

Virginia

Standards of Learning Assessments Test Blueprint

Grade 8 Writing

2010 English Standards of Learning

This revised test blueprint will be effective with the administration of the 2012-2013 English Standards of Learning (SOL) tests.

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Grade 8 Writing Standards of Learning

Test Blueprint

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General Test Information

Test Blueprint

Much like the blueprint for a building, a test blueprint serves as a guide for test construction. The blueprint indicates the content areas that will be addressed by the test and the number of items that will be included by content area and for the test as a whole. There is a blueprint for each test (e.g., grade 3 reading, grade 5 mathematics, grade 8 science, Virginia and United States History).

Reporting Categories

The Grade 8 writing test covers the Standards of Learning (SOL) in the writing and research strands of the Grade 6 through Grade 8 English SOL. In the test blueprint, the SOL are grouped into categories that address related content and skills. These categories are labeled as reporting categories. For example, a reporting category for the Grade 8 Writing Standards of Learning test is *Research, plan, compose, and revise for a variety of purposes*. Each of the SOL in this reporting category addresses skills for researching, planning, composing and revising written material. When the results of the SOL tests are reported, the scores will be presented for each reporting category and as a total test score.

Assignment of Standards of Learning to Reporting Categories

In the Grade 8 Writing SOL test, each Standard of Learning is assigned to only one reporting category. For example, SOL 8.8b is assigned to *Edit for correct use of language, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling*.

Standards of Learning Excluded from Testing

In some content areas, there are SOL that do not lend themselves to assessment within the current format of the SOL tests. The SOL not tested are listed as *Excluded from Testing* at the end of the blueprint for each test.

Coverage of Standards of Learning

Due to the large number of SOL in each grade level content area, *every* Standard of Learning will not be assessed on every version (form) of an SOL test. By necessity, to keep the length of a test reasonable, each version will sample from the SOL within a reporting category. All SOL in the blueprint will be tested within a three-year period, and *all of these* SOL are eligible for inclusion on each version of an SOL test.

Use of the Curriculum Framework

The English Standards of Learning, amplified by the Curriculum Framework, define the essential understandings, knowledge, and skills that are measured by the Standards of Learning tests. The Curriculum Framework asks essential questions, identifies essential understandings, defines essential content knowledge, and describes essential skills students need to master.

Description of the Test

The grade 8 writing test has two components. The first component is composed of items that require students to correct errors embedded in selections that are intended to model rough drafts of student writing. Some of the items are multiple-choice with students selecting the correct revision to the text from the answer choices provided. For example, students might be asked to select the sentence that does not belong in the rough draft from a list of options. Other items are “technology enhanced” and allow the student to indicate the revision to the text in some other way. For example, a technology-enhanced item might allow a student to correct punctuation errors by dragging commas into a sentence.

In the second component students are asked to write a short paper in response to an expository or persuasive prompt. Prompts present a context for writing in the form of a question, an issue, or a hypothetical situation. Each student’s response to the writing prompt receives a score in each of two domains: 1) composing/written expression and 2) usage/mechanics. Each domain is scored independently, using the following scale:

4 = The writer demonstrates consistent, though not necessarily perfect, control* of almost all the domain’s features.

3 = The writer demonstrates reasonable, but not consistent, control* of most of the domain’s features indicating some weakness in the domain.

2 = The writer demonstrates enough inconsistent control* of several of the domain’s features indicating some weakness in the domain.

1 = The writer demonstrates little or no control* of most of the domain’s features.

* Control is the ability to use a given feature of written language effectively at the appropriate grade level. A paper receives a higher score to the extent that it demonstrates increasing control of the features in each domain. The rubric included in the blueprint for the grade 8 writing assessment explains score points for each domain.

All papers are read by at least two readers, with the student’s score for each domain being the total of the score assigned by both readers. For example, in the composing/written expression domain, if Reader A scores the student’s paper a 3 and Reader B scores the student’s paper a 2, the student’s score in the composing/written expression domain is a 5. Since a reader may assign a score of 1 to 4, the range of possible scores in any domain is 2 to 8 when the two readers’ scores are combined. The composing/written expression score is counted two times, and the usage/mechanics score is counted once in calculating the total score. Therefore, in the total score of the short paper, the composing/written expression score counts 2/3 and the usage/mechanics score counts 1/3.

