

Virginia

Standards of Learning Assessments

Blueprint

Grade 8

Writing Test

for the

2002 English Standards of Learning

**This revised blueprint will be effective with the Spring
2006 administration of the Standards of Learning Tests.**

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Grade 8 Writing Blueprint

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Standards of Learning (SOL) Test Blueprint

Introduction

What is a test blueprint?

A test blueprint is a guide for test construction and use. The Standards of Learning (SOL) test blueprints serve a number of purposes. They serve as a guide to test developers as they write test questions and construct the SOL tests. These blueprints also serve as a guide to educators, parents, and students in that they show:

- (a) the SOL covered by the test and which, if any, have been excluded;
- (b) which SOL are assigned to each reporting category;
- (c) the number of test items in each reporting category and on the total test;
- (d) general information about how the test questions were constructed; and
- (e) the materials that students are allowed to use while taking the test.

How is the test blueprint organized?

The blueprint contains the following information:

1. **Test Development Guidelines:** guidelines used by the testing contractor and the members of the Content Review Committees in developing the SOL tests. This section contains two parts:
 - A. General Considerations — lists general considerations that are used in developing the test as well as considerations specific to a particular content area.
 - B. Ancillary Materials — lists any materials that students are allowed to use while taking the test.
2. **Blueprint Summary Table:** a summary of the blueprint which displays the following information:
 - reporting categories for the test;
 - number of test items in each reporting category;
 - Standards of Learning (SOL) included in each reporting category. SOL are identified by numbers and letters that correspond to the original SOL document;
 - SOL which are excluded from the SOL test;
 - number of operational items on the test;
 - number of field-test items on the test; and
 - total number of items (operational and field-test items) on the test.
3. **Expanded Blueprint:** provides the same information as the Blueprint Summary Table except that the full text of each SOL is included. The scoring rubric is in this section.

What is a reporting category?

Each test assesses a number of SOL. In the test blueprint, SOL are grouped into categories that represent related content or skills. These categories are labeled *Reporting Categories*. For example, a reporting category for the grade 8 writing test is “Edit for correct use of language, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.” Each of the SOL in this reporting category addresses skills used during the editing process. When the results of the SOL tests are reported, the scores will be presented in terms of scores for each reporting category and a total test score.

Are some SOL assigned to more than one reporting category?

In the grade 8 writing test, all letters under a particular SOL are coded to the same reporting category. Each standard, as well as each letter under a standard, is assigned to only one reporting category.

Are there some SOL not included in the test blueprint?

At the end of the blueprint, the SOL not included in the blueprint are listed in "SOL Excluded From This Test."

Will all SOL listed in the blueprint be assessed each time the SOL tests are given?

Each SOL will not be assessed on every SOL test form. To keep the length of a test reasonable, the test will measure a selection of the SOL within a reporting category. However, every SOL that is not excluded in the blueprint is eligible for inclusion on each form of an SOL test. Over time all SOL in a reporting category will be assessed.

Grade 8 Writing Test Development Guidelines

The grade 8 writing test has two components: 1) a multiple-choice component and 2) a direct-writing component in which students write in response to a prompt.

A. General Considerations

1. All items included in this test will address the knowledge and skills specified in the writing strand of the 2002 Virginia Standards of Learning in English for grades 6-8.
2. Items (including prompts) will be examined for any content or context that stereotypes, offends, or unfairly penalizes students based on age, gender, economic status, race, ethnicity, religion, or geographic region.
3. The test will be untimed. The multiple-choice component will be administered on one day and the direct-writing component will be administered on the next day. Dates for the administration of both components will be set by the Department of Education.
4. There is no penalty for guessing. Students' scores will be based on the number of correct answers on the multiple-choice component and points earned on the response to the writing prompt.
5. The multiple-choice component of the grade 8 writing test will be composed of a series of brief scenarios, each of which defines a writing task for a specified audience. Items following the statement of the writing task will address planning or prewriting activities relevant to the specified task and will be coded to the **Planning, Composing, and Revising** reporting category.

