Expository Essay Planning

Step 1: Carefully read the prompt.

Prompt:
Write an essay explaining <u>whether</u> <u>failure</u> can <u>strengthen</u> a person.

Step 2: Underline words which give specific, direct, important instructions/topics to address. What do you have to cover in your response in order to answer the question completely?

Step 3: Pull out and bullet words/directions underlined.
Step 4: Brainstorm answers for the bulleted words.

- Whether – I am given a choice on what side I want to argue. I need to choose one side or the other and not flip flop.

- Failure can strengthen –

Failure can strengthen a person	Failure cannot strengthen a person
People learn from their mistakes	Failure can cripple a person into inaction
Failure can spark determination	Failure can undermine a person's confidence

Which side is easier to argue? Which side can I prove with evidence?

Step 5: Using your list above, brainstorm possible examples you could use to support your reasons. Examples can be from literature, history, current events, personal experience, etc. Do not use hypothetical / made-up examples about people who didn't really exist!

Failure can strengthen a person	Failure cannot strengthen a person
People learn from their mistakes – Odysseus learned from his tragedy on the Ciconian island and only sends scouts to the island of the Lotus Eaters in order to prevent mass slaughter.	Failure can cripple a person into inaction – After falling down when I first learned to ride a bike as a child, fear prevented me for years from ever trying again.
Failure can spark determination – Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team, but that failure motivated him to work harder.	Failure can undermine a person's confidence – This overlaps a lot with my first example. Maybe these two are not distinct enough from each other.

Step 6: Which side is strongest? Use the answers from the bullets to develop the thesis. A thesis is an answer to the question, complete with reasons to support your opinion.

Suggested thesis template: **State your position + a transition word + two main points you'll cover.**

Thesis:
Although the disappointment is tough to deal with in the moment, failure over the long-term can lead to success because individuals can learn and grow from past mistakes; in addition, failure has the potential to spark inextinguishable determination.

Step 7: What can I say about my examples to prove my thesis more clearly? What insight can I add about this reason / example that isn't direct summary or a restatement of my example?

Example	Commentary
People learn from their mistakes – Odysseus learned from his tragedy on the Ciconian island and only sends scouts to the island of the Lotus Eaters in order to prevent further slaughter.	While failure can be painful in the moment, we learn and grow more effectively from our mistakes than our successes. If and when we encounter the same situation again, there will be a better outcome due to the experience we have gained along the way.
Failure can spark determination – Michael Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team, but that failure motivated him to work harder.	Failure can ignite something deep within us that forces us to push beyond our limitations. When a goal is achieved, people often stagnate or even regress back to old ways. When we fail, however, we keep pushing forward, ultimately becoming stronger and more capable human beings.

Step 7: Create a thematic statement based on your prewriting. This idea is for the conclusion of your answer. How can we link these ideas and concrete details to a universal lesson or theme?

Failure is not something to be feared. Failure is an opportunity for growth as well as inspiration for future success. Embracing our disappointments as learning opportunities is how we evolve into the people we are meant to be.

Step 8: Put it all together! Be sure to add transition words and additional details to strengthen your essay.

SAMPLE FAILURE ESSAY

Although the disappointment is tough to deal with in the moment, failure over the long-term can ultimately lead to success because individuals can learn and grow from past mistakes; in addition, failure has the potential to spark an inextinguishable determination inside all of us.

Failure opens up great opportunities for personal growth. Odysseus, for example, in Homer's *Odyssey* learns from his tragedy on the Ciconian island where 72 of his men are killed after he allows them to run into enemy territory without leadership. After this fiasco, he only sends scouts into the island of the Lotus Eaters, the next stop on his journey, in order to prevent further mass slaughter. Odysseus learns from his failure and changes for the better in order to protect his men. While failure can be painful at the time, we learn and grow more effectively from our mistakes than our successes. If and when we encounter the same situation again, there will be a better outcome due to the experience we have gained along the way.

Additionally, failure can inspire an individual to work harder than he or she ever thought possible. Michael Jordan was cut from his high school varsity basketball team, but that failure motivated him to work even harder to achieve his goals. He spent endless hours in the gym that following year honing his skills and building his core body strength. He allowed his anger at being cut to motivate him to strive for greatness. Today he is still known as one of the greatest basketball players who ever lived. Failure can ignite something deep within us that forces us to push beyond our limitations. When a goal is achieved, people sometimes stagnate or even regress back to old ways. When we fail, however, we keep pushing forward, ultimately becoming stronger and more capable human beings.

Failure is not something to be feared. On the contrary, failure is an opportunity for growth as well as inspiration for future success. Embracing our disappointments as learning opportunities is how we evolve into the people we are meant to be.