

# Oklahoma School Testing Program

## Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCT)

### Grade 8 Writing

**PARENT, STUDENT, AND TEACHER GUIDE**



2012–2013

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Oklahoma State Department of Education  
2704482-W

**Testing Dates  
2013 School Year**

**Writing Test**  
April 3–4, 2013

(Make-up tests may be given through April 24)



**CTB**

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**STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION  
STATE OF OKLAHOMA**

Dear Parent/Guardian and Student:

Soon students will be participating in the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests. These tests are designed to measure knowledge in Mathematics, Reading, Science, and Writing.

Parents/guardians will receive a report on their child's performance on the tests. This report will indicate their child's areas of strength as well as areas needing improvement.

This guide provides a list of test-taking tips, objectives covered in the test, a practice writing test, and an example of a well-written paper. Parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss these materials with their child to help prepare them for the tests. During the test week, it is very important for each child to get plenty of sleep, eat a good breakfast, and arrive at school on time.

If you have any questions about the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests, please contact your local school or the State Department of Education.

Sincerely,  
Your State Superintendent of Public Instruction



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## The Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests

The Governor, state legislators, and other Oklahoma elected officials have committed themselves to ensuring that all Oklahoma students receive the opportunity to learn the skills required to succeed in school and in the workplace. To achieve this goal, schools must prepare every Oklahoma student for colleges, universities, and jobs that require new and different skills.

Under the direction of the Legislature, Oklahoma teachers, parents, and community leaders met to agree upon the skills that students are expected to master by the end of each grade. The results of their efforts, *Oklahoma C<sup>3</sup> Standards*, provide the basis for Oklahoma's core curriculum.

In addition, the Legislature established the criterion-referenced test component of the Oklahoma School Testing Program to measure students' progress in mastering the *Oklahoma C<sup>3</sup> standards* and objectives. Tests have been developed by national test publishers that specifically measure the *Oklahoma C<sup>3</sup> standards* and objectives at Grade 8. Teachers from throughout Oklahoma have been involved in the review, revision, and approval of the questions that are included in the tests.

The Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCT), a criterion-referenced testing program, compare a student's performance with performance standards established by the State Board of Education. These standards, referred to as the Oklahoma Performance Index, or OPI, identify specific levels of performance required on each test. These standards are based upon reviews from groups of Oklahoma educators and citizens who evaluated the tests and made recommendations.

In the content areas of Mathematics, Reading, Science, and Writing, a student's test performance is reported according to one of four performance levels: Advanced, Proficient/Satisfactory, Limited Knowledge, and Unsatisfactory.

This year, students in Grade 8 will respond to two writing prompts (one operational and one field test) and take multiple-choice tests in Mathematics, Reading, and Science.

This guide provides an opportunity for parents, students, and teachers to become familiar with how writing will be assessed. It presents general test-taking tips, lists the *Oklahoma C<sup>3</sup> Writing Standards* and objectives that are eligible for assessment in a statewide testing program, gives scoring criteria, the five analytic score rubric, and composite score characteristics. A practice test is also provided, along with an example of a good paper. Finally, information regarding preparing for writing to the Common Core State Standards is presented.

## Test-Taking Tips

The following tips provide effective strategies for taking the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests. Test-taking skills cannot replace studying based on the *Oklahoma C<sup>3</sup> Writing Standards* and objectives, which serve as the foundation for the tests.

### General Test-Taking Tips:

- DO...** read this guide carefully and complete the practice test.
- DO...** make sure you understand all test directions. If you are uncertain about any of the directions, raise your hand to ask questions before testing has started.
- DON'T...** wait until the last minute to prepare for the Writing Test.
- DON'T...** worry about the tests. Students who are calm and sure of themselves do better on tests.

### Tips for the Writing Tests:

- DO...** read the two passages and the writing topic carefully. Be sure to use information from both passages in your paper.
- DO...** plan what you want to say before writing. Use the planning pages in the test book to help you plan. These pages will not be scored.
- DO...** leave time to revise and edit your paper toward the end of the test.
- DO...** use the “Writer’s Checklist” to remind yourself of what to look for as you revise and edit your paper.



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## The Writing Test

In April, students in Grade 8 will take the state Writing Test. Students will be given two writing prompts to complete. For the scored operational prompt, students are given two passages to read along with a specific writing topic. Students will write their responses in the test books. For the writing prompt, they are given two practice planning pages, which are not scored, five lined pages on which to write, and a “Writer’s Checklist” that provides reminders for revising and editing.

The following sections of this guide:

- list the *Oklahoma C<sup>3</sup> Writing Standards* that are covered in the Grade 8 Writing Test;
- describe the criteria that are used to score the students’ papers;
- reproduce student directions and a sample writing prompt;
- present an example of a well-written response; and
- provide information about preparing for writing to the Common Core State Standards.

## *Oklahoma C<sup>3</sup> Writing Standards*

The *Oklahoma C<sup>3</sup> Writing Standards* measured by the Grade 8 Writing Test are based on the 2010 *PASS* revision. They are listed below.