Score points from the composing/written expression domain are assigned to the **Research, Plan, Compose, and Revise** reporting category. Score points from the usage/mechanics domain are assigned to the **Editing** reporting category.

All rough drafts, items, and prompts are appropriate for eighth-grade students in terms of difficulty, interest, and reading level, as determined by the Content Review Committee.

Grade 8 Writing Test Blueprint Summary Table

Reporting Category	Grade 6 Writing Standards of Learning	Grade 7 Writing Standards of Learning	Grade 8 Writing Standards of Learning	Multiple-Choice/Technology-Enhanced Item (MC/TEI) Component: Number of Items	Short Paper Component: Number of Possible Score Points
Research, plan, compose, and revise for a variety of purposes	6.7 a-i 6.9 a-c, e	7.7 a-j 7.9 a-c, e	8.7 a-g 8.9 a-d, g	10	Composing/ Written Expression 16
Edit for correct use of language, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling	6.8 b-h	7.8 b-e, g, h	8.8 b-g	14	Usage/ Mechanics 8
SOL not tested on MC/TEI Component	6.7j 6.8 a 6.9 d	7.7k 7.8 a, f 7.9 d	8.7h 8.8 a 8.9 e-f		
SOL not scored on Short Paper Component*	6.8a 6.9 a-e	7.8 a, f 7.9 a-e	8.8 a 8.9 a-g		
Number of Operational Items				24	24
Number of Field Test Items**				14	
Total Number of Items				38	24

* All SOL not listed will be scored on the short paper component.

**Field test items are being tried out with students for potential use on subsequent tests and will not be used to compute students' scores on the test.

Grade 8 Writing Expanded Test Blueprint

Reporting Category: Research, plan, compose, and revise for a variety of purposes

Number of Items: 10

Standards of Learning:

Grade Six Standards of Learning:

- 6.7 The student will write narration, description, exposition, and persuasion.
- a) Identify audience and purpose.
 - b) Use a variety of prewriting strategies including graphic organizers to generate and organize ideas.
 - c) Organize writing structure to fit mode or topic.
 - d) Establish a central idea and organization.
 - e) Compose a topic sentence or thesis statement if appropriate.
 - f) Write multiparagraph compositions with elaboration and unity.
 - g) Select vocabulary and information to enhance the central idea, tone, and voice.
 - h) Expand and embed ideas by using modifiers, standard coordination, and subordination in complete sentences.
 - i) Revise sentences for clarity of content including specific vocabulary and information.
- 6.9 The student will find, evaluate, and select appropriate resources for a research product.
- a) Collect information from multiple sources including online, print, and media.
 - b) Evaluate the validity and authenticity of texts.
 - c) Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate, and communicate information.
 - e) Define the meaning and consequences of plagiarism and follow ethical and legal guidelines for gathering and using information.

Grade Seven Standards of Learning:

- 7.7 The student will write in a variety of forms with an emphasis on exposition, narration, and persuasion.
- a) Identify intended audience.
 - b) Use a variety of prewriting strategies including graphic organizers to generate and organize ideas.
 - c) Organize writing structure to fit mode or topic.
 - d) Establish a central idea and organization.
 - e) Compose a topic sentence or thesis statement.
 - f) Write multiparagraph compositions with unity elaborating the central idea.
 - g) Select vocabulary and information to enhance the central idea, tone, and voice.

- h) Expand and embed ideas by using modifiers, standard coordination, and subordination in complete sentences.
 - i) Use clauses and phrases for sentence variety.
 - j) Revise sentences for clarity of content including specific vocabulary and information.
- 7.9 The student will apply knowledge of appropriate reference materials to produce a research product.
- a) Collect and organize information from multiple sources including online, print and media.
 - b) Evaluate the validity and authenticity of sources.
 - c) Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate, and communicate information.
 - e) Define the meaning and consequences of plagiarism and follow ethical and legal guidelines for gathering and using information.

