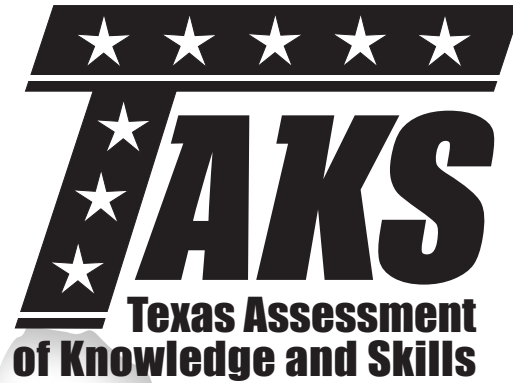


August 2004



Information Booklet

WRITING

Grade 7

Revised

Texas Education Agency • Student Assessment Division

INTRODUCTION

The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) is a completely reconceived testing program. It assesses more of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) than the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) did and asks questions in more authentic ways. TAKS has been developed to better reflect good instructional practice and more accurately measure student learning. We hope that every teacher will see the connection between what we test on this new state assessment and what our students should know and be able to do to be academically successful. To provide you with a better understanding of TAKS and its connection to the TEKS and to classroom teaching, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has developed this newly revised edition of the TAKS information booklet. The information booklets were originally published in January 2002, before the first TAKS field test. Now, after several years of field tests and live administrations, we are able to provide an even more comprehensive picture of the testing program. We have clarified some of the existing material and, in some cases, provided new sample items and/or more explanations of certain item types. However, it is important to remember that these clarifications do not signify any change in the TAKS testing program. The objectives and TEKS student expectations assessed on TAKS remain unchanged. We hope this revised version of the TAKS information booklet will serve as a user-friendly resource to help you understand that the best preparation for TAKS is a coherent, TEKS-based instructional program that provides the level of support necessary for all students to reach their academic potential.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The development of the TAKS program included extensive public scrutiny and input from Texas teachers, administrators, parents, members of the business community, professional education organizations, faculty and staff at Texas colleges and universities, and national content-area experts. The agency involved as many stakeholders as possible because we believed that the development of TAKS was a responsibility that had to be shared if this new assessment was to be an equitable and accurate measure of learning for all Texas public school students.

The three-year test-development process, which began in summer 1999, included a series of carefully conceived activities. First, committees of Texas educators identified those TEKS student expectations for each grade and subject area assessed that should be tested on a statewide assessment. Then a committee of TEA Student Assessment and Curriculum staff incorporated these selected TEKS student expectations, along with draft objectives for each subject area, into eleventh grade exit level surveys. These surveys were sent to Texas educators at the middle school and secondary levels for their review. Based on input we received from more than 27,000 survey responses, we developed a second draft of the objectives and TEKS student expectations. In addition, we used this input during the development of draft objectives and student expectations for grades 3 through 10 to ensure that the TAKS program, like the TEKS curriculum, would be vertically aligned. This vertical alignment was a critical step in ensuring that the TAKS tests would become more rigorous as students moved from grade to grade. For example, the fifth grade tests would be more rigorous than the fourth grade tests, which would be more rigorous than the third grade tests. Texas educators felt that this increase in rigor from grade to grade was both appropriate and logical since each subject-area test was closely aligned to the TEKS curriculum at that grade level.

In fall 2000 TEA distributed the second draft of the objectives and TEKS student expectations for eleventh grade exit level and the first draft of the objectives and student expectations for grades 3 through 10 for review at the campus level. These documents were also posted on the Student Assessment Division’s website to encourage input from the public. Each draft document focused on two central issues: first, whether the objectives included in the draft were essential to measure on a statewide assessment; and, second, whether students would have received enough instruction on the TEKS student expectations included under each objective to be adequately prepared to demonstrate mastery of that objective in the spring of the school year. We received more than 57,000 campus-consensus survey responses. We used these responses, along with feedback from national experts, to finalize the TAKS objectives and student expectations. Because the state assessment was necessarily limited to a “snapshot” of student performance, broad-based input was important to ensure that TAKS assessed the parts of the TEKS curriculum most critical to students’ academic learning and progress.

In the thorough test-development process that we use for the TAKS program, we rely on educator input to develop items that are appropriate and valid measures of the objectives and TEKS student expectations the items are designed to assess. This input includes an annual educator review and revision of all proposed test items before field-testing and a second annual educator review of data and items after field-testing. In addition, each year panels of recognized experts in the fields of English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies meet in Austin to critically review the content of each of the high school level TAKS assessments to be administered that year. This critical review is referred to as a content validation review and is one of the final activities in a series of quality-control steps designed to ensure that each high school test is of the highest quality possible. A content validation review is considered necessary at the high school grades (9, 10, and 11) because of the advanced level of content being assessed.

ORGANIZATION OF THE TAKS TESTS

TAKS is divided into test objectives. It is important to remember that the objective statements are not found in the TEKS curriculum. Rather, the objectives are “umbrella statements” that serve as headings under which student expectations from the TEKS can be meaningfully grouped. Objectives are broad statements that “break up” knowledge and skills to be tested into meaningful subsets around which a test can be organized into reporting units. These reporting units help campuses, districts, parents, and the general public understand the performance of our students and schools. Test objectives are not intended to be “translations” or “rewordings” of the TEKS. Instead, the objectives are designed to be identical across grade levels rather than grade specific. Generally, the objectives are the same for third grade through eighth grade (an elementary/middle school system) and for ninth grade through eleventh grade (a high school system). In addition, certain TEKS student expectations may logically be grouped under more than one test objective; however, it is important for you to understand that this is not meaningless repetition—sometimes the organization of the objectives requires such groupings. For example, on the TAKS writing tests for fourth and seventh grades, some of the same student expectations addressing the conventions of standard English usage are listed under both Objective 2 and Objective 6. In this case, the expectations listed under Objective 2 are assessed through the overall strength of a student’s use of language conventions on the written composition portion of the test; these same expectations under Objective 6 are assessed through multiple-choice items attached to a series of revising and editing passages.