***Writing/Grammar/Usage and Mechanics: The student will express ideas effectively in written modes for a variety of purposes and audiences.***

Discuss and keep a list of writing ideas. Write clear, coherent, and focused papers progressing through the stages of the writing process. Work independently and in self-directed writing teams to edit and revise.

**Standard 1: Writing Process—The student will use the writing process to write coherently.**

1. Use a writing process to develop and refine composition skills. Students are expected to use a variety of prewriting strategies such as brainstorming, outlining, free writing, discussing, clustering, webbing, using graphic organizers, notes, logs, and reading to generate ideas and gather information.
2. Develop a main idea/thesis through use of details, examples, reasons, anecdotes, and use patterns as appropriate to purpose such as spatial, chronological, and climatic.
3. Blend paragraphs, with effective transitions, into larger texts.
4. Use precise word choices, including figurative language, that convey specific meaning and tone.
5. Use a variety of sentence structures, types, and lengths to contribute to fluency and interest.

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6. Revise multiple drafts individually and with peers.
  7. Edit for errors in Standard English usage, sentence structure, mechanics, and spelling.

**Standard 2: Modes and Forms of Writing—The student will write for a variety of purposes and audiences using narrative, descriptive, expository, argumentative, persuasive, and reflective modes.**

At Grade 8, write creative, narrative, expository, argumentative, persuasive, reflective, and descriptive papers of at least 500 to 750 words and introduce technical documents. Demonstrate a command of Standard English and the research, organization, and drafting strategies outlined in the writing process. Writing demonstrates an awareness of the audience (intended reader) and purpose for writing.

1. Compose narrative text to include short stories, fictional, biographical, or autobiographical narratives that:
  - a. create and develop a plot or sequence of events using well-chosen details that reveal the significance of each event.
  - b. create and develop a character(s), including comparisons, that show the character's (s') beliefs and qualities.
  - c. create and develop an appropriate point of view (e.g., third person limited or first person point of view).
  - d. create and maintain a setting that enhances the narration.
  - e. adjust tone and style to make writing more interesting and engaging to the audience.
  - f. use a range of narrative devices including dialogue, internal monologue, suspense, specific action, physical and background descriptions, and foreshadowing.
  - g. reveal the writer's attitude about the subject.
  - h. use sensory details and precise word choice.

Example: Write an autobiographical account of one of your most memorable first days of school. Describe the day and its importance clearly enough so the reader can see and feel the day from your perspective.

2. Compose expository texts including research reports, technical documents, and other informational texts that:
  - a. define a research thesis (a statement of position on the topic).
  - b. integrate important ideas, concepts, or direct quotations from significant information sources.
  - c. identifies a variety of primary and secondary sources and distinguish the nature and value of each.
  - d. organizes and displays information on charts, tables, maps, and graphs.
  - e. document sources as appropriate to style.
  - f. create technical documents using appropriate style and format that identify the necessary sequence or process.

Example: Using research compiled on public transportation in Oklahoma, compose a documented paper with illustrations and bibliography (works cited).

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3. Compose persuasive/argumentative compositions that:
    - a. include a well-defined thesis that makes a clear and knowledgeable appeal.
    - b. present detailed evidence, examples, and reasoning to support effective arguments and emotional appeal.
    - c. provide details, reasons, and examples, arranging them effectively by predicting, identifying, and addressing reader concerns and counterarguments.

Example: Using the research completed on public transportation, compose a persuasive letter to the mayor on why the community should or should not invest more resources into public transportation.
  4. Compose reflective papers to:
    - a. express the individual's insight into conditions or situations.
    - b. compare a scene from a work of fiction with a lesson learned from experience.
    - c. complete a self-evaluation on a class performance.

Example: Write a reflective paper that analyzes reasons for selections used in a portfolio of works that demonstrate skills in different subjects.
  5. Compose responses to literature, including poetry, that:
    - a. demonstrate careful reading and insight into interpretations.
    - b. connect responses to the writer's techniques and to specific textual references.
    - c. make supported inferences about the effects of a literary work on its audience.
    - d. support judgments with references to the text, other works, other authors, or to personal knowledge.

Example: After reading a novel, compose an essay describing the different ways the characters speak (slang words or regional dialect) and analyze how this enhances or detracts from the narrative.
  6. Write for different purposes and to a specific audience or person, adjusting tone and style as necessary to make writing interesting.

Example: Write stories, poetry, and reports, showing a variety of word choices, or review a favorite book or film.
  8. Use appropriate essay test-taking and time-writing strategies that:
    - a. budget time for prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing.
    - b. prioritize the question/prompt.
    - c. identify the common directives from the prompt (Identify command verbs: *explain*, *compare*, *evaluate*, *define*, and *develop*, etc.).
    - d. analyze the question or prompt and determine the appropriate mode of writing.
    - e. apply appropriate organizational methods to thoroughly address the prompt.
    - f. utilize an editing checklist or assessment rubric, if provided.
  9. Use legible handwriting/penmanship to copy and/or compose text, in manuscript or cursive, using correct spacing and formation of letters.