Grade Eight Standards of Learning:

- 8.7 The student will write in a variety of forms, including narration, exposition, persuasion, and informational.
- a) Identify intended audience.
 - b) Use prewriting strategies to generate and organize ideas.
 - c) Distinguish between a thesis statement and a topic sentence.
 - d) Organize details to elaborate the central idea and provide unity.
 - e) Select specific vocabulary and information for audience and purpose.
 - f) Use interview quotations as evidence.
 - g) Revise writing for clarity of content, word choice, sentence variety, and transitions among paragraphs.
- 8.9 The student will apply knowledge of appropriate reference materials to produce a research product.
- a) Collect and synthesize information from multiple sources including online, print and media.
 - b) Evaluate the validity and authenticity of texts.
 - c) Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate, and communicate information.
 - d) Make sense of information gathered from diverse sources by identifying misconceptions, main and supporting ideas, conflicting information, point of view or bias.
 - g) Define the meaning and consequences of plagiarism and follow ethical and legal guidelines for gathering and using information.

Reporting Category: Edit for correct use of language, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling**Number of Items: 14****Standards of Learning:****Grade Six Standards of Learning:**

- 6.8 The student will edit writing for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and paragraphing.
- b) Use subject-verb agreement with intervening phrases and clauses.
 - c) Use pronoun-antecedent agreement to include indefinite pronouns.
 - d) Maintain consistent verb tense across paragraphs.
 - e) Eliminate double negatives.
 - f) Use quotation marks with dialogue.
 - g) Choose adverbs to describe verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.
 - h) Use correct spelling for frequently used words.

Grade Seven Standards of Learning:

- 7.8 The student will edit writing for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and paragraphing.
- b) Choose appropriate adjectives and adverbs to enhance writing.
 - c) Use pronoun-antecedent agreement to include indefinite pronouns.
 - d) Use subject-verb agreement with intervening phrases and clauses.
 - e) Edit for verb tense consistency and point of view.
 - g) Use quotation marks with dialogue.
 - h) Use correct spelling for commonly used words.

Grade Eight Standards of Learning:

- 8.8 The student will edit writing for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and paragraphing.
- b) Use and punctuate correctly varied sentence structures to include conjunctions and transition words.
 - c) Choose the correct case and number for pronouns in prepositional phrases with compound objects.
 - d) Maintain consistent verb tense across paragraphs.
 - e) Use comparative and superlative degrees in adverbs and adjectives.
 - f) Use quotation marks with dialogue and direct quotations.
 - g) Use correct spelling for frequently used words.

Standards of Learning not tested on the MC/TEI Component:**Grade Six Standards of Learning:**

- 6.7 The student will write narration, description, exposition, and persuasion.
j) Use computer technology to plan, draft, revise, edit, and publish writing.
- 6.8 The student will edit writing for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and paragraphing.
a) Use a variety of graphic organizers, including sentence diagrams, to analyze and improve sentence formation and paragraph structure.
- 6.9 The student will find, evaluate, and select appropriate resources for a research product.
d) Cite primary and secondary sources.

Grade Seven Standards of Learning:

- 7.7 The student will write in a variety of forms with an emphasis on exposition, narration, and persuasion.
k) Use computer technology to plan, draft, revise, edit, and publish writing.
- 7.8 The student will edit writing for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and paragraphing.
a) Use a variety of graphic organizers, including sentence diagrams, to analyze and improve sentence formation and paragraph structure.
f) Demonstrate understanding of sentence formation by identifying the eight parts of speech and their functions in sentences.
- 7.9 The student will apply knowledge of appropriate reference materials to produce a research product.
d) Cite primary and secondary sources.

Grade Eight Standards of Learning:

- 8.7 The student will write in a variety of forms, including narration, exposition, persuasion, and informational.
h) Use computer technology to plan, draft, revise, edit, and publish writing.
- 8.8 The student will edit writing for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and paragraphing.
a) Use a variety of graphic organizers, including sentence diagrams, to analyze and improve sentence formation and paragraph structure.

- 8.9 The student will apply knowledge of appropriate reference materials to produce a research product.
- e) Cite primary and secondary sources using Modern Language Association (MLA) or American Psychological Association (APA) style.
 - f) Publish findings and respond to feedback.