ORGANIZATION OF THE INFORMATION BOOKLETS

The purpose of the information booklets is to help Texas educators, students, parents, and other stakeholders understand more about the TAKS tests. These booklets are not intended to replace the teaching of the TEKS curriculum, provide the basis for the isolated teaching of skills in the form of narrow test preparation, or serve as the single information source about every aspect of the TAKS program. However, we believe that the booklets provide helpful explanations as well as show enough sample items, reading and writing selections, and prompts to give educators a good sense of the assessment.

Each grade within a subject area is presented as a separate booklet. However, it is still important that teachers review the information booklets for the grades both above and below the grade they teach. For example, eighth grade mathematics teachers who review the seventh grade information booklet as well as the ninth grade information booklet are able to develop a broader perspective of the mathematics assessment than if they study only the eighth grade information booklet.

The information booklets for each subject area contain some information unique to that subject. For example, the mathematics chart that students use on TAKS is included for each grade at which mathematics is assessed. However, all booklets include the following information, which we consider critical for every subject-area TAKS test:

- an overview of the subject within the context of TAKS
- a blueprint of the test—the number of items under each objective and the number of items on the test as a whole
- information that clarifies how to read the TEKS
- the reasons each objective and its TEKS student expectations are critical to student learning and success
- the objectives and TEKS student expectations that are included on TAKS
- additional information about each objective that helps educators understand how it is assessed on TAKS
- sample items that show some of the ways objectives are assessed

Introduction to TAKS Writing at Grade 7

Writing is a life skill. As students move from grade to grade, writing skills are critical for academic progress. Students who have difficulty putting their thoughts into writing struggle to succeed in social studies, science, and many areas other than English language arts. Because good writing requires good thinking, the act of writing actually helps students learn to clarify their thoughts and focus their ideas. In addition, students who write well are usually strong readers. Why? In very simple terms, a writer must be able to read what he or she has written and recognize whether the words mean what the writer wants them to mean. Therefore, every time a student is writing effectively, that student is also reading carefully and thoughtfully. In this way, writing and reading reinforce each other. Students who have strong writing and reading skills will have more opportunities available to them throughout their lives, in both education and employment, than those who have not learned these skills.

The objectives for the seventh grade writing test are listed below.

- Objective 1:** The student will, within a given context, produce an effective composition for a specific purpose.
- Objective 2:** The student will produce a piece of writing that demonstrates a command of the conventions of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure.
- Objective 3:** The student will recognize appropriate organization of ideas in written text.
- Objective 4:** The student will recognize correct and effective sentence construction in written text.
- Objective 5:** The student will recognize standard usage and appropriate word choice in written text.
- Objective 6:** The student will proofread for correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling in written text.

Objectives 1 and 2 are assessed through a composition the student writes in response to a prompt. Objectives 3 through 6 test revising and editing skills in a peer-editing context. In this booklet each of the six TAKS objectives appears with its related TEKS student expectations that are eligible for testing. It is critical to remember, however, that there are a number of TEKS student expectations that are not listed here. Even though only a portion of the TEKS writing curriculum has been identified as eligible for statewide testing, *all* the curriculum must be taught to ensure that students are receiving a solid, complete program of writing instruction.

For students to be successful writers, writing instruction must occur at *every* grade level, not merely at the tested grades. The TEKS were organized to ensure that at each grade level students acquire the writing skills they will need for success in the next grade. That is, writing skills in the curriculum are addressed in a systematic, “building block” manner from grade to grade. Because of this careful alignment of skills, basic writing concepts are strengthened as students progress through elementary school, middle school, and high school. Making writing an important part of other content areas, such as science and social studies, will strengthen this alignment. In addition, students learn to write effectively by having many opportunities to practice writing. Without practice, students cannot internalize the skills they need in order to be able to write competently and confidently. Students practice by keeping journals, writing in response to reading or in response to a movie or other viewing experience, writing the procedures for science experiments, etc. Valuable writing practice does not have to be, and should not always be, prompt-driven.

General Guidelines for TAKS Writing at Grade 7

Written Composition

- The open-ended nature of the prompt allows students to address the prompt as they choose as long as their composition is in standard English prose. (Note: Poetry is not an acceptable form of response.) Students' ability to use their own experience and perspective helps them effectively express their ideas about the topic.
- Each composition is evaluated on a 4-point scale using focused holistic scoring. Readers use a rubric, or set of specific criteria at each score point, to identify characteristics of the composition. At the same time, readers evaluate the student's writing as a whole, taking into account the limitations imposed by the testing situation.
- The composition section of the TAKS writing test assesses Objectives 1 and 2. Objective 1 focuses on the quality of the composition's content, while Objective 2 focuses on how clearly and effectively the student communicates his or her ideas. These objectives are inextricably linked because good writing must be both substantial and mechanically sound.
- The expectations for what constitutes a successful piece of writing will be appropriate for grade 7. For example, seventh graders do not generally have the same ability as high school students to connect and develop their ideas. In addition, writers at the middle school level are not expected to have the same level of spelling ability or range of vocabulary as more experienced writers. Some misspellings are anticipated in the composition, especially if the student attempts to use more advanced vocabulary.
- The written composition rubric appears on pages 17–20.

