

## SECTION 6

# SAMPLE TEST ITEMS FOR THE WRITING SUBTEST: WRITING KNOWLEDGE AND PROFICIENCY

This section of the Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment (VCLA) Study Guide provides sample test items and other information to assist you in preparing to take the VCLA Writing Subtest: Writing Knowledge and Proficiency.

This section contains:

- sample multiple-choice items;
- test directions for the multiple-choice items, short-answer items, and writing assignments;
- a sample short-answer item, Summary assignment, and Composition assignment;
- an answer key for the multiple-choice items with explanations for the correct responses;
- the performance characteristics and scoring scale for the writing assignments; and
- a strong response to the sample short-answer item and each writing assignment.

## Multiple-Choice Items

### Test Directions for the Writing Subtest Multiple-Choice Items

**DIRECTIONS FOR THE GRAMMAR AND USAGE  
SECTION OF THE WRITING SUBTEST**

This section of the Writing subtest is based on several passages. In this part of the writing section, the term *error* refers to language use that does not conform to the conventions of Standard English.

Each passage is followed by several multiple-choice items related to the passage. Read each passage carefully and then read the items that refer to that passage. For each item, choose the ONE best answer based on the information contained in the passage you have just read.

For this section, there are 34 multiple-choice items in all, numbered 1 to 34. Record your answer to each item **on Answer Document E** in the space that corresponds to the item number. Completely fill in the space having the same letter as the answer you have chosen.

Do NOT make any stray marks in your answer document. **You may use the margins of this test booklet for scratch paper, but only the answers that you record in your answer document will be scored.**

**USE ANSWER  
DOCUMENT E**

## Sample Multiple-Choice Items

Use the passage below to answer the three questions that follow.

<sup>1</sup>Although the individuals who drafted the U.S. Constitution had much in common, disagreements did arise at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787. <sup>2</sup>Despite their nationalist outlook, many of the delegates could be quite defensive of state interests, and the Constitution would be a product of a series of compromises. <sup>3</sup>One concerned representation, a question on which the views of large states such as New York and Virginia differed considerably from those of small states such as New Jersey. <sup>4</sup>Speaking for the large states, James Madison submitted a proposal that called for a two-house legislature in which representation was based on population. <sup>5</sup>This gave the more populous states a clear advantage: the more people a state had, the more representatives it could send to both houses of Congress.

<sup>6</sup>\_\_\_\_\_ <sup>7</sup>As an alternative, James Patterson of New Jersey proposed the creation of a one-house legislature in which each state had a single vote. <sup>8</sup>For obvious reasons, the large states objected to Patterson's proposal just as strongly as the small states had to Madison's scheme, and they made their objections known to supporters of Patterson's scheme. <sup>9</sup>There was plainly a need for compromise. <sup>10</sup>After considerable debate, Roger Sherman of Connecticut suggested another plan that would establish the governmental structure with which we are familiar today: a two-house legislature in which each state had two senators in the upper house, while representation in the lower house was based on population.



- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Which statement, if added as Sentence 6, would best fit the writer's pattern of development in the second paragraph?</p> <p>A. Many of the delegates felt they could devise a better scheme.</p> <p>B. Not surprisingly, the small states took a dim view of this proposal.</p> <p>C. Not surprisingly, many of the delegates believed there was a simpler solution.</p> <p>D. The small states carefully considered Madison's proposal.</p> | <p>2. Which of the following methods of organization does the author use in the passage?</p> <p>A. order of importance</p> <p>B. cause and effect</p> <p>C. comparison and contrast</p> <p>D. problem and solution</p> |
|  | <p>3. Which sentence should be revised to eliminate unnecessary words or phrases?</p> <p>A. Sentence 3</p> <p>B. Sentence 4</p> <p>C. Sentence 8</p> <p>D. Sentence 10</p>   |

**Use the passage below to answer the six questions that follow. This passage contains errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.**