A rough draft of a response to the specified writing task will follow the planning/prewriting test items. The rough draft will be divided into two sections. The first section will have errors which require revision such as the inclusion of a sentence that does not belong or two sentences that need to be combined. Items following the first section of the rough draft will require the student to correct these errors by choosing the correct revision from the answer choices provided. These items will also be coded to the **Planning, Composing, and Revising** reporting category.

The second section of the rough draft will contain embedded errors in usage or mechanics. Items following this section will refer to underlined words or groups of words in the second section of the rough draft and will require students to choose the answer which represents correct usage or mechanics. These items will be coded to the **Editing** reporting category. In some cases the underlined words will contain no error and the correct answer will be "as it is."

6. In the direct-writing component of the grade 8 writing test, students will be asked to write in response to a prompt. Prompts will present to the student a context for writing in the form of a question, an issue, or a hypothetical situation. Each student's response to the

writing prompt will receive a score in each of three domains: 1) composing, 2) written expression, and 3) usage and mechanics. Each domain will be scored independently, using the following scale:

- 4 = The writer demonstrates consistent, though not necessarily perfect, control* of almost all the domain's features.
- 3 = The writer demonstrates reasonable, but not consistent, control* of most of the domain's features indicating some weakness in the domain.
- 2 = The writer demonstrates enough inconsistent control* of several of the domain's features indicating some weakness in the domain.
- 1 = The writer demonstrates little or no control* of most of the domain's features.

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

All papers are read by at least two readers, with the student's score for each domain being the total of the score assigned by both readers. For example, in the composing domain, if Reader A gives the student's paper a 3 and Reader B gives the student's paper a 2, the student's score in the composing domain would be a 5. Since a reader may assign a score of 1 to 4, the range of possible scores in any domain would be from 2 to 8 when the two readers' scores are added together.

Score points from the composing and written expression domains are assigned to the **Planning, Composing, and Revising** reporting category. Score points from the usage and mechanics domain are assigned to the **Editing** reporting category.

- 7. Scenarios, rough draft writing samples, items, and prompts will be appropriate for grade 8 students in terms of difficulty, interest, and reading level, as determined by the Content Review Committee.
- 8. Students must be provided scratch paper and access to a dictionary on the direct-writing component of the writing test. Students may **not** use a thesaurus for the direct-writing component.
- 9. Students may **not** use a dictionary or a thesaurus for the multiple-choice component.

B. Ancillary Materials

Refer to the current examiner's manual or the Department of Education's Web site for ancillary materials that may be used.

Grade 8 Writing Test Blueprint Summary Table

Reporting Categories	Multiple-Choice Component: Number of Items	Direct-Writing Component: Number of Possible Score Points	Grade 6 SOL	Grade 7 SOL	Grade 8 SOL
Plan, compose, and revise in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes	10	Composing: 8 Written Expression: 8	6.6 a-e	7.8 a-e	8.7 a-d
Edit for correct use of language, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling	14	Usage and Mechanics: 8	6.7 b-f	7.9 c-e	8.8 b-e
SOL Excluded From This Test			6.7 a	7.8 f 7.9 a-b	8.7 e 8.8 a
Total Number of Operational Items	24	24			
Field Test Items*	14				
Total Number of Items	38	24			

*These field test items will *not* be used to compute students' scores on the test.

Expanded Blueprint

Reporting Category: Plan, compose, and revise writing in a variety of forms for a variety of purposes

Number of Items: 10 multiple-choice items and 16 possible score points for the direct-writing component: Composing and Written Expression

Grade 6 SOL in This Reporting Category:

- 6.6 The student will write narratives, descriptions, and explanations.
- Use a variety of planning strategies to generate and organize ideas.
 - Establish central idea, organization, elaboration, and unity.
 - Select vocabulary and information to enhance the central idea, tone, and voice.
 - Expand and embed ideas by using modifiers, standard coordination, and subordination in complete sentences.
 - Revise writing for clarity.