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**Standard 3: Grammar/Usage and Mechanics—The student will demonstrate appropriate practices in writing by applying grammatical knowledge to the revising and editing stages of writing.**

1. Standard English Usage—Demonstrate correct use of Standard English in speaking and writing as appropriate to eighth grade.
  - a. Use the principal parts of verbs and progressive verb forms.
  - b. Use nominative, objective, and possessive pronouns correctly.
  - c. Identify and correctly use linking verbs.
  - d. Make subjects and verbs agree.
  - e. Identify personal, reflexive, and intensive pronouns.
  - f. Use nominative, objective, and possessive nouns and pronouns correctly.
  - g. Use correct pronoun reference and make pronouns agree with their antecedents.
  - h. Identify and use abstract, concrete, and collective nouns.
  - i. Correctly form and use the positive, comparative, and superlative forms of adjectives.
  - j. Identify and use appositives and appositive phrases.
  - k. Use verbals (infinitives, gerunds, and participles) to vary sentence structure in writing.
  - l. Correctly identify and use independent, dependent, restrictive (essential) and nonrestrictive (nonessential) clauses and phrases.
  - m. Correctly use all conjunctions.
  - n. Distinguish commonly confused words (e.g., there, their, they're; two, to, too; accept, except; affect, effect).
2. Mechanics and Spelling—Demonstrate appropriate language mechanics in writing.
  - a. Apply the capitalization rules appropriately in writing.
  - b. Punctuate correctly in writing, including:
    - i. Commas
    - ii. Quotation marks
    - iii. Apostrophes
    - iv. Colons and semicolons
    - v. Conventions of letter writing
    - vi. Hyphens, dashes, parenthesis
  - c. Distinguish correct spelling of commonly misspelled words and homonyms.
3. Sentence Structure—Demonstrate appropriate sentence structure in writing.
  - a. Correct sentence run-ons and fragments.
  - b. Correct dangling and misplaced modifiers.
  - c. Differentiate between dependent, independent restrictive (essential) and nonrestrictive (nonessential) clauses.
  - d. Simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences.
  - e. Compose sentences with simple, complete, and compound predicates.

## Scoring Criteria

Scoring criteria are based on standards and objectives. Writing Test papers receive two types of scores: a composite score and a series of analytic scores for specific writing skills. The analytic scores each focus on a specific aspect of the student’s writing. The composite score reflects how well the student can integrate writing techniques to produce a good paper.

Papers that do not meet certain criteria cannot be scored. Papers receive a score value of ‘unscorable’ if they meet any of the following conditions:

- No response or just a restatement of the task
- Response in a language other than English
- Response that is illegible or incomprehensible
- Response about a topic different from the assigned task

## Analytic Scores

Each piece of student writing is scored on five analytic characteristics that indicate specific writing skills. These scores range from 4 (the highest score) to 1 (the lowest score). Taken together, these scores provide a profile of the specific strengths and weaknesses of the student’s writing. The following are the actual scoring rubrics used to assign the five analytic scores.

Transitional Rubric			
Score	Opinion	Informative	Narrative
Ideas and Development 30%			
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The content is appropriate for audience and purpose. (8.W.4)</li> <li>• The writer addresses the prompt with a fully developed argument using relevant, compelling claim(s) and counterclaim(s), accurate text-based evidence, and logical reasoning. (8.W.1.b)</li> <li>• The writer quotes and paraphrases evidence avoiding plagiarism. (8.W.8)</li> <li>• Writer expresses an insightful perspective towards the topic. (from prior SDE rubric)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The content is appropriate for audience and purpose. (8.W.4)</li> <li>• Topic is clear and fully developed using relevant text-based facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other examples. (8.W.2.b)</li> <li>• The writer quotes and paraphrases evidence avoiding plagiarism. (8.W.8)</li> <li>• Topic is consistently sustained throughout the composition. (from prior SDE rubric)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The content is appropriate for audience and purpose. (8.W.4)</li> <li>• A real or imagined story or experience with a narrator and characters is fully developed using descriptive details. (8.W.3)</li> <li>• A context and point of view are clearly defined. (8.W.3.a)</li> <li>• Narrative techniques such as dialogue and description are used effectively to develop experiences, events, and/or characters. (8.W.3.b)</li> </ul>

The Transitional Rubric shows alignment to the Common Core State Standards.