For nearly three decades following the death of Frida Kahlo in 1954; the work of the renowned painter from Mexico all but vanished from the art world. Then in 1983, publication of Hayden Herrera's biography catapulted her back into the public eye, launching what one observer called a "Frida frenzy." By the nineties, Kahlo had a growing army of devoted fans and admirors. As part of a promotional campaign for a showing of her work, the U.S. Postal Service issued a stamp with her face on it, *Time* magazine placed her on a cover, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art plastered New York city buses with one of her self-portraits. Kahlo operas, documentaries, novels, plays, look-alike competitions, and a critically-acclaimed movie added to her fame, while her paintings began to sell at prices that Picassos' typically command. Indeed, the revival of interest in Frida Kahlo has been a fitting tribute to a gifted artist whose work reflected her passionate ferosity and her absolute refusal to be anyone but herself.

4. If one of the underlined segments of the sentence below contains an error in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation, select the type of error. If there is no error, select D, "sentence correct."

For nearly three decades following the death of Frida Kahlo in 1954; the work of the renowned painter from Mexico all but vanished from the art world.

- A. spelling error
- B. punctuation error
- C. capitalization error
- D. sentence correct

5. If one of the underlined segments of the sentence below contains an error in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation, select the type of error. If there is no error, select D, "sentence correct."

Then in 1983, publication of Hayden Herrera's biography catapulted her back into the public eye, launching what one observer called a "Frida frenzy."

- A. spelling error
- B. punctuation error
- C. capitalization error
- D. sentence correct
6. If one of the underlined segments of the sentence below contains an error in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation, select the type of error. If there is no error, select D, "sentence correct."

By the nineties, Kahlo had a growing army of devoted fans and admirors.

- A. spelling error
- B. punctuation error
- C. capitalization error
- D. sentence correct

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7. If one of the underlined segments of the sentence below contains an error in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation, select the type of error. If there is no error, select D, "sentence correct."

As part of a promotional campaign for a showing of her work, the U.S. Postal Service issued a stamp with her face on it. Time magazine placed her on a cover, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art plastered New York city buses with one of her self-portraits.

- A. spelling error
- B. punctuation error
- C. capitalization error
- D. sentence correct
8. If one of the underlined segments of the sentence below contains an error in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation, select the type of error. If there is no error, select D, "sentence correct."

Kahlo operas, documentaries, novels, plays, look-alike competitions, and a critically-acclaimed movie added to her fame, while her paintings began to sell at prices that Picassos' typically command.

- A. spelling error
- B. punctuation error
- C. capitalization error
- D. sentence correct

9. If one of the underlined segments of the sentence below contains an error in spelling, capitalization, or punctuation, select the type of error. If there is no error, select D, "sentence correct."

Indeed, the revival of interest in Frida Kahlo has been a fitting tribute to a gifted artist whose work reflected her passionate ferosity and her absolute refusal to be anyone but herself.

- A. spelling error
- B. punctuation error
- C. capitalization error
- D. sentence correct

## Answer Key

### Item 1, Objective 7, Correct Response B

In the second paragraph of the passage, the writer describes how opposition among the smaller states to Madison's proposal generated a debate that resulted in a compromise on the issue of representation. Thus, of the choices available, response B best fits the writer's pattern of development in the paragraph.

### Item 2, Objective 8, Correct Response D

In the passage, the writer first introduces the problem of representation that arose at the Constitutional Convention between representatives from the larger and smaller states. The author then describes how Roger Sherman of Connecticut proposed a compromise plan that resolved a major disagreement among large-state and small-state delegates. Thus, of the choices available, response D best describes how the author organized the information presented in the passage.

### Item 3, Objective 9, Correct Response C

In sentence 8 of the second paragraph, the writer notes that the large states found Patterson's proposal just as objectionable as the small states had found Madison's plan. Adding that critics of Patterson's proposal made their objections known is unnecessary as that phrase simply repeats the earlier observation that the large states objected strongly to the proposal. Since none of the other available choices contain unnecessary words or phrases, response C is the best answer.