Revising and Editing (Multiple-Choice Section)

- Students read passages designed to resemble student writing. Multiple-choice questions about these passages require students to indicate how a particular sentence might be corrected or improved or how the organization or development of a paragraph might be strengthened. This task parallels what students frequently do in class when they read one another's writing to check for problems with organization, sentence boundaries, verb tense, word choice, punctuation and spelling errors, etc. Such peer-editing activities are a central part of an effective process-based classroom.
- Passages at seventh grade are approximately 250 to 300 words in length and may be accompanied by photographs or illustrations to provide students with additional context. Sentences within each passage are numbered.
- Passages are written to be appropriate for seventh graders with regard to subject matter, vocabulary, and interest level. In recognition of the wide range of students' backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences, the passages represent cultural diversity as much as possible.
- Rather than each of the four revising and editing objectives being tested with a separate set of passages, items for a single passage will address all four objectives.

- As students learn the writing process, they become familiar with common terminology. Some of this terminology is routinely used in the wording of TAKS items. Students should be able to read and understand such terms as *revise* (or *revising* or *revision*), *edit*, *peer-editing*, *organization*, *improve*, *combine*, *complete sentence*, *delete*, *add*, and *insert*.

Dictionary/Thesaurus Use

- While students are writing their compositions, they must have access to an English language dictionary and thesaurus or an English language dictionary/thesaurus combination. The school may provide these, or students may bring copies from home. The minimum schools need is one dictionary/thesaurus for every five students testing, but the state's recommendation is one for every three students or, optimally, one for each student. Students may use these reference materials the entire time they are writing their compositions.
- The seventh grade writing test booklet has two seals. The first sealed section contains the written composition prompt, and the second contains the revising and editing section. Students must complete the composition section of the test before they begin the revising and editing section. Once a student has finished the composition and before he or she breaks the seal on the revising and editing section, he or she must give up all access to a dictionary/thesaurus.
- After finishing the revising and editing section, a student may go back to reread or revise his or her composition, but this review **MUST** be done without the use of any reference materials.

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)
Blueprint for Grade 7 Writing

TAKS Objectives	Number of Items
Objective 1 (Composition) Objective 2 (Composition)	1 writing prompt
Objective 3: Organization (Revising and Editing)	6 multiple-choice items
Objective 4: Sentence Structure (Revising and Editing)	10 multiple-choice items
Objective 5: Standard Usage/Word Choice (Revising and Editing)	12 multiple-choice items
Objective 6: Punctuation, Capitalization, Spelling (Revising and Editing)	12 multiple-choice items
Total number of items	1 writing prompt 40 multiple-choice items

A Key to Understanding the TEKS Included on TAKS Grade 7 Writing

Example from Objective 1

A ← (7.15) **Writing/purposes.** The student writes for a variety of audiences and purposes and in a variety of forms. The student is expected to

B → (D) write to entertain such as to compose [humorous poems or] short stories (4–8). ← **C** ← **D**

KEY

A. Knowledge and Skills Statement

This broad statement describes what students should know and be able to do for seventh grade writing. The number preceding the statement identifies the grade and number of the knowledge and skills statement.

B. Student Expectation

This specific statement describes what students should be able to do to demonstrate proficiency in what is described in the knowledge and skills statement. Students are tested on skills outlined in the student expectation statement.

C. [bracketed text]

Although the entire student expectation has been provided for reference, text in brackets indicates that this portion of the student expectation is not tested on TAKS.

D. (4–8)

The student expectation is taught from fourth grade through eighth grade.

NOTE: The full TEKS curriculum can be found at www.tea.state.tx.us/teks/.

TEKS STUDENT EXPECTATIONS—IMPORTANT VOCABULARY

For every subject area and grade level, two terms—*such as* and *including*—are used to help make the TEKS student expectations more concrete for teachers. However, these terms function in different ways. To help you understand the effect each of the terms has on specific student expectations, we are providing the following:

- a short definition of each term
- an example from a specific student expectation for this subject area
- a short explanation of how this term affects this student expectation

Such as

The term *such as* is used when the specific examples that follow it function only as representative illustrations that help define the expectation for teachers. These examples are just that—examples. Teachers may choose to use them when teaching the student expectation, but there is no requirement to use them. Other examples can be used in addition to those listed or as replacements for those listed.

Example from Grade 7 Writing, Objective 6

(7.17) **Writing/grammar/usage.** The student applies standard grammar and usage to communicate clearly and effectively in writing. The student is expected to

- (G) write with increasing accuracy when using apostrophes in contractions such as *won't* and possessives such as *Smith's* (4–8).

Students learn how to use apostrophes correctly by writing many different words. The two words listed are just examples; there is no requirement to use these particular examples.

Including

The term *including* is used when the specific examples that follow it must be taught. However, other examples may also be used in conjunction with those listed.

Example from Grade 7 Writing, Objective 5

(7.17) **Writing/grammar/usage.** The student applies standard grammar and usage to communicate clearly and effectively in writing. The student is expected to

- (C) employ standard English usage in writing for audiences, including subject-verb agreement, pronoun referents, and parts of speech (4–8).

The terms following *including* are examples of critical areas of grammar that a student needs to master in order to write effectively in standard English. These areas of grammar must be taught; however, teachers should not limit their teaching only to these examples.

Remember

- Any example preceded by the term *such as* in a particular student expectation may or may not provide the basis for an item assessing that expectation. Because these examples do not necessarily have to be used to teach the student expectation, it is equally likely that other examples will be used in assessment items. The rule here is that an example will be used only if it is central to the knowledge, concept, or skill the item assesses.
- It is more likely that some of the examples preceded by the term *including* in a particular student expectation will provide the basis for items assessing that expectation, since these examples must be taught. However, it is important to remember that the examples that follow the term *including* do not represent all the examples possible, so other examples may also provide the basis for an assessment item. Again, the rule here is that an example will be used only if it is central to the knowledge, concept, or skill the item assesses.