Standards of Learning not scored on the Short Paper Component:

Grade Six Standards of Learning:

- 6.8 The student will edit writing for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and paragraphing.
- a) Use a variety of graphic organizers, including sentence diagrams, to analyze and improve sentence formation and paragraph structure.
- 6.9 The student will find, evaluate, and select appropriate resources for a research product.
- a) Collect information from multiple sources including online, print, and media.
 - b) Evaluate the validity and authenticity of texts.
 - c) Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate, and communicate information.
 - d) Cite primary and secondary sources.
 - e) Define the meaning and consequences of plagiarism and follow ethical and legal guidelines for gathering and using information.

Grade Seven Standards of Learning:

- 7.8 The student will edit writing for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and paragraphing.
- a) Use a variety of graphic organizers, including sentence diagrams, to analyze and improve sentence formation and paragraph structure.
 - f) Demonstrate understanding of sentence formation by identifying the eight parts of speech and their functions in sentences.
- 7.9 The student will apply knowledge of appropriate reference materials to produce a research product.
- a) Collect and organize information from multiple sources including online, print and media.
 - b) Evaluate the validity and authenticity of sources.
 - c) Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate, and communicate information.
 - d) Cite primary and secondary sources.
 - e) Define the meaning and consequences of plagiarism and follow ethical and legal guidelines for gathering and using information.

Grade Eight Standards of Learning:

- 8.8 The student will edit writing for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and paragraphing.
- a) Use a variety of graphic organizers, including sentence diagrams, to analyze and improve sentence formation and paragraph structure.
- 8.9 The student will apply knowledge of appropriate reference materials to produce a research product.
- a) Collect and synthesize information from multiple sources including online, print and media.
 - b) Evaluate the validity and authenticity of texts.
 - c) Use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate, and communicate information.
 - d) Make sense of information gathered from diverse sources by identifying misconceptions, main and supporting ideas, conflicting information, point of view or bias.
 - e) Cite primary and secondary sources using Modern Language Association (MLA) or American Psychological Association (APA) style.
 - f) Publish findings and respond to feedback.
 - g) Define the meaning and consequences of plagiarism and follow ethical and legal guidelines for gathering and using information.

Grade 8 Writing Test Composing/Written Expression Rubric

Score Point 4 **The writer demonstrates consistent, though not necessarily perfect, control of the Composing/Written Expression domain’s features.**

The writing at this score point level:

- Demonstrates consistent focus on a central idea, with clear awareness of the intended audience.
- Fully and consistently elaborates the central idea by using examples, anecdotes, illustrations and/or details.
- Contains a clear and logical organizational plan which consistently clarifies the relationship of one idea or event to another.
- Exhibits consistent unity by having few if any digressions, using effective transitions that connect ideas within and across paragraphs, maintaining a consistent point of view, and having an effective lead and closure.
- Includes sentences of various lengths and structures and appropriately subordinates ideas and/or embeds modifiers to create a rhythmic flow throughout the piece.
- Uses highly specific word choice, descriptive and/or figurative language, and selected information purposefully to craft a message, create tone, and enhance the writer’s voice.

Score Point 3 **The writer demonstrates reasonable, but not consistent, control of the Composing/Written Expression domain’s features.** The writer may control some features of the domain more than others.

The writing at this score point level:

- Demonstrates reasonable focus on a central idea, with awareness of the intended audience.
- Provides reasonable elaboration on the central idea, though some thinness or unevenness in elaboration may occur.
- Contains evidence of an organizational plan which clarifies the relationship of one idea or event to another, although some lapses in organization may occur.
- Exhibits reasonable unity by having few minor digressions or shifts in point of view, purposeful use of some transitions, and the presence of a lead and closure.
- Includes sentences of various lengths and structures, though at times, a lack of structural complexity may diminish the rhythm of the piece.
- Uses specific word choice, descriptive language, and selective information to craft the writer’s message. A few examples of vivid or purposeful language may be present alongside some general statements or vague words that somewhat flatten the tone and voice.