### Item 4, Objective 11, Correct Response B

A semicolon is used to separate independent clauses that can stand alone as sentences and are not joined by a conjunction. Because the semicolon in this sentence is used to separate a subordinate clause ("For nearly three decades following the death of Frida Kahlo in 1954 . . .") that cannot stand on its own from the independent clause that follows it, the sentence contains a punctuation error. Therefore, response B is the correct answer.

### Item 5, Objective 11, Correct Response D

There are no spelling, punctuation, or capitalization errors in the segments underlined in the sentence. Thus, response D is the correct answer.

### Item 6, Objective 11, Correct Response A

In this sentence, the word admirors is spelled incorrectly; it should be spelled admirers. Therefore, response A is the correct answer.



**Item 7, Objective 11, Correct Response C**

In this sentence the word city is part of a proper name and must be capitalized. Therefore, response C is the correct answer.

**Item 8, Objective 11, Correct Response B**

Because Picasso was a single individual, the apostrophe at the end of word Picassos, to indicate the possessive case, should be placed before the letter "s," not after it. Therefore, response B is the correct answer.

**Item 9, Objective 11, Correct Response A**

In this sentence, the word ferosity is spelled incorrectly; it should be spelled ferocity. Therefore, response A is the correct answer.

## Short-Answer Items

This part of the writing subtest includes several short-answer items. For each item, candidates are asked to revise text containing two grammatical errors. Candidates are asked to rewrite the text in proper grammatical form, correctly using grammar and writing mechanics (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization). Responses to the short-answer items are scored on the basis of the number of corrections made accurately, subtracting for the introduction of new errors. Responses may revise or restructure the syntax of the original text but must maintain the essential elements (e.g., names, places, actions) and relationship between those elements (e.g., cause/effect, before/after). The response must be a single sentence.

### Test Directions for the Writing Subtest Short-Answer Items

#### **DIRECTIONS FOR THE SHORT-ANSWER SECTION OF THE WRITING SUBTEST**

This section of the Writing subtest consists of three items. For each item, you are asked to revise text that contains two errors (e.g., in grammar, usage, construction, spelling, capitalization, or punctuation). For each item, rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained. In addressing the errors, you may restructure the syntax of the original text, but the essential elements (e.g., names, places, actions) and relationship among those elements (e.g., cause/effect, before/after) must be maintained. Your rewrite should be a single sentence and should not introduce any new errors in grammar, usage, construction, spelling, punctuation, or capitalization. Note that proper names of people are correctly spelled within the text.

**Write or print the entire sentence as you have revised it on page 3 of Answer Document E in the space that corresponds to each item number.** Your score will be based solely on the responses that are written in the space provided for each item. Be sure to write or print legibly.

**USE ANSWER  
DOCUMENT E:  
PAGE 3**

### Sample Short-Answer Item and Response

**The following text contains two errors (e.g., in grammar, usage, construction, spelling, capitalization, punctuation). Rewrite the text so that the errors are addressed and the original meaning is maintained. Your rewrite should be a single sentence.**

Neither Alan nor Thomas are ready to begin the project, they believe they need at least another week to complete their preparations.

Errors: subject/verb agreement; comma splice

Sample Rewrite: Neither Alan nor Thomas is ready to begin the project; they believe they need at least another week to complete their preparations.

## Writing Assignment: Summary

This section of the Writing subtest presents a passage for the candidate to summarize in his or her own words. Responses are scored on the extent to which they effectively communicate the main idea and essential points of the passage clearly and concisely, in the candidate's own words. The candidate's response should conform to the conventions of Standard English (e.g., be free of grammatical errors) and should be written legibly. More specifically, the candidate's response is scored according to the following performance characteristics.

Responses to the writing assignments are typically scored holistically by two or more qualified educators during scoring sessions held after each VCLA test administration. Scorers are oriented before each scoring session to ensure that all responses are scored according to standardized procedures. Responses are scored according to standardized procedures using scoring scales that have been reviewed by Virginia educators and approved by the Virginia Department of Education.