Grade 7 SOL in This Reporting Category:

- 7.8 The student will develop narrative, expository, and persuasive writing.
- Apply knowledge of prewriting strategies.
 - Elaborate the central idea in an organized manner.
 - Choose vocabulary and information that will create voice and tone.
 - Use clauses and phrases to vary sentences.
 - Revise writing for clarity and effect.

Grade 8 SOL in This Reporting Category:

- 8.7 The student will write in a variety of forms, including narrative, expository, persuasive, and informational.
- Use prewriting strategies to generate and organize ideas.
 - Organize details to elaborate the central idea.
 - Select specific vocabulary and information.
 - Revise writing for word choice, sentence variety, and transitions among paragraphs.

Reporting Category: Edit for correct use of language, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
Number of Items: 14 multiple-choice items and 8 possible score points for the direct-writing component: Usage and Mechanics

Grade 6 SOL in This Reporting Category:

- 6.7 The student will edit writing for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and sentence structure.
- b. Use subject-verb agreement with intervening phrases and clauses.
 - c. Use pronoun-antecedent agreement to include indefinite pronouns.
 - d. Maintain consistent tense inflections across paragraphs.
 - e. Choose adverbs to describe verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.
 - f. Use correct spelling for frequently used words.

Grade 7 SOL in This Reporting Category:

- 7.9 The student will edit writing for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and paragraphing.
- c. Choose pronouns to agree with antecedents.
 - d. Use subject-verb agreement with intervening phrases and clauses.
 - e. Edit for verb tense consistency.

Grade 8 SOL in This Reporting Category:

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

Excluded SOL for Grades 6, 7, and 8

Grade 6 SOL Excluded From This Test:

- 6.7 The student will edit writing for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and sentence structure.
- a. Use a variety of graphic organizers, including sentence diagrams, to analyze and improve sentence formation and paragraph structure.

Grade 7 SOL Excluded From This Test:

- 7.8 The student will develop narrative, expository, and persuasive writing.
- f. Use a word processor to plan, draft, revise, edit, and publish selected writings.
- 7.9 The student will edit writing for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and paragraphing.
- a. Use a variety of graphic organizers, including sentence diagrams, to analyze and improve sentence formation and paragraph structure.
 - b. Demonstrate understanding of sentence formation by identifying the 8 parts of speech and their functions in sentences.

Grade 8 SOL Excluded From This Test:

- 8.7 The student will write in a variety of forms, including narrative, expository, persuasive, and informational.
- e. Use available technology.
- 8.8 The student will edit writing for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and paragraphing.
- a. Use a variety of graphic organizers, including sentence diagrams, to analyze and improve sentence formation and paragraph structure.

Grade 8 Writing Test Composing Rubric

Score Point 4

The writer demonstrates consistent, though not necessarily perfect, control of the composing domain's features. Full elaboration focuses the central idea both at the sentence level and throughout the entire piece by providing purposeful examples, anecdotes, illustrations, or details. Narrative organization is intact; in other modes, minor organizational lapses may occur. In all types of writing, a strong organizational plan is apparent. Any organizational lapses that occur do not significantly detract from the presentation. Several elements in the writing provide evidence of unity: appropriate transitions, a consistent point of view (e.g., not switching from "I" to "you"), a lack of digressions, and the presence of a lead and closure that is more than mere repetition of statements.

Score Point 3

The writer demonstrates reasonable, but not consistent, control of the composing domain's features; the writer may control some features more than others. Purposeful elaboration focuses the central idea both at the sentence level and throughout the entire piece of writing. However, occasional thinness or unevenness in elaboration may occur. Narrative organization is intact. Organizational lapses may occur (in modes other than narration), but an overall plan is apparent. Unity is evidenced by the fact that few, if any, minor digressions or shifts in point of view occur. Transitions are, on the whole, purposefully used. An opening and closing, though not sophisticated, are present.

Score Point 2

The writer demonstrates inconsistent control of several features, indicating significant weakness in the composing domain. At this score point, major digressions may be present, or ideas compete and no one idea emerges as central. Even if a single idea dominates, the writing may be a list of general, underdeveloped statements or a skeletal plot. Often, little elaboration or organization is apparent. Although a contrived closure may be present, inconsistent control of transitions or the lack of a logically elaborated central idea prevent unity from emerging.