TAKS Grade 7 Writing

Objective 1

The ability to communicate thoughts and ideas through writing helps students become successful, not only in school but throughout their lives. In order to communicate effectively, students must organize and develop ideas in a logical, coherent, and interesting manner that is easy for the reader to follow and understand. Objective 1 tests each student’s ability to produce an organized and well-developed composition in response to a prompt. The prompt is worded so that students have broad latitude in crafting an individual response. Students can use any organizational strategy that allows them to write an effective piece—they can write a story, a description, a philosophical piece, an expository piece—or they can combine approaches. However students choose to respond, it is important that the composition they write is uniquely theirs—that it is authentic and represents their best thinking and writing.

Objective 1

The student will, within a given context, produce an effective composition for a specific purpose.

(7.15) **Writing/purposes.** The student writes for a variety of audiences and purposes and in a variety of forms. The student is expected to

- (A) write to express, [discover, record,] develop, reflect on ideas, and to problem solve (4–8);
- (B) write to influence such as to persuade, argue, and request (4–8);
- (C) write to inform such as to explain, describe, report, and narrate (4–8);
- (D) write to entertain such as to compose [humorous poems or] short stories (4–8);
- (E) select and use voice and style appropriate to audience and purpose (6–8);
- (G) use literary devices effectively such as suspense, dialogue, and figurative language (5–8);
and
- (H) produce cohesive and coherent written texts by organizing ideas, using effective transitions, and choosing precise wording (6–8).

(7.16) **Writing/penmanship/capitalization/punctuation/spelling.** The student composes original texts, applying the conventions of written language such as capitalization, punctuation, handwriting, penmanship, and spelling to communicate clearly. The student is expected to

- (A) write legibly by selecting cursive or manuscript as appropriate (4–8).

- (7.18) **Writing/writing processes.** The student selects and uses writing processes for self-initiated and assigned writing. The student is expected to
- (C) revise selected drafts by adding, elaborating, deleting, combining, and rearranging text (4–8); and
 - (D) revise drafts for coherence, progression, and logical support of ideas (4–8).

Objective 1—For Your Information

Objective 1 focuses on the aspects of writing that contribute to the quality of a composition’s content. These aspects represent the first four sections of the rubric: focus and coherence, organization, development of ideas, and voice. It is not enough for students to know what these terms mean. Students must be able to “see” how these terms affect a piece of writing. For example, how does a composition that lacks focus and coherence look different from one that is strong in that area? How does superficial development look different from development that has depth? Once students start to see these kinds of differences and are given multiple opportunities to write, over time their writing will become more unique and compelling. Students will gain confidence in their ability to communicate effectively.

On TAKS students must

- respond directly to the prompt. Although students are given wide latitude in this regard, the link between the composition and the prompt must be evident.
- remain focused on the topic throughout the composition. The first step in establishing a strong focus is for students to decide what they want their controlling, or main, idea to be. (At higher grade levels, this idea is called a thesis statement.) Everything students write in their composition should contribute to a reader’s understanding of that idea. Any sentences that do not do this weaken the focus and coherence of the composition.
- organize their ideas so that each sentence is logically linked to the next sentence. The sentences should form a kind of “chain.” Each sentence moves the composition forward and deepens the reader’s understanding of the ideas; no sentences are extraneous or overlap. In addition, each paragraph should logically lead to the next; the relationships between paragraphs should be clear. Each paragraph should “build” on the one before it.
- develop their ideas in depth. To understand how to create writing that has depth, students must first understand the relationship between thinking and writing, for without good thinking, good writing is impossible. Depth depends less on how much students say than on the quality of what they say. Good development is based on the ability to “layer” and “flesh out” ideas so that each sentence a student writes adds meaning to the sentences that come before it. Good development is also original; that’s why students who simply write a plot summary of something they’ve read in a book or seen on television or in a movie or who simply write the lyrics of a song they’ve heard receive a failing score. The writing in these cases is not really theirs. Original development is also a problem for most students who follow formulas; because the development is contrived, students are usually unable to achieve any depth.

- express an individual voice. Expressing an individual voice means that the composition engages the reader. The student’s writing sounds authentic and original and genuinely expresses the student’s personality or personal viewpoint. When a student responds in a highly individualistic way, his or her voice is naturally expressed. Because the composition has a “face,” a meaningful connection is established between the reader and the writer. On the other hand, formulaic writing tends to be “faceless” and, more often than not, prevents a student from having the opportunity to express his or her own unique voice.

Objective 2

To write well, students must be able to apply the conventions of the English language. This means that students must have the following skills. First, when students write a composition, they must have the ability to follow the rules of correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. Second, they must have the ability to write effective sentences and use words and phrases that enhance the reader's understanding of their ideas. Although students are not expected to produce error-free writing on the test, they are expected to write as clearly and correctly as possible. The stronger the writing conventions are, the more likely it is that students will be able to produce an effective composition.

Objective 2

The student will produce a piece of writing that demonstrates a command of the conventions of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure.

- (7.16) **Writing/penmanship/capitalization/punctuation/spelling.** The student composes original texts, applying the conventions of written language such as capitalization, punctuation, handwriting, penmanship, and spelling to communicate clearly. The student is expected to
- (B) capitalize and punctuate correctly to clarify and enhance meaning such as capitalizing titles, using hyphens, semicolons, colons, possessives, and sentence punctuation (6–8);
 - (C) spell derivatives correctly by applying the spellings of bases and affixes (7–8);
 - (D) spell frequently misspelled words correctly such as *their*, *they're*, and *there* (7–8);
 - (E) use resources to find correct spellings (4–8); and
 - (F) spell accurately in final drafts (4–8).
- (7.17) **Writing/grammar/usage.** The student applies standard grammar and usage to communicate clearly and effectively in writing. The student is expected to
- (A) write in complete sentences, varying the types such as compound and complex sentences, and use appropriately punctuated independent and dependent clauses (7–8);
 - (B) use conjunctions to connect ideas meaningfully (4–8);
 - (C) employ standard English usage in writing for audiences, including subject-verb agreement, pronoun referents, and parts of speech (4–8);
 - (D) use adjectives (comparative and superlative forms) and adverbs appropriately to make writing vivid or precise (4–8);
 - (E) use prepositional phrases to elaborate written ideas (4–8);
 - (F) use verb tenses appropriately and consistently such as present, past, future, perfect, and progressive (6–8);

- (G) write with increasing accuracy when using apostrophes in contractions such as *won't* and possessives such as *Smith's* (4–8); and
- (H) write with increasing accuracy when using pronoun case such as “She had the party” (6–8).