Responses to the writing assignments are scored on the extent to which they effectively communicate a whole message to a specified audience for the stated purpose and in the candidate's own words. The response should conform to the conventions of Standard English and should be written legibly. A response to a writing assignment is designated "unscorable" if it is unrelated to the assigned topic, illegible, not in the appropriate language, of insufficient length of original work to score, or merely a repetition of the assignment. If there is no response to a writing assignment, it is designated "blank."

In judging the overall effectiveness of each response, scorers use scoring scales that describe varying levels of performance. A set of **Performance Characteristics** guides scorers in considering responses to the writing assignments. The **Scoring Scale** is related to the performance characteristics for the test and is used by scorers in assigning scores to responses to the writing assignments. Review the following performance characteristics and scoring scale provided with the sample assignments as you prepare to take the VCLA.

### Performance Characteristics

<b>Fidelity</b>	Fidelity is the extent to which the response accurately and clearly represents in your own words the essential meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage.
<b>Conciseness</b>	Conciseness is the extent to which the response is of appropriate length, depth, and specificity to convey the essential meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage.
<b>Organization</b>	Organization is the extent to which your sequencing and paragraphing of ideas convey the essential meaning, logical structure, and point of view of the original passage.
<b>Mechanics, Grammar, and Word Choice</b>	Mechanics, grammar, and word choice are the extent to which words are spelled correctly and your writing follows the conventions of punctuation and capitalization; the effectiveness of the sentence structure and the extent to which the sentences are free of structural errors; and the extent to which your writing shows care and precision in word choice and is free of usage errors.

A sample of the test directions is provided on the next page.

## Test Directions for the Writing Subtest Writing Assignment: Summary

### **DIRECTIONS FOR THE WRITING SUMMARY EXERCISE OF THE WRITING SUBTEST**

This section of the Writing subtest presents a passage for you to summarize in your own words. The passage can be found on the next page. Prepare a summary of approximately 150 to 200 words.

You may use any blank space in this test booklet or on the unlined page following the passage to make notes, write an outline, or otherwise prepare your summary. **However, your score will be based solely on the version of your summary that is written on pages 5 and 6 of Answer Document E. Summaries written in the test booklet will NOT be scored.**

Your summary should effectively communicate the main idea and essential points of the passage. You are expected to identify the relevant information and communicate it clearly and concisely in your own words.

Your summary will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **FIDELITY:** Fidelity is the extent to which the response accurately and clearly represents in your own words the essential meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage.
- **CONCISENESS:** Conciseness is the extent to which the response is of appropriate length, depth, and specificity to convey the essential meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage.
- **ORGANIZATION:** Organization is the extent to which your sequencing and paragraphing of ideas convey the essential meaning, logical structure, and point of view of the original passage.
- **MECHANICS, GRAMMAR, AND WORD CHOICE:** Mechanics, grammar, and word choice are the extent to which words are spelled correctly and your writing follows the conventions of punctuation and capitalization; the effectiveness of the sentence structure and the extent to which the sentences are free of structural errors; and the extent to which your writing shows care and precision in word choice and is free of usage errors.

The final version of your summary should conform to the conventions of Standard English, should be written legibly, and should be in your own words.