<b>Transitional Rubric</b>			
<b>Score</b>	<b>Opinion</b>	<b>Informative</b>	<b>Narrative</b>
	<b>Ideas and Development 30%</b>		
<b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The content is largely appropriate for audience and purpose.</li> <li>The writer addresses the prompt with a partially developed argument using claim(s) and counterclaim(s), text-based evidence, and reasoning.</li> <li>The writer attempts to quote and paraphrase evidence.</li> <li>Writer sustains a perspective though most of the argument.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The content is largely appropriate for audience and purpose.</li> <li>Topic is stated and partially developed using text-based facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other examples.</li> <li>The writer attempts to quote and paraphrase evidence.</li> <li>Topic is sustained throughout the composition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The content is largely appropriate for audience and purpose.</li> <li>A real or imagined story or experience with a narrator or characters is adequately developed using some details.</li> <li>A context and point of view are present.</li> <li>Some narrative techniques such as dialogue and description are evident.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The content is limited for audience and purpose.</li> <li>The writer addresses the prompt with an insufficient argument with claim(s) and counterclaim(s), and limited use of text-based evidence, and reasoning.</li> <li>The writer does not attempt to quote or paraphrase evidence.</li> <li>Writer has difficulty expressing or sustaining a perspective.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The content is limited for audience and purpose.</li> <li>Topic may be inferred and has limited development using weak text-based facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other examples.</li> <li>The writer does not attempt to quote or paraphrase evidence.</li> <li>Writer does not sustain the topic throughout the composition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The content is limited for audience and purpose.</li> <li>A real or imagined story or experience with a narrator or characters is minimally developed with few details.</li> <li>A context and point of view may not be clearly defined.</li> <li>Narrative techniques may be minimally used.</li> </ul>
<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The content is inappropriate for audience and purpose.</li> <li>Writer's response to the prompt is not developed.</li> <li>Little evidence is elicited from the text.</li> <li>Writer has little or no perspective.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The content is inappropriate for audience and purpose.</li> <li>Topic is unclear and is not developed.</li> <li>Little evidence is elicited from the text.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The content is inappropriate for audience and purpose.</li> <li>A real or imagined story or situation is not developed.</li> <li>A context and point of view are missing.</li> <li>Narrative techniques are missing.</li> </ul>

Transitional Rubric			
Score	Opinion	Informative	Narrative
	Organization, Unity, and Coherence 25%		
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction presents a clear topic and establishes the argument. (8.W.1.a)</li> <li>• Sustained focus on content and structure (prior SDE rubric)</li> <li>• Reasons and information that support the writer’s purpose are logically ordered. (8.W.1.a)</li> <li>• Transitions between ideas are coherent and link reasons. (8.W.1.c)</li> <li>• A formal style is established and maintained. (8.W.1.d)</li> <li>• Conclusion is compelling and supports the opinion. (8.W.1.e)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction is engaging and presents a clear topic. (prior SDE rubric and 8.W.2.a)</li> <li>• Text-based facts, details, and examples are presented in a well-executed progression. (8.W.2.b)</li> <li>• Transitions are appropriate and clearly link ideas. (8.W.2.c)</li> <li>• A formal style is established and maintained. (8.W.2.e)</li> <li>• Conclusion clearly flows from the information presented. (8.W.2.f)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction engages and orients the reader. (prior SDE rubric and 8.W.3.a)</li> <li>• Well-structured event sequence unfolds in a natural and logical manner and moves the reader through the story or experience. (8.W.3.a)</li> <li>• A variety of transitions signal shifts in time and settings and show relationships among experiences and events. (8.W.3.c)</li> <li>• Conclusion naturally flows from narrated experiences and events. (8.W.3.e)</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction presents a topic and an argument.</li> <li>• Focus on content and structure</li> <li>• Reasons and information that support the writer’s purpose are partially ordered.</li> <li>• Transitions support and link reasons.</li> <li>• A formal style is established but may be inconsistent.</li> <li>• Conclusion is satisfying and supports the argument.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction and topic are evident.</li> <li>• Text-based facts, details, and examples are presented in a logical progression.</li> <li>• Transitions link ideas.</li> <li>• A formal style is established but may be inconsistent.</li> <li>• Conclusion is apparent and relates to the information presented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction interests and orients the reader.</li> <li>• Event sequence is logical and moves the reader through the story or experience.</li> <li>• Transitions signal shifts in time and settings, and show relationships among experiences and events.</li> <li>• Conclusion follows from narrated experiences and events.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction does not present a clear topic or argument.</li> <li>• Lack of focus on content and structure is evident.</li> <li>• Reasons and information that support the writer’s purpose are ordered in random progression.</li> <li>• Transitions are limited and do not link reasons.</li> <li>• A formal style may be attempted.</li> <li>• Conclusion is incomplete with little support for the argument.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction is incomplete and topic is not clearly stated.</li> <li>• Some text-based facts, details, and examples are presented randomly.</li> <li>• Transitions are limited and fail to link ideas.</li> <li>• A formal style may be attempted.</li> <li>• Conclusion is incomplete with little support of the information presented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction may leave the reader with questions.</li> <li>• Event sequence is unclear or limited which makes it difficult for the reader to follow the story or experience.</li> <li>• Ineffective transitions are used.</li> <li>• Conclusion may be missing or irrelevant.</li> <li>• Lacks logical direction.</li> </ul>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacks logical direction.</li> <li>• No evidence of organizational structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacks logical direction.</li> <li>• No evidence of organizational structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacks logical direction.</li> <li>• No evidence of organizational structure</li> </ul>