Score Point 1

The writer demonstrates little or no control of most of the composing domain's features. The focus on a central idea is lacking, or the piece is so sparse that the presence of a clear focus is insufficient for it to earn a higher score. Typically, the writing jumps from point to point, without a unifying central idea. No overall organizational strategy is apparent. The writing seems haphazard, and sentences can be rearranged without substantially changing the meaning. Bare statement is the norm, but even in responses that are several pages long, no purposeful elaboration is present.

Grade 8 Writing Test Written Expression Rubric

Score Point 4

The writer demonstrates consistent, though not necessarily perfect, control of the written expression domain's features. The result is a purposefully crafted message that the reader remembers, primarily because its precise information and vocabulary resonate as images in the reader's mind. Highly specific word choice and information also create tone in the writing and enhance the writer's voice. Metaphors, similes, and other figurative language, if present, are purposeful. The writer repeats or varies sentence construction for effect and appropriately subordinates ideas and embeds modifiers on a regular basis, resulting in a rhythmic flow throughout the piece.

Score Point 3

The writer demonstrates reasonable, but not consistent, control of the written expression domain's features; the writer may control some features more than others. On the whole, specific word choice and information cause the message to be clear; occasionally, a few examples of vivid or purposeful figurative language may be present. Along with instances of successful control, a few general statements or vague words might be presented; when they are, the tone and voice of the piece will flatten somewhat. Overall, subordination and sentence variety are present, but occasional awkward constructions or the lack of structural complexity may diminish the rhythm of the paper.

Score Point 2

The writer demonstrates inconsistent control of several features, indicating significant weakness in the written expression domain. Some specificity of word choice might exist, but mostly the message will be crafted with imprecise, bland language. As a result, the writer's voice emerges only on occasion, if at all. The selection of information may be uneven and/or consist of an attempt to tell everything that the writer knows about a topic. A relative lack of sentence variety may make the reading monotonous, and awkward constructions may be distracting enough to

make the writer's meaning unclear on occasion. While a few brief rhythmic clusters of sentences may occur, an overall sense of rhythmic flow is not present.

Score Point 1

The writer demonstrates little or no control of most of the written expression domain's features. Both word choice and information are general, vague, and/or repetitive. A lack of sentence variety makes the presentation monotonous. The existence of several extremely awkward constructions may further reduce the paper's stylistic effect. The writer's lack of control of vocabulary and information prevents both tone and voice from emerging.

Grade 8 Writing Test Usage/Mechanics Rubric

Score Point 4

The writer demonstrates consistent, though not necessarily perfect, control of the domain's features of usage/mechanics. The writing demonstrates a thorough understanding of usage and mechanics as specified in the Virginia K-8 SOL. The author uses capitalization, punctuation, usage, and sentence formation and applies the structural principles of spelling. A few careless errors in usage and mechanics may be present. However, the writer's control of the domain's many features is too strong for these mistakes to detract from the performance.

Score Point 3

The writer demonstrates reasonable, but not consistent, control of most of the domain's features of usage/mechanics. The writing demonstrates a basic understanding of usage and mechanics as specified in the Virginia K-8 SOL. For the most part, the author appropriately applies both the rules of capitalization, punctuation, usage, and sentence formation and the structural principles of spelling expected of 8th graders.

Score Point 2

The writer demonstrates inconsistent control of several features, indicating significant weakness in the domain of usage/mechanics. Evidence of the author's knowledge of features of this domain appears alongside frequent errors. In terms of both usage and mechanics, the writer inconsistently applies the rules of capitalization, punctuation, usage, spelling, and sentence formation as specified in the Virginia K-8 SOL. The density of errors across features outweighs the feature control present in the paper.

Score Point 1

The writer demonstrates little or no control of most of the domain's features of usage/mechanics. Frequent and severe errors distract the reader and make the writing very hard to understand. Even when meaning is not significantly affected, the density and variety of errors overwhelm the performance and keep it from meeting minimum standards of competence.