**USE ANSWER  
DOCUMENT E:  
PAGES 5 AND 6**

## Scoring Scale for the Writing Assignment: Summary

Score Point	Score Point Description
4	<p><b>A well-formed written response</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using his or her own words, the candidate accurately and clearly represents the essential meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage. The candidate does not distort or misrepresent the original meaning or substitute his/her own ideas or opinions for those expressed in the original text.</li> <li>The candidate's response is concise, but provides enough statements of appropriate depth and specificity to represent the essential meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage.</li> <li>The response exhibits control and organization; the sequencing and paragraphing of ideas clearly represent the essential meaning, logical structure, and point of view of the original passage.</li> <li>The candidate shows mastery of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization). The candidate uses correct and effective paragraph and sentence structure. The candidate's usage and choice of words are careful and precise.</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>A generally well-formed written response</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using his or her own words, the candidate generally represents most of the meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage without distortion or misrepresentation.</li> <li>The candidate's response may be too long or too short, but generally provides enough statements of appropriate depth and specificity to convey most of the meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage.</li> <li>The candidate's organization of ideas may be somewhat unclear, incomplete, or partially ineffective, but sequencing and paragraphing of ideas generally represent the essential meaning, logical structure, and point of view of the original passage.</li> <li>The candidate may make some errors in the use of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization). The candidate uses adequate paragraph and sentence structure, but minor errors may be present. The candidate's usage and choice of words may display minor errors.</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>A partially formed written response</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The candidate represents only some of the meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage. The candidate may substitute his or her own ideas and opinions for those expressed in the original passage. The candidate may distort or misrepresent some of the original meaning. The candidate may rely heavily on the language of the original passage to express the essential ideas and meaning of the original passage.</li> <li>The candidate's response may be too long or too short, or lack appropriate depth or specificity, to convey the essential meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage.</li> <li>The candidate's organization, paragraphing, and sequencing of ideas may compromise or distort the meaning, logical structure, and/or point of view of the original passage.</li> <li>The candidate makes frequent errors in the use of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization). Sentence and paragraph structure are poor, with noticeable and distracting errors. Imprecision in usage and word choice is distracting.</li> </ul>
1	<p><b>An inadequately formed written response</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The candidate fails to represent the meaning, content, and point of view of the original passage in his or her own words. The original meaning is distorted, misrepresented, or merely copied.</li> <li>The candidate's response fails to convey the depth or specificity of meaning conveyed by the original passage.</li> <li>The candidate's organization, paragraphing, and sequencing of ideas fail to convey the meaning, logical structure, and point of view of the original passage.</li> <li>The candidate makes serious and numerous errors in the use of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization). Sentence and paragraph structure are ineffective, and few sentences are free of errors. Imprecision in usage and word choice interferes with meaning.</li> </ul>
U	<p><b>The response is unrelated to the assigned topic, illegible, primarily in a language other than English, not of sufficient length of original work to score, or merely a repetition of the passage.</b></p>
B	<p><b>There is no response to the assignment.</b></p>

## Sample Writing Assignment: Summary

Use the passage below to prepare a summary of 150 to 200 words.

### John Smith and Pocahontas

One of the most familiar episodes in Virginia's early history is the story of Pocahontas rescuing John Smith. As Smith related the tale, he was about to be executed by the Powhatans when the chief's daughter halted the proceeding by laying her head across his. According to Smith, Pocahontas was motivated by compassion for him and saved his life at great risk to her own. For centuries, historians took the adventurer at his word, at times giving the story a romantic cast. More recently, however, scholars have reexamined Smith's words and other evidence related to the event. Although the "rescue" doubtlessly took place, many believe that Smith's life was never actually in danger.

Smith is one of the more colorful personalities in American history. That the Virginia Company's Jamestown settlement survived its precarious early years owed much to his leadership. The globe-trotting son of a Lincolnshire yeoman, Smith was a larger-than-life figure who had fought in various European wars and had no hesitation about assuming command of the floundering settlement when he saw it headed for extinction. In addition to supervising the construction of houses and the planting of crops, he took charge of efforts to obtain needed food supplies from Native Americans. He also explored the surrounding rivers and forests to learn what he could about the region. On one such expedition in late 1607, he was captured by Algonkian deer hunters, who held him for several weeks before presenting him to their leader, Powhatan. An elaborate feast followed, after which Smith was made to lie across two flat stones as men with clubs circled his prostrate body. It was then that Pocahontas intervened on his behalf.

There is no reason to doubt that Smith thought the Powhatans intended to kill him. He knew little about their customs and could only explain his rescue in terms that made sense from an English cultural perspective. That his ordeal was part of a ritual probably never occurred to him. But historians who have begun to reexamine the past from the viewpoint of Native Americans now believe that is exactly what happened. They argue that Smith's near execution represented a symbolic enactment of his death. He was then "reborn" as part of the tribe by being brought back from the grave by one of its members. Smith's status as a leader and representative of the Jamestown colonists would have warranted such treatment. And two days after this ceremony took place, another was held in which Powhatan told Smith that he would always consider him a son. For many native groups, such ritual adoptions served as a prelude to the creation of intertribal alliances. This appears to be what the chief had in mind. Smith's acceptance into the Powhatan family was to be the basis for establishing closer relations between Native Americans and the fledgling settlement at Jamestown.

