

### Pizza Party U.S.A.

Let's begin by stating the obvious: Leap Day should be a holiday. I mean, come on: It's not even a real day. It's a 100 percent free 24 hours, and employers  
5 should have no claim to it.

That's why we need to turn Leap Day into a holiday this year. But Leap Day shouldn't be just another run-of-the-mill three-day weekend. After all, we already  
10 have a ridiculous number of winter holidays: Thanksgiving, the freebie day after Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, some holiday in February, Arbor Day or something—I can't even keep track of  
15 'em all.

And besides, Leap Day only comes once every four years. Surely that calls for something special. We need something  
20 extraordinary, a quadrennial celebration like none the world has ever seen.

Ladies and Gentlemen, what America needs is Pizza Party U.S.A.

Here's how it works. First we ditch the whole 'Do you want \$3 of your federal tax to go to the Presidential Election Campaign Fund?' thingie on income tax forms. I mean, come on—who checks that box anyhow?  
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Instead, we add a checkbox that says, 'Do you want \$3 of your federal tax to go to PIZZA PARTY U.S.A.?!! Heck, yeah!' Call me crazy, but I'm guessing people will be more enthusiastic about chipping  
30 in for a pizza party than donating it to some old guy who already has enough money to buy Neptune. Besides, we'll add a line that says, 'WARNING: NO THREE BUCKS, NO PIZZA!' Which  
35 should do the trick.  
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Also on the tax form will be some checkboxes where people can pick out their favorite toppings and specify what they absolutely won't eat. We build up  
45 the PPUSA fund for four years and then, every Leap Day, booyah: Pizza Party U.S.A., baby!

Then, at noon on Feb. 29, citizens from around the nation will travel to their local community centers, present photo I.D. (to prove they chipped in), and receive in return:  
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—Three slices of pizza

—A 16-ounce soda. And no diet soda, either—this is a pizza party, people!  
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—\$2 in quarters for the video games

Holy smokes, is this the greatest idea you've ever heard or what?! Just picture it: whole communities, gathering to  
60 celebrate that most cherished of American icons—pizza. People from all walks of life united by a mutual love of pan-style crust. Dude, I'm totally psyched about this plan.

And you should be, too. Pizza Party U.S.A. is just what America needs in this era. If we can come together—even if just for one day every four years—and throw the best pizza party in the history  
65 of civilization, I'm confident that the United States will be restored to its rightful place in the eyes of the world. We will be viewed as a shining beacon of hope on a mozzarella-covered hill, a nation where, despite our differences,  
70 the citizenry can join together at the table of Liberty and drink Dr. Pepper from the plastic cup of Freedom.  
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Adapted from Matthew Baldwin, "Pizza Party U.S.A." © 2004 by The Morning News Corp.

## Question

The author of "Pizza Party U.S.A." argues that we should have a national pizza party every four years to celebrate the extra day that Leap Year brings on February 29.

Your teacher has asked you to come up with your own plan for what we should do on this day.

Write an introductory paragraph for an essay you would compose on this subject. Your introduction should engage the reader, give an overview of the main ideas you plan to include in the essay, and contain a thesis statement that clearly states what you feel people should do every four years on February 29.

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Question 2 (3 points max)

A successful response will consist of an introductory paragraph that proposes an alternate plan for celebrating Leap Day to the one mentioned in "Pizza Party U.S.A." The paragraph should provide an interesting hook, give an overview of the main ideas in the essay, and include a successful thesis statement. Responses may resemble, but are not limited to, the following:

- If you had an extra day, a completely free 24 hours, what would you do with it? Would you waste it in front of the television, spend it doing the same work you do every other day, or would you try to make a difference? Every four years we have this opportunity—Leap Year gives us an extra day on February 29, a day that too many people waste. Instead of losing this opportunity, we should devote it to helping other people. February 29 should be a national community service holiday, where we "leap" in to help others in need.
- Leap Day—it sounds so active—the name alone implies physical activity. You can't leap without getting out of your chair. Every four years we get this day, Leap Day, a day that too many people spend doing the same things they always do. For most, this means sitting in chairs and watching television or searching the Internet. Instead of pursuing these activities, we should seize the opportunity and make Leap Day a national exercise day. If everyone in the country spent the day exercising in fun ways, we could improve our nation's physical fitness.

**Rubric:**

- 0 A response at this level is hostile, blank, or otherwise unscorable.
- 1 A response at this level suggests an alternate way to celebrate Leap Day but does not construct a successful paragraph. The paragraph may be missing a hook, may not provide an overview of the main ideas in the essay, or may lack a clear thesis. This response may resemble an opinion on the issue more than an introductory paragraph for an essay. Significant errors in grammar or style are present in the response.
- 2 A response at this level offers an introductory paragraph that is appropriate in content and form but lacks elements that make it successful. The hook may be inadequate, the overall main ideas in the essay may not be effectively explained, or the thesis may be ineffective. This response is clearly structured as a paragraph, but it may not adequately introduce an essay. Some errors in grammar or style are present in the response.
- 3 A response at this level offers a successful introductory paragraph for an essay. The response includes a strong hook, a clear overview of the main ideas in the essay, and an effective thesis. The response could successfully introduce an essay on this subject. Few, if any, errors in grammar or style are present in the response.