<b>Transitional Rubric</b>			
<b>Score</b>	<b>All Modes</b>		
	<b>Word Choice 15%</b>	<b>Sentences and Paragraphs 15%</b>	<b>Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics 15%</b>
<b>4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings are demonstrated effectively. (5.L.5 and 8.L.5)</li> <li>Concrete words and phrases, sensory details, and domain-specific vocabulary are used effectively to clearly convey ideas. (5.L.6 and 8.L.6)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rich variety of sentence structure, type, and length (prior SDE rubric and 5.L.3.a)</li> <li>Few, if any, fragments or run-ons (prior SDE rubric)</li> <li>Evidence of appropriate paragraphing (prior SDE rubric)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectively demonstrates command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage as well as capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. (5.L.1, 5.L.2 and 8.L.1 and 8.L.2)</li> <li>Errors are minor and do not affect readability. (prior SDE rubric)</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings are demonstrated.</li> <li>Concrete words and phrases, sensory details, and domain-specific vocabulary are used to convey ideas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Variety of sentence structure, type, and length</li> <li>Few fragments or run-ons</li> <li>Evidence of paragraphing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrates command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage as well as capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.</li> <li>Errors may be more noticeable but do not significantly affect readability.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings are limited.</li> <li>Concrete words and phrases, sensory details, and domain-specific vocabulary are limited.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited variety of sentence structure, type, and length</li> <li>Several fragments or run-ons</li> <li>Little or no attempt at paragraphing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrates limited command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage as well as capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.</li> <li>Errors may be distracting and interfere with readability.</li> </ul>
<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings are not evident.</li> <li>Concrete words and phrases, sensory details, and domain-specific words are lacking.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No clear sentence structure</li> <li>Many fragments or run-ons</li> <li>Little or no attempt at paragraphing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrates little or no command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage as well as capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.</li> <li>Errors are numerous and severely impede readability.</li> </ul>



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## Composite Score

A student's composite score on the Writing assessment, **in part**, is derived by assigning various weights to the five analytic traits. The averaged analytic score for each category is multiplied by the appropriate weight (percentage) and summed. The sum is then multiplied by 15 to place the score on the appropriate scale. The weights are assigned based on the importance of each trait and are supported by empirical evidence. Each student's composite score will range from 60 (the highest score) to 15 (the lowest score). The weights attributed to each analytic score are given in the table below.

### Composite Score

Percentage	Analytic Score Category
30%	Ideas and Development
25%	Organization, Unity, and Coherence
15%	Word Choice
15%	Sentences and Paragraphs
15%	Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics

## Composite Score and Performance Level

New standards will be set on the operational writing prompt in Summer of 2013. At that time, the composite scores will be used to categorize a student's performance as Advanced, Proficient/Satisfactory, Limited Knowledge, or Unsatisfactory.

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## Practice Writing Test

Presented on the following pages is a practice Writing Test. This may be used as a classroom activity to help students prepare for the state assessment.

### Writer's Checklist

- Is the topic addressed in my writing?
- Are my ideas expressed in complete sentences?
- Do I explain or support my ideas with enough details?
- Are the details I included directly related to my topic?
- Are my ideas arranged in a clear order for the reader to follow?
- Do my paragraphs have topic sentences when appropriate?
- Do I start each sentence with a capital letter and capitalize other appropriate words?
- Have I used correct punctuation at the end of each sentence and within each sentence?
- Is my spelling correct throughout my writing?
- Will the reader be able to read my handwriting?

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**Directions:**

**Today you will read two passages and then write a paper on an assigned topic that relates to both passages. Your writing will be based on experiences, events, or information from both passages. Your writing will be scored on how fully you develop the topic and on how well you organize and express your ideas. Your composition will be scored by trained readers. As you work, keep in mind these three stages of the writing process:**

- **Planning** Take time to organize your writing by listing, outlining, or organizing your ideas in the space provided.
- **Writing** Write about the topic in a clear and logical manner on the five lined pages following the Planning Pages. You do not need to use all of the pages but make sure your composition is as complete as possible. Be sure to include a beginning, a middle, and an ending for your composition.
- **Editing/Revising** Take time to reread what you have written and decide if you need to add more details or change the organization of your composition. At the same time, look for and correct any errors in grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. You may use the Writer’s Checklist on the previous page to help you revise your writing.

On the following pages, you will be given instructions to read the writing topic and then two passages. After you finish reading, you will have two pages for planning your paper. You might consider using a web, cluster, list, story map, or any other method to help you organize your writing. Write your paper on the lined pages that follow. You may use the Writer’s Checklist to help you revise your writing.

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### **Practice Writing Topic:**

**Write an informational paper about how wildlife conservation organizations work to protect endangered species and increase their numbers both in captivity and in the wild. Be sure to use information from both sources in your paper.**

**Before you begin planning and writing your informational paper, read the two passages:**

- 1. “A Guide to Healthy Habitat Design”**
- 2. “Spotlight on Excellence: An Interview with a Student Conservationist”**

### **A Guide to Healthy Habitat Design**

- 1 Animal shelters, zoos, and wildlife sanctuaries all face a common challenge. They must create a habitat designed to keep animals safe, healthy, and in good spirits. Habitat designers must consider many factors to create an ideal home. Some of these factors include the following:
  - the purpose for housing the animal.
  - the best way to replicate the animal’s life in the wild.
  - the safety of the animal.