(7.18) **Writing/writing processes.** The student selects and uses writing processes for self-initiated and assigned writing. The student is expected to

- (E) edit drafts for specific purposes such as to ensure standard usage, varied sentence structure, and appropriate word choice (4–8); and
- (H) proofread his/her own writing and that of others (4–8).

Objective 2—For Your Information

Objective 2 assesses a student’s ability to communicate effectively by demonstrating a command of the conventions of written English in a composition.

- The evaluation of conventions is based on a holistic judgment of the student’s mastery of conventions overall, not on the total number of errors or on the number of any certain type of error. This holistic judgment takes into account the degree of sophistication the student attempts in constructing sentences and using words.
- Some errors related to conventions are more serious than others because they have a greater effect on a student’s ability to communicate clearly. For example, using pronouns without clear antecedents (to whom or to what the pronoun refers) is generally more disruptive to the reader’s understanding than capitalizing words incorrectly.
- Students are permitted to use an English language dictionary and thesaurus during the composition portion of the writing test.

Grade 7 Sample Prompt

Write a composition about why it is important to appreciate what you have.

The information in the box below will help you remember what you should think about when you write your composition.

REMEMBER—YOU SHOULD

- write about why it is important to appreciate what you have
- make your writing interesting to the reader
- make sure that each sentence you write helps the reader understand your composition
- make sure that your ideas are clear and easy for the reader to follow
- write about your ideas in detail so that the reader really understands what you are saying
- check your work for correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and sentences

SCORE POINT 1

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS AN INEFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- Individual paragraphs and/or the composition as a whole are not focused. The writer may shift abruptly from idea to idea, making it difficult for the reader to understand how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- The composition as a whole has little, or no, sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion, if present, may be perfunctory.
- A substantial amount of writing may be extraneous because it does not contribute to the development or quality of the composition. In some cases, the composition overall may be only weakly connected to the prompt.

Organization

- The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and/or paragraph to paragraph is not logical. Sometimes weak progression results from an absence of transitions or from the use of transitions that do not make sense. At other times, the progression of thought is simply not evident, even if appropriate transitions are included.
- An organizational strategy is not evident. The writer may present ideas in a random or haphazard way, making the composition difficult to follow.
- Wordiness and/or repetition may stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

- The writer presents one or more ideas but provides little or no development of those ideas.
- The writer presents one or more ideas and attempts to develop them. However, this development is so general or vague that it prevents the reader from understanding the writer's ideas.
- The writer presents only a plot summary of a published piece of writing, a movie, or a television show.
- The writer omits information, which creates significant gaps between ideas. These gaps prevent the reader from clearly understanding those ideas.

Voice

- The writer does not engage the reader, therefore failing to establish a connection.
- There may be little or no sense of the writer's individual voice. The composition does not sound authentic or original. The writer is unable to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- There is little or no evidence in the composition that the writer can correctly apply the conventions of the English language. Severe and/or frequent errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure may cause the writing to be unclear or difficult to read. These errors weaken the composition by causing an overall lack of fluency.
- The writer may misuse or omit words and phrases and may frequently write awkward sentences. These weaknesses interfere with the effective communication of ideas.

SCORE POINT 2

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- Individual paragraphs and/or the composition as a whole are somewhat focused. The writer may shift quickly from idea to idea, but the reader has no difficulty understanding how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- The composition as a whole has some sense of completeness. The writer includes an introduction and conclusion, but they may be superficial.
- Some of the writing may be extraneous because it does not contribute to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

- The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and/or paragraph to paragraph may not always be smooth or completely logical. Sometimes the writer needs to strengthen the progression by including more meaningful transitions; at other times the writer simply needs to establish a clearer link between ideas.
- The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses do not enable the writer to present ideas effectively.
- Some wordiness and/or repetition may be evident, but these weaknesses do not completely stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

- The writer attempts to develop the composition by listing ideas or briefly explaining them. In both of these cases, the development remains superficial, limiting the reader's understanding and appreciation of the writer's ideas.
- The writer presents one or more ideas and attempts to develop them. However, there is little evidence of depth of thinking because this development may be somewhat general, inconsistent, or contrived.
- The writer may omit small pieces of information that create minor gaps between ideas. However, these gaps do not prevent the reader from understanding those ideas.

Voice

- There may be moments when the writer engages the reader but fails to sustain the connection.
- Individual paragraphs or sections of the composition may sound authentic or original, but the writer has difficulty expressing his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- Errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure throughout the composition may indicate a limited control of conventions. Although these errors do not cause the writing to be unclear, they weaken the overall fluency of the composition.
- The writer may include some simple or inaccurate words and phrases and may write some awkward sentences. These weaknesses limit the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

SCORE POINT 3

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A GENERALLY EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- Individual paragraphs and the composition as a whole are, for the most part, focused. The writer generally shows the clear relationship between ideas, making few sudden shifts from one idea to the next.
- The composition as a whole has a sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion add some depth to the composition.
- Most of the writing contributes to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

- The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph is generally smooth and controlled. For the most part, transitions are meaningful, and the links between ideas are logical.
- The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses are generally effective.
- Wordiness and/or repetition, if present, are minor problems that do not stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

- The writer attempts to develop all the ideas included in the composition. Although some ideas may be developed more thoroughly and specifically than others, the development overall reflects some depth of thought, enabling the reader to generally understand and appreciate the writer's ideas.
- The writer's presentation of some ideas may be thoughtful. There may be little evidence that the writer has been willing to take compositional risks when developing the topic.

