased sources in my own words | ✓ My ending restates the position in new words |
| ✓ My ending connects to a larger principle | ✓ I met the specific goal I set before drafting |
| ■ I revised at least one sentence for clarity | ■ The response answers the question fully |



Self-Reinforcement

Acknowledge what you did well. Then identify one thing to improve next time.

I did well at:

The explanations — I actually used “This matters because...” and “This directly contradicts...” instead of just listing facts. I also remembered not to say “I think” in the topic sentence, which I usually do by accident.

Next time I want to improve:

My conclusion. I feel like it makes sense but it's a little general at the end. I want to try connecting the argument to a specific constitutional clause or Supreme Court case next time so it feels more grounded.