There is much in Smith's writing that raises questions about his veracity, and it is not surprising that he has been accused of fabricating and romanticizing his experiences with the Powhatans. But the story he related most likely took place. What he did not record, and probably did not understand, was what it meant. It would be another three and a half centuries or so before historians started asking the questions that would supply that meaning.



**Writing Assignment: Summary Sample Response**

John Smith was a globe-trotting adventurer whose leadership of the Jamestown settlement during its precarious early years probably saved the colony from extinction. One of the more memorable episodes of Smith's Virginia years was his rescue by Pocahontas, the daughter of a Powhatan chief, who laid her head across his as he was about to be executed by tribal warriors. According to Smith, she did so because of the great compassion she felt for him, knowing that she was putting her own life at risk.

For many years, scholars accepted Smith's account of the incident. More recently, however, historians reexamining the past from the viewpoint of Native Americans have proposed an alternative explanation. They believe the Powhatans had no intention of killing Smith, and that his ordeal was part of a tribal adoption ritual. According to this interpretation, Smith's near execution represented a symbolic enactment of his death, from which he was afterward "reborn" into the tribe. By making Smith a member of the Powhatan family, these historians contend, Native Americans hoped to establish closer relations with the English settlement at Jamestown.

## Writing Assignment: Composition

In this section of the Writing subtest, the candidate is asked to prepare a composition on an assigned topic. Responses are scored on the extent to which they effectively communicate a whole message to the specified audience for the stated purpose. The candidate is assessed on his or her ability to express, organize, and support opinions and ideas. The candidate is not assessed on the position he or she takes. The final version of the composition should conform to the conventions of Standard English, should be written legibly, and should be the candidate's own work. More specifically, the candidate's response is scored according to the following performance characteristics.

Responses to the writing assignments are scored on the extent to which they effectively communicate a whole message to a specified audience for the stated purpose and in the candidate's own words. The response should conform to the conventions of Standard English and should be written legibly. A response to a writing assignment is designated "unscorable" if it is unrelated to the assigned topic, illegible, not in the appropriate language, of insufficient length of original work to score, or merely a repetition of the assignment. If there is no response to a writing assignment, it is designated "blank."

In judging the overall effectiveness of each response, scorers use scoring scales that describe varying levels of performance. A set of **Performance Characteristics** guides scorers in considering responses to the writing assignments. The **Scoring Scale** is related to the performance characteristics for the test and is used by scorers in assigning scores to responses to the writing assignments. Review the following performance characteristics and scoring scales provided with the sample assignments as you prepare to take the VCLA.

### Performance Characteristics

<b>Appropriateness</b>	Appropriateness is the extent to which your response addresses the topic and uses language and style appropriate to the given audience, purpose, and occasion.
<b>Organization</b>	Organization is the clarity of the writing and the logical sequence of your ideas.
<b>Focus and Unity</b>	Focus and unity are the clarity with which you state and maintain focus on the main idea or point of view.
<b>Development</b>	Development is the extent to which your response provides statements of appropriate depth, specificity, and/or accuracy.
<b>Usage</b>	Usage is the extent to which your writing shows care and precision in word choice and is free of usage errors.
<b>Sentence Structure</b>	Sentence structure is the effectiveness of the sentence structure and the extent to which the sentences are free of structural errors.
<b>Mechanical Conventions</b>	Mechanical conventions are the extent to which words are spelled correctly and your response follows the conventions of punctuation and capitalization.

A sample of the test directions is provided on the next page.