Voice

- The writer engages the reader and sustains that connection throughout most of the composition.
- For the most part, the composition sounds authentic and original. The writer is generally able to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- The writer generally demonstrates a good command of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. Although the writer may make minor errors, they create few disruptions in the fluency of the composition.
- The words, phrases, and sentence structures the writer uses are generally appropriate and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

SCORE POINT 4

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- Individual paragraphs and the composition as a whole are focused. This sustained focus enables the reader to understand and appreciate how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- The composition as a whole has a sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion are meaningful because they add depth to the composition.
- Most, if not all, of the writing contributes to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

- The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph is smooth and controlled. The writer's use of meaningful transitions and the logical movement from idea to idea strengthen this progression.
- The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses enhance the writer's ability to present ideas clearly and effectively.

Development of Ideas

- The writer's thorough and specific development of each idea creates depth of thought in the composition, enabling the reader to truly understand and appreciate the writer's ideas.
- The writer's presentation of ideas is thoughtful or insightful. The writer may approach the topic from an unusual perspective, use his/her unique experiences or view of the world as a basis for writing, or make interesting connections between ideas. In all these cases, the writer's willingness to take compositional risks enhances the quality of the content.

Voice

- The writer engages the reader and sustains this connection throughout the composition.
- The composition sounds authentic and original. The writer is able to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- The overall strength of the conventions contributes to the effectiveness of the composition. The writer demonstrates a consistent command of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. When the writer attempts to communicate complex ideas through sophisticated forms of expression, he/she may make minor errors as a result of these compositional risks. These types of errors do not detract from the overall fluency of the composition.
- The words, phrases, and sentence structures the writer uses enhance the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

Objective 3

Revision is an integral part of the writing process. After the first draft the competent writer often adds, deletes, combines, and/or rearranges words and sentences as well as adds effective transitions to better organize and more fully develop his or her thoughts and ideas. Objective 3 tests the student's ability to recognize and correct errors in organization and development in the context of peer-editing passages.

Objective 3

The student will recognize appropriate organization of ideas in written text.

(7.18) **Writing/writing processes.** The student selects and uses writing processes for self-initiated and assigned writing. The student is expected to

- (C) revise selected drafts by adding, elaborating, deleting, combining, and rearranging text (4–8); and
- (D) revise drafts for coherence, progression, and logical support of ideas (4–8).

Objective 3—For Your Information

Items that assess the student expectations grouped in Objective 3 will require students to

- recognize that a sentence that is irrelevant to a paragraph or to the passage as a whole should be deleted. (An irrelevant sentence may add information, but that information is not closely linked to other ideas in the paragraph or passage. Irrelevant sentences cause a piece of writing to lack focus and coherence.)
- identify a sentence that could be added to a paragraph to improve its development
- select the most appropriate transition word or phrase to effectively link ideas

Objective 4

Editing and proofreading are also an important part of the writing process. During this stage the skillful writer uses correct sentence structure to ensure that his or her meaning is evident. Faulty phrasing, misuse of conjunctions, fragments, and run-on sentences can cause the reader to be confused and misunderstand the intended message. Objective 4 tests the student's ability both to recognize and correct errors in sentence structure and to improve the effectiveness of sentences in the context of peer-editing passages.

Objective 4

The student will recognize correct and effective sentence construction in written text.

(7.17) **Writing/grammar/usage.** The student applies standard grammar and usage to communicate clearly and effectively in writing. The student is expected to

- (A) write in complete sentences, varying the types such as compound and complex sentences, and use appropriately punctuated independent and dependent clauses (7–8);
- (B) use conjunctions to connect ideas meaningfully (4–8); and
- (E) use prepositional phrases to elaborate written ideas (4–8).

(7.18) **Writing/writing processes.** The student selects and uses writing processes for self-initiated and assigned writing. The student is expected to

- (E) edit drafts for specific purposes such as to ensure standard usage, varied sentence structure, and appropriate word choice (4–8).

Objective 4—For Your Information

Items that assess the student expectations grouped in Objective 4 will require students to

- recognize fragments and run-on sentences and determine the best way to correct them
- choose the most effective way to combine ideas
- improve the wording of awkward and/or wordy sentences

Objective 5

To communicate clearly, the writer must also know how to apply the rules of standard grammar and usage. Incorrect use of tense, lack of agreement between subjects and verbs, and unclear pronoun referents can cause the reader to misunderstand the writer's meaning. Objective 5 tests the student's ability to recognize and correct errors in grammar and usage in the context of peer-editing passages.

Objective 5

The student will recognize standard usage and appropriate word choice in written text.

- (7.17) **Writing/grammar/usage.** The student applies standard grammar and usage to communicate clearly and effectively in writing. The student is expected to
- (C) employ standard English usage in writing for audiences, including subject-verb agreement, pronoun referents, and parts of speech (4–8);
 - (D) use adjectives (comparative and superlative forms) and adverbs appropriately to make writing vivid or precise (4–8);
 - (F) use verb tenses appropriately and consistently such as present, past, future, perfect, and progressive (6–8); and
 - (H) write with increasing accuracy when using pronoun case such as “She had the party” (6–8).
- (7.18) **Writing/writing processes.** The student selects and uses writing processes for self-initiated and assigned writing. The student is expected to
- (E) edit drafts for specific purposes such as to ensure standard usage, varied sentence structure, and appropriate word choice (4–8); and
 - (H) proofread his/her own writing and that of others (4–8).