#### **Purpose**

- 2 People build animal habitats for many different purposes. A zoo may need a habitat that will house an animal for many years. An animal shelter may care for an animal briefly while that animal heals. Others may house an endangered animal for a short time before finding it a place to live in the wild. A sanctuary may design an open habitat to encourage animals to stay and raise their young in a safe place.
- 3 The purpose of the habitat drives its design in many ways. If the animal will live there for a long time, it is crucial to include features from its native habitat. This helps the animal to be both happy and healthy in its new home. For example, a panda enjoys climbing, so its habitat must include rock formations and trees that it can climb.

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- 4 When an animal shelter cares for injured wildlife, the habitat is often only temporary. In this case, more focus is placed on the safety and health concerns for the animal. An injured bird may be kept in an indoor room in a cage so it will not re-injure itself or those people caring for it. When it is healed, it may then be moved to an outside enclosure so it can exercise and relearn the skills it will need in the wild.

### **Natural Habitat**

- 5 A crucial element in designing a habitat is knowledge of the life the animal leads in the wild. A familiar habitat keeps the animal happy in its new home. A happy animal will be healthier, live longer, and be more likely to have babies. Many zoos and wildlife sanctuaries study the animals in their care. A natural habitat is important because the animal will be more likely to behave as it would in the wild.
- 6 Habitat designers must spend time researching where an animal lives. They should plant native plants and include natural shelters like caves or overhangs. For instance, for a hippopotamus, they would not only include plenty of water, but also make sure that there is enough land area for the nighttime grazing that provides the hippopotamus's main source of food in the wild.
- 7 In addition to the physical needs that a habitat provides, the designer should consider the mental needs as well. Most animals should be given toys to play with to mimic activities done in their natural environment. Some animals prefer to be alone. Others must have companionship. Thus, when planning a habitat for a gorilla, the designer should make it large enough for a small family group of gorillas. Also, toys such as puzzle feeders should be provided to encourage the gorillas to use tools to get their food.

### **Safety**

- 8 A vital concern in any animal habitat is safety—both for the animal and the people. Most animals should be able to enter stress-free private areas out of sight of visitors. Glass exhibits hold snakes in order to prevent escape or accidental contact with visitors. However, places are created in the exhibit for the snake to hide so it can feel secure. In addition, the exhibit is designed to allow the snake to control its body temperature.
- 9 Animal sanctuaries and refuges must consider safety as well. Injured birds should be kept in areas where they cannot re-injure themselves by trying to fly before they are ready. Wetlands designed to attract animals to a natural habitat should have enough cover to protect nesting sites from predators. Furthermore, potentially poisonous plants should be removed.

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10 Habitat designers consider all these issues when developing an animal's new home. They strive to make the surroundings as comfortable, safe, and stimulating as possible. To do this, habitat designers study where an animal lives in nature. They learn what each animal needs to stay safe and healthy.

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### ***Spotlight on Excellence: An Interview with a Student Conservationist***

In this month's *Spotlight on Excellence*, we welcome the winner of this year's Teen Green Award, Lee Wilson. She met with me to explain her amazing work with the new student club, SEECH (Students Engineering Environmental Change).

**Paul:** Hi, Lee. You must be pretty excited about your award. Can you tell us why you were chosen?

**Lee:** Yes, Paul. The Teen Green Award is a huge honor. I received the award because I founded SEECH, a student group working to protect the native animals in our area.

**Paul:** What inspired you to start this group?

**Lee:** Last summer I participated in a crew with the national Student Conservation Association. We worked together to help with a study to save a forest. While doing this, I learned how interconnected all life on Earth is. Entire animal species are disappearing more quickly than ever before because their habitats are being destroyed. I wanted to continue this work here at home. Many other students were interested in helping, so I started this club.

**Paul:** Can you describe some of the work your club does?

**Lee:** We started a Prairie Dog Awareness program to change how people view prairie dogs. In the past, prairie dogs have been seen as pests. However, prairie dog colonies are part of a critical habitat for many native wildlife species like the burrowing owl and the black-footed ferret. So far, we have collected 286 pledges to support prairie dog habitats!

**Paul:** What is the most exciting activity that SEECH has participated in?

**Lee:** The last weekend in September, we joined a group of volunteers counting how many black-footed ferrets are living in Aubrey Valley. We went out at night and used high-powered lights to locate them because they sleep in the burrows during the day. Volunteers counted a total of 57 ferrets that weekend. I saw two of them myself!

**Paul:** Why is the black-footed ferret important?

**Lee:** Less than 50 years ago, the black-footed ferret was considered to be extinct. Then, in 1981, they found a small group of these ferrets living in Wyoming. That

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started an effort to bring back the black-footed ferret. Conservationists raise the babies in safe places like zoos. Then, when the ferrets are old enough, volunteers take them to Colorado to prepare them for release into the wild. Now there are about 750 black-footed ferrets living in the wild.

**Paul:** Why can't they just release the ferrets into the wild right away?

**Lee:** The ferrets must be taught to defend themselves from predators like hawks and badgers. They also need to get used to living in burrows and navigating tunnels. They even need to be taught to hunt.