## Test Directions for the Writing Subtest Writing Assignment: Composition

### **DIRECTIONS FOR THE COMPOSITION EXERCISE OF THE WRITING SUBTEST**

This section of the Writing subtest consists of one writing assignment. The assignment can be found on the next page. You are asked to prepare a multiple-paragraph composition of approximately 300 to 600 words on an assigned topic.

You may use any blank space in the test booklet to make notes, write an outline, or otherwise prepare your composition. **However, your score will be based solely on the version of your composition that is written in Written Response Booklet F. Compositions written in the test booklet will NOT be scored.**

Your composition should effectively communicate a whole message to the specified audience for the stated purpose. You will be assessed on your ability to express, organize, and support opinions and ideas. You will not be assessed on the position you express.

Your composition will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **APPROPRIATENESS:** Appropriateness is the extent to which your response addresses the topic and uses language and style appropriate to the given audience, purpose, and occasion.
- **ORGANIZATION:** Organization is the clarity of the writing and the logical sequence of your ideas.
- **FOCUS AND UNITY:** Focus and unity are the clarity with which you state and maintain focus on the main idea or point of view.
- **DEVELOPMENT:** Development is the extent to which your response provides statements of appropriate depth, specificity, and/or accuracy.
- **USAGE:** Usage is the extent to which your writing shows care and precision in word choice and is free of usage errors.
- **SENTENCE STRUCTURE:** Sentence structure is the effectiveness of the sentence structure and the extent to which the sentences are free of structural errors.
- **MECHANICAL CONVENTIONS:** Mechanical conventions are the extent to which words are spelled correctly and your response follows the conventions of punctuation and capitalization.

The final version of your composition should conform to the conventions of Standard English, should be written legibly, and should be your own original work.

**USE WRITTEN  
RESPONSE BOOKLET F**

### Scoring Scale for the Writing Assignment: Composition

Score Point	Score Point Description
4	<p><b>A well-formed written response</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The candidate addresses the assignment fully and uses appropriate language and style.</li> <li>• The candidate exhibits control in the organization of ideas.</li> <li>• The candidate clearly states a main idea and/or point of view, and maintains focus and unity throughout the response.</li> <li>• The candidate develops the response fully by providing ample statements of appropriate depth, specificity, and accuracy.</li> <li>• Usage and choice of words are careful and precise.</li> <li>• Sentence structure is effective and free of errors.</li> <li>• The candidate shows mastery of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization).</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>A generally well-formed written response</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The candidate generally addresses the assignment and for the most part uses appropriate language and/or style.</li> <li>• The organization of ideas is generally clear and logical, but there may be occasional ambiguity or partial ineffectiveness.</li> <li>• The main idea and/or point of view of the response is generally clear, and focus and unity are generally maintained.</li> <li>• The response is generally developed through the use of statements of appropriate depth, specificity, and accuracy.</li> <li>• Minor errors in usage and word choice may be evident.</li> <li>• Sentence structure is generally correct, although minor errors may be present.</li> <li>• There may be some errors in the use of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization).</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>A partially formed written response</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The candidate partially addresses the assignment and may use inappropriate language and/or style.</li> <li>• The candidate may make an effort to organize and sequence ideas, but organization is largely unclear.</li> <li>• The main idea and/or point of view is inconsistent and/or the focus and unity of the discussion are not sustained.</li> <li>• The response includes very few statements that contribute effectively to the development of the response.</li> <li>• Imprecision in usage and word choice is distracting.</li> <li>• Sentence structure is poor, with noticeable and distracting errors.</li> <li>• The candidate makes frequent errors in the use of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization).</li> </ul>
1	<p><b>An inadequately formed written response</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The candidate attempts to address the assignment, but language and style are generally inappropriate for the given audience, purpose, and/or occasion.</li> <li>• Any organization that is present fails to present an effective sequence of ideas.</li> <li>• The main idea and/or point of view of the response is not identified.</li> <li>• The candidate fails to include statements that contribute effectively to the development of the response.</li> <li>• Imprecision in usage and word choice interferes with meaning.</li> <li>• Sentence structure is ineffective, and few sentences are free of errors.</li> <li>• The candidate makes serious and numerous errors in the use of mechanical conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization).</li> </ul>
U	<p><b>The response is unrelated to the assigned topic, illegible, primarily in a language other than English, not of sufficient length of original work to score, or merely a repetition of the assignment.</b></p>
B	<p><b>There is no response to the assignment.</b></p>

## Sample Writing Assignment: Composition

### COMPOSITION EXERCISE

Read the passages below about assigning homework to students over the summer vacation; then follow the instructions for writing your composition.