Objective 5—For Your Information

Items that assess the student expectations grouped in Objective 5 test a student’s ability to recognize standard English usage and appropriate word choice. Items may focus on

- subject-verb agreement
- verb tenses
- pronoun referents (pronoun-antecedent agreement)
- parts of speech
- adverbs and adjectives, including the comparative and superlative forms
- use of double negatives
- misuse of homonyms such as *their/there/they’re*
- replacing an indefinite reference, such as *they* or *it*, with a specific noun or noun phrase
- replacing a vague word or phrase with more precise wording

Objective 6

Effective writers examine their work for correct capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Capitalization and punctuation marks take the place of the pauses, stops, and intonations used to convey meaning in oral communication. Accuracy in language mechanics helps the reader “hear” those nuances and better understand what the writer is trying to communicate. Correct spelling also helps the writer communicate clearly. Objective 6 tests the student’s ability to recognize and correct errors in capitalization, punctuation, and spelling in the context of peer-editing passages.

Objective 6

The student will proofread for correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling in written text.

- (7.16) **Writing/penmanship/capitalization/punctuation/spelling.** The student composes original texts, applying the conventions of written language such as capitalization, punctuation, handwriting, penmanship, and spelling to communicate clearly. The student is expected to
- (B) capitalize and punctuate correctly to clarify and enhance meaning such as capitalizing titles, using hyphens, semicolons, colons, possessives, and sentence punctuation (6–8);
 - (C) spell derivatives correctly by applying the spellings of bases and affixes (7–8);
 - (D) spell frequently misspelled words correctly such as *their*, *they’re*, and *there* (7–8); and
 - (F) spell accurately in final drafts (4–8).
- (7.17) **Writing/grammar/usage.** The student applies standard grammar and usage to communicate clearly and effectively in writing. The student is expected to
- (G) write with increasing accuracy when using apostrophes in contractions such as *won’t* and possessives such as *Smith’s* (4–8).
- (7.18) **Writing/writing processes.** The student selects and uses writing processes for self-initiated and assigned writing. The student is expected to
- (H) proofread his/her own writing and that of others (4–8).

Objective 6—For Your Information

Items developed to assess the student expectations grouped in Objective 6 will require a student to recognize and correctly edit errors in capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

- Capitalization and punctuation items will include the range of rules commonly taught at the seventh grade level. Punctuation rules that are not consistently applied across the state-adopted seventh grade English language arts textbooks will not be tested (for example, the presence or absence of a comma before the *and* in a series of items).
- Spelling items will include both rule-based and sight words that are within the writing vocabulary of seventh graders.

Grade 7 Revising and Editing Samples

Amber is in the seventh grade. She read about an unusual hotel and wrote a paper to describe it. As part of a peer-editing assignment, she wants you to read her paper. After you read Amber's paper, think about the suggestions you would make to help her correct and improve it. Then answer the multiple-choice questions that follow.

A Deep Sleep

(1) Almost 130 years ago Jules Verne wrote a book called *20,000 Leagues under the sea*. (2) In this story Verne described a sea captain who lived underwater in a whale-shaped submarine. (3) When the book was written, the idea of living underwater seemed impossible. (4) Today, however, Jules Verne might be surprised to learn that people can actually spend the night underwater at an amazing hotel in Florida.

(5) This unusual hotel, which is located about 21 feet below the surface of the Atlantic Ocean was named Jules's Undersea Lodge in honor of Jules Verne. (6) Built by NASA, the lodge was first used as an underwater lab for ocean research. (7) Scientists needed a place to study the similarities between living underwater and living in outer space.

(8) In 1986 the lab was converted into the world's first underwater hotel.

(9) It didn't take long for people around the world to hear about this remarkable place.

(10) Visitors to the lodge are often quite surprised who expect a glass elevator to take them to their rooms. (11) They must scuba dive to the ocean bottom to get their first view of the underwater hotel, which sits

on pillars. (12) Once guests are inside the hotel, they find two large bedrooms and a kitchen with a microwave oven and dining area.

(13) Each room, which contains its own television, VCR, and stereo, has huge round windows. (14) These windows give guests an endless view of sea creatures in their natural environment. (15) Throughout their stay the guests peer out as fish peer in. (16) When visitors leave this unusual hotel, they probably understood how it feels to live in an aquarium.

- 1 What change, if any, should be made in sentence 1?
- A Change *years* to *year's*
 - B Change *wrote* to *writes*
 - C* Change *under the sea* to *Under the Sea*
 - D Make no change

Objective 6

- 2 What change, if any, should be made in sentence 5?
- A Change *surface* to *surfase*
 - B* Add a comma after *Ocean*
 - C Change *Lodge* to *lodge*
 - D Make no change

Objective 6

- 3 What change, if any, should be made in sentence 7?
- A Change *needed* to *will need*
 - B Change *similarities* to *similaritys*
 - C Add a comma after *underwater*
 - D* Make no change

Objective 6

- 4 What change, if any, should be made in sentence 8?

- A Change *lab* to *Lab*
- B Change *was converted* to *converting*
- C* Change *worlds* to *world's*
- D Make no change

Objective 6

- 5 Which sentence could be added after sentence 9 to support the ideas in the second paragraph (sentences 5–9)?

- A Someone who lives under the sea for an extended period is called an aquanaut.
- B There are many other interesting types of hotels in the world.
- C* The lodge is now so popular that guests often have to make reservations a year in advance.
- D Lodge rules prohibit guests from harming any of the sea life.

Objective 3

This item asks students to determine which of four sentences would give the reader a better understanding of the ideas in the paragraph. The wrong answer choices may have some link to the overall topic but are not directly related to the other sentences in the paragraph and, therefore, would not contribute to the smooth progression of ideas.

- 6 Which of the following is the BEST way to rewrite the ideas in sentence 10?
- A Visitors to the lodge expect a glass elevator to take them to their rooms, they are often quite surprised.
 - B* Visitors to the lodge who expect a glass elevator to take them to their rooms are often quite surprised.
 - C They are often quite surprised, visitors to the lodge who expect a glass elevator to take them to their rooms.
 - D Visitors to the lodge are often quite surprised. Who expect a glass elevator to take them to their rooms.