Score Point 2 The writer demonstrates inconsistent control of several of the Composing/Written Expression domain's features, indicating significant weakness.

The writing at this score point level:

- Demonstrates inconsistent focus on a central idea, with limited awareness of the intended audience.
- Provides inconsistent elaboration on the central idea by listing general, underdeveloped statements.
- Organizes ideas inconsistently, with limited evidence of the relationship between one idea or event and another.
- Exhibits little unity due to the inconsistent use of transitions to connect ideas, major digressions, competing central ideas, occasional shifts in point of view, and weak lead and/or closure.
- Contains little variety in sentence lengths and structures, resulting in a lack of rhythmic flow.
- Contains mostly imprecise, bland language, though some specificity of word choice might occur and allow the writer's voice or tone to emerge on occasion.

Score Point 1 The writer demonstrates little or no control of most of the Composing/Written Expression domain's features.

The writing at this score point level:

- Has little or no focus on a central idea and little or no awareness of the intended audience.
- Has little or no purposeful elaboration.
- Has little or no organizational plan, failing to develop relationships between ideas or events and typically jumping from one thought to the next.
- Demonstrates little or no unity due to major digressions, shifts in point of view, the lack of transitions connecting ideas or events, and a limited or no lead and/or closure.
- Lacks sentence variety rendering the presentation monotonous.
- Uses general, vague, and/or repetitious vocabulary with little or no selected information, failing to create tone or to develop the writer's voice.

Grade 8 Writing Test Usage/Mechanics Rubric

Score Point 4 **The writer demonstrates consistent, though not necessarily perfect, control of the Usage and Mechanics domain’s features.**

The writing at this score point level:

- Exhibits consistent control of sentence formation, avoiding fragments, run-ons, comma splices, and beginning sentences with coordinating conjunctions.
- Exhibits consistent control of usage, including subject/verb agreement, pronoun agreement, pronoun case, adjectives and adverbs, verb tenses, plurals and possessives, homophones, and avoidance of double negatives.
- Exhibits consistent control of mechanics, including punctuation, capitalization, formatting, and spelling.

Score Point 3 **The writer demonstrates reasonable, though not necessarily consistent, control of the Usage and Mechanics domain’s features.** The writer exhibits control which outweighs occasional errors present in the paper.

The writing at this score point level:

- Exhibits reasonable control of sentence formation, avoiding fragments, run-ons, comma splices, and beginning sentences with coordinating conjunctions.
- Exhibits reasonable control of usage, including subject/verb agreement, pronoun agreement, pronoun case, adjectives and adverbs, verb tenses, plurals and possessives, homophones, and avoidance of double negatives.
- Exhibits reasonable control of mechanics, including punctuation, capitalization, formatting, and spelling.

Score Point 2 **The writer demonstrates inconsistent control of several of the Usage and Mechanics domain’s features.** Although there are frequent errors, there is also evidence of the author’s knowledge of the domain. The density and variety of errors outweigh the control present in the paper.

The writing at this score point level:

- Exhibits inconsistent control of sentence formation, including occasional fragments, run-ons, comma splices, and a pattern of beginning sentences with coordinating conjunctions.
- Exhibits inconsistent control of usage, including subject/verb agreement, pronoun agreement, pronoun case, adjectives and adverbs, verb tenses, plurals and possessives, homophones, and double negatives.
- Exhibits inconsistent control of mechanics, including punctuation, capitalization, formatting, and spelling.

Score Point 1 **The writer demonstrates little or no control of most of the Usage and Mechanics domain’s features.** Frequent and severe errors in usage and mechanics distract the reader and may make the writing hard to understand. Even when meaning is not significantly affected, the density and variety of errors overwhelm the performance and keep it from meeting minimum standards of competence.

The writing at this score point level:

- Exhibits little or no control of sentence formation, including fragments, run-ons, comma splices, and many sentences that begin with coordinating conjunctions.
- Exhibits little or no control of usage, including subject/verb agreement, pronoun agreement, pronoun case, adjectives and adverbs, verb tenses, plurals and possessives, homophones, and double negatives.
- Exhibits little or no control of mechanics, including punctuation, capitalization, formatting, and spelling.