**Paul:** So, ferrets live in the burrows, just like prairie dogs? Do they also live together in large groups like prairie dogs do?

**Lee:** They actually live in burrows that prairie dogs build. In fact, they spend 90% of their time below ground. However, unlike the prairie dogs, they prefer to live on their own. Eventually they do get together in pairs so they can raise their babies.

**Paul:** They sound like fascinating animals. The efforts of the SEECH members to help these and other native animals are really admirable. What do you envision for the future?

**Lee:** We plan to have a trail-clearing fundraiser. We will collect pledges for every meter of trail we clear. We'll use the proceeds to pay for a volunteer project this summer at the National Black-Footed Ferret Conservation Society where conservationists teach the young ferrets to survive in the wild.

**Paul:** That is an ambitious plan! I hope you will keep us updated on all your conservation projects. I anticipate that you will have many eager new members once the students read about your exciting environmental endeavors.



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## Practice Writing Topic:

**Write an informational paper about how wildlife conservation organizations work to protect endangered species and increase their numbers both in captivity and in the wild. Be sure to use information from both sources in your paper.**



In the space below, you may PLAN your composition. You might consider using a web, cluster, list, story map, or any other method to help you organize your writing. Do not write your final draft on these pages. Any writing on these pages will not be scored. Write your composition on the lined pages that follow.

## Practice Planning Page

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## Practice Planning Page

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**Practice Response Space**

**Practice Writing Topic:**

**Write an informational paper about how wildlife conservation organizations work to protect endangered species and increase their numbers both in captivity and in the wild. Be sure to use information from both sources in your paper.**




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**Practice Response Space (continued)**


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**Practice Response Space (continued)**


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<p><b>Practice Response Space (continued)</b></p>
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## Example of a Well-Written Response

Presented in this section is an example of a well-written paper.

### Example Writing Topic:

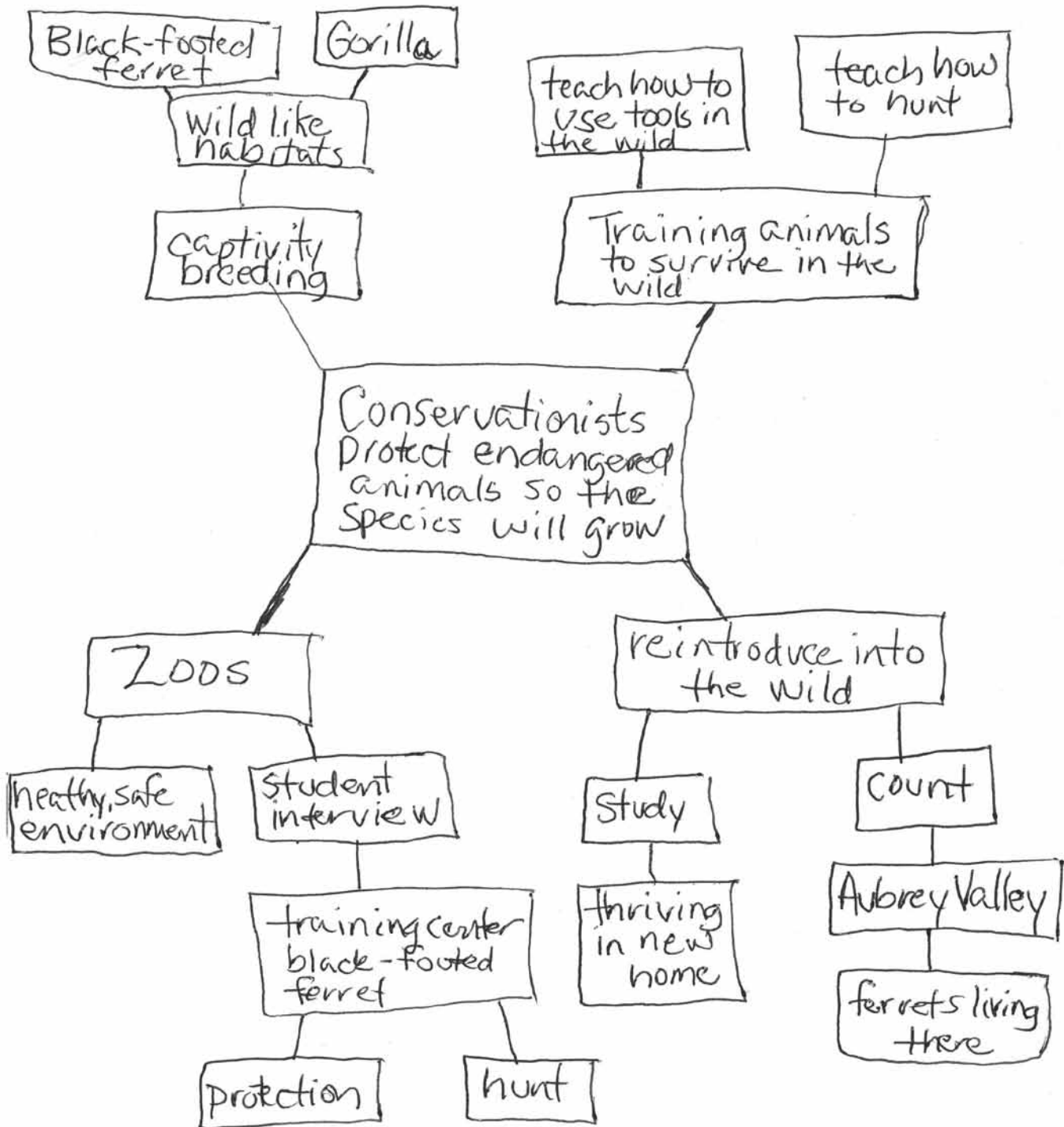
**Write an informational paper about how wildlife conservation organizations work to protect endangered species and increase their numbers both in captivity and in the wild. Be sure to use information from both sources in your paper.**