Objective 4

This item asks a student to choose a more effective way to write the sentence. The correct answer rearranges the words in the sentence so that the meaning is immediately clear.

- 7 What change, if any, should be made in sentence 11?
- A Change **They** to **He**
 - B* Change **there** to **their**
 - C Change **which** to **it**
 - D Make no change

Objective 5

- 8 What change should be made in sentence 16?
- A Delete the comma after **hotel**
 - B Change **probably** to **probly**
 - C* Change **understood** to **understand**
 - D Change **feels** to **feel**

Objective 5

Jamal has written a book report for his English class. As part of a peer-editing conference, he wants you to read his report and suggest how he might improve and correct it. When you are finished reading, answer the multiple-choice questions that follow.

A Lesson from John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*

(1) I really enjoyed John Steinbeck's novel *The Pearl*. (2) It is the story of Kino, a fisherman, who lives in the Mexican village of La Paz with his wife Juana. (3) The story starts when their baby Coyotito is stung by a scorpion. (4) This creature has a narrow tail with a stinger on the end. (5) The doctor refuses to help the boy. (6) Juana treats Coyotito with seaweed.

(7) The next morning Kino dives in the sea for oysters. (8) Finding an enormous pearl in one and realizing it must be very valuable. (9) He and Juana begin dreaming about how much this pearl will improve their lives, but they're in for a big surprise. (10) First the pearl buyers offer Kino an unfair price, and he refuses to sell the precious gem. (11) Then his neighbors try to steal it.

(12) As a result of these problems, Kino and Juana is unable to sleep. (13) They hide the pearl in a hole in the dirt floor of their house. (14) Soon many people throughout the village are begging Kino and Juana for money, and others are trying to cheat them. (15) Even the doctor attempts to convince the couple that he should now treat Coyotito, although Juana's treatment has already healed the boy. (16) In a desperate move the doctor makes Coyotito sick again.

(17) Soon Kino and Juana learn that they can trust no one.

(18) Instead of riches, the pearl brings them sadness and heartache.

(19) They lose their only child and eventually have to flee from their

home. (20) Kino carries the pearl back to the ocean and throws it into the

dark seawater.

(21) I think Steinbeck wants to teach readers a lesson through the

story of Kino's family. (22) He reminds us that riches cannot bring

happiness. (23) At the beginning of the book, Kino and Juana are poor,

but they are happy with each other and their little Coyotito. (24) When

he finds the pearl, he calls it the Pearl of the World because he thinks it

will help his family have a better life. (25) Sadly, he is wrong. (26) The

pearl ends up making the family miserably. (27) At one point Juana even

warns Kino about the pearl when she says, "It will destroy us all!"

(28) Juana is right. (29) The pearl leads to greed, and this greed

eventually causes Coyotito's death.

(30) John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* is an excellent book. (31) It was

written a long time ago, but it still has an important message for us

today. (32) When I start thinking that stylish clothes and a pocket full of

money can make me happy, I will always remember Kino and his pearl.

- 1 What is the BEST way to combine sentences 5 and 6?
- A The doctor refuses to help the boy, and Juana treats Coyotito with seaweed when he refuses.
 - B The doctor, he refuses to help the boy, and Juana, she treats Coyotito with seaweed.
 - C The doctor refuses to help the boy, Juana treats Coyotito with seaweed.
 - D* The doctor refuses to help the boy, so Juana treats Coyotito with seaweed.

Objective 4

When students are asked to combine two sentences, they should keep in mind that the right answer must be a grammatically correct sentence, must be the most effective sentence (not wordy or awkward), and must not change the original meaning.

- 2 What is the BEST way to revise sentence 8?
- A* He finds an enormous pearl in one and realizes it must be very valuable.
 - B Finding an enormous pearl in one. He realizes it must be very valuable.
 - C He finds an enormous pearl in one, he realizes it must be very valuable.
 - D No revision is needed.

Objective 4

- 3 What change, if any, should be made in sentence 12?
- A Change **problems** to **problem's**
 - B* Change **is** to **are**
 - C Change **to** to **too**
 - D Make no change

Objective 5

- 4 What change, if any, should be made in sentence 15?
- A* Change **convinse** to **convince**
 - B Change **Juana's** to **Juanas**
 - C Change **has** to **have**
 - D Make no change

Objective 6

- 5 Which transition word or phrase should be added to the beginning of sentence 20?
- A Before all this happens,
 - B However,
 - C* At the end of the story,
 - D For example,

Objective 3

This item asks students to recognize how an effective transition can improve the progression of ideas from sentence to sentence. Students must choose the transition word or phrase that makes the best sense in the context of the paragraph as a whole.

- 6 The meaning of sentence 24 can be improved by changing the first **he** to —
- A Steinbeck
 - B Coyotito
 - C* Kino
 - D the doctor

Objective 5

This item asks students to replace an ambiguous pronoun (a pronoun whose antecedent is unclear) with a specific noun to clarify the meaning of the sentence.

- 7 What change, if any, should be made in sentence 26?
- A Add a comma after **pearl**
 - B Change **ends** to **end**
 - C* Change **miserably** to **miserable**
 - D Make no change

Objective 5

- 8 Which sentence does NOT belong in this book report?
- A* Sentence 4
 - B Sentence 11
 - C Sentence 18
 - D Sentence 30

Objective 3

This item requires students to recognize an extraneous, or unnecessary, sentence in the passage. When students revise their own writing, they may often discover that they have included a sentence that does not move their composition forward; in other words, the sentence may have some link to the overall topic but is not directly related to the other sentences in the paragraph. Such a sentence can stall the progression of ideas and cause the reader to wonder why that sentence has been included.