#### Summer Homework: YES

Proponents argue that summer homework assignments enable teachers to build upon the learning that has taken place during the school year and to prepare students for the following year's curriculum. Without summer homework, the long vacation means that students forget much of what they have learned and teachers have to spend a considerable amount of time in the fall going back over what has already been taught. Moreover, summer homework assignments are a necessity if the United States is to keep pace educationally with other industrialized countries, where both the school day and the school year are usually longer than they are in the United States.

#### Summer Homework: NO

Opponents of summer homework argue that students need time to pursue their own interests outside the structured environment of the classroom. They believe that the most effective learning occurs when students are independently investigating topics that they find personally interesting. In addition, say opponents, summer homework interferes with summer employment, which not only is an important source of income for young people, but also provides life experiences that are just as meaningful to young people's development as what they learn at school.

Your purpose is to write a persuasive composition, to be read by a classroom instructor, in which you take a position on whether or not students should be assigned homework over the summer vacation. Be sure to defend your position with logical arguments and appropriate examples.

### Writing Assignment: Composition Sample Response

Summer vacation has traditionally been a time for students to unwind from the pressure of the school year. Over the summer months, young people are free to pursue their own hobbies and interests, earn money and learn new skills, travel, meet new people, socialize with family and friends, or simply relax and enjoy themselves. Given the stress that students face during the year to get assignments in on time while juggling extracurricular activities, family demands, and frequently, part-time employment, the summer break is not only welcome relief but important for the health and well-being of young people. On the other hand, the traditional summer vacation often results in students forgetting what they have learned and losing ground in their studies. The typical school year begins with a review of previous lessons, so that time for new learning is lost and progress is delayed.

Those who oppose homework over the summer argue that it would prevent students from working. Summer employment allows students to get a taste of the "real world"—to learn self-discipline and responsibility by "punching a clock." For many students, a summer job is their first experience earning their own money; they may be forced to follow a budget and make responsible spending choices in order to build up a saving's account for college.

It is also argued that students need a break in order to pursue their own interests in depth. Many young people have talents and interests that are ignored or only touched on in the classroom. A full summer spent immersed in music at summer music camp, exploring nature in a National Park, or travelling to a foreign country may open the door to a rewarding and successful career a student may not have otherwise considered.

While these objections are legitimate ones, there is no reason that homework assignments should prevent participation in other activities. In fact, the assignments could be designed to supplement and enhance summer activities. My most educationally stimulating and fun summer was the one I spent as a camp counselor while writing about it for a

*(continued)*

**Writing Assignment: Composition Sample Response (*continued*)**

class research paper. I spent many evening hours writing in my journal to record my experiences and reflections. Not only did I learn a great deal about a world beyond the classroom, but I awakened in myself a desire to continue this rewarding experience by becoming a teacher. When classes resumed in the fall, I was more prepared, focused, and motivated to study hard and earn good grades to fulfill my dream.

Furthermore, if our children are to be prepared for an increasingly technological world, they must be better educated. Computer and problem solving skills will be crucial for future employment. Since these skills must be frequently practiced if they are to be mastered and retained, assigning homework over the summer will greatly benefit our students. Other countries require their students to spend much more time in the classroom than the U.S. does and we put not only individuals but our nation as a whole at a disadvantage by having no educational expectations for two to three months a year.

In conclusion, summer homework should not be seen as a hardship, preventing students from exploring other interests, but as a complement to other summer activities. Furthermore, summer learning can better prepare students for a future in which advanced training and expertise will be necessary for economic success.