### Example Planning Page

Endangered Animals      protect animals  
Breeding in captivity      Reintroduce into the wild  
Habitats in Captivity  
    ex. black-footed ferret  
Training for the wild      released animals  
    The goal for release



## Example Planning Page



### Example Response

Many animals in our world are endangered. Wildlife conservationists work to protect these animals and increase their numbers so they can thrive. In order to do this, conservationists must sometimes first capture these animals. They then breed them in a safe place in captivity. Once the babies are able to take care of themselves, they can then begin to reintroduce them to the wild.

When preparing a home for an animal in captivity, conservationists create a habitat that includes as many features from its life in the wild as possible. For example, a home for a black-footed ferret must have tunnels like those in the prairie dog colonies that it lives in. The way an animal likes to live is also taken into

Example Response

account.

Animal habitats have a great impact on how well different kinds of animals will react to life in captivity. Gorillas like to live in groups, so a small group of gorillas will be kept together. Black-footed ferrets prefer to live alone so they would be kept in separate spaces. It is important that the habitat be like it is in the wild. According to the passage "A Guide to Healthy Habitat Design," it will keep the animal happy so it "will be healthier, live longer, and be more likely to have babies." It will also prepare the animal for the time it will be released back into the wild.

Conservationists do not put the animals back into the wild as soon as they are old enough or healthy enough. They first train the animals to make

### Example Response

sure they can survive in the wild. Gorillas are given toys that teach them to use tools in the wild to get food. When an injured bird heals, it is moved to a larger outdoor area and taught how to hunt again.

Zoos also play a role in helping animals survive. Many zoos work with conservationists' groups to raise animals in healthy and safe environments. According to "Spotlight on Excellence: An Interview with a Student Conservationist," these groups take the black-footed ferret babies to a zoo and then release them to the wild. Before the black-footed ferret is returned to the wild, it lives in a special training center in Colorado. While there, it learns to protect itself from predators like hawks, and learns to hunt in tunnels for its favorite food, prairie dogs.

### Example Response

Once an animal can survive in the wild, it is reintroduced into a protected area. Once released, conservationists continue to study it to make sure it is thriving in its new home. Each year, they will count how many animals are living in the new home to make sure the project is a success. For example, in Aubrey Valley they go out with flashlights at night to count the ferrets living there.

It takes a lot of hard work and dedication to save endangered species. Although they must sometimes first be captured and kept safe, the final goal is to release them back into their natural habitat. Conservationists do everything in their power to make sure that the animals will survive and their numbers will increase once they are back in the wild.

## Preparing for Writing to the Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort to establish a shared set of clear educational standards for English language arts and mathematics that states can voluntarily adopt. The standards have been informed by the best available evidence and the highest state standards across the country and globe and have been designed by a diverse group of teachers, experts, parents, and school administrators, so they reflect both our aspirations for our children and the realities of the classroom. These standards are designed to ensure that students graduating from high school are prepared to go on to college or enter the workforce and that parents, teachers, and students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. The standards are benchmarked to international standards to guarantee that our students are competitive in the emerging global marketplace. ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org))

Oklahoma’s State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2010 along with the majority of other states. These next few years will be a time of transition as Oklahoma begins moving from our current *Oklahoma C<sup>3</sup> Standards* curriculum to the CCSS. Transition will include teacher development, local curriculum revision, and test development for a new generation of state assessments. This transition will be complete and fully implemented by the 2014–15 school year.

In order to begin bridging to the requirements of the CCSS, students in Grade 8 will participate in both an operational prompt and a field test prompt this year that align to both the *Oklahoma C<sup>3</sup> Standards* and the CCSS for Writing and Language.

### Common Core State Standards for Writing

- 8.W.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
  - Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
  - Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
  - Establish and maintain a formal style.
  - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
- 8.W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
  - Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

- c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
  - d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
  - e. Establish and maintain a formal style.
  - f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.
- 8.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
- a. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
  - b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
  - c. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence, signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another, and show the relationships among experiences and events.
  - d. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.
  - e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.
- 8.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standard 1-3 above.)
- 8.W.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
- 8.W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

## **Common Core State Standards for Language**

- 8.L.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- 8.L.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
- 8.L.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
- 8.L.6 Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

