

**CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOL
EXIT EXAM**

**ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ARTS
ESSAY PRACTICE TEST
RESPONSE TO WRITING PROMPT
FORM ESSAY F**

Source:






**Standards and Assessment Division
California Department of Education**

Edited by:

RUSD Department of Educational Accountability

WRITING

 **REMINDER**

-  Write your response to the writing prompt below.
-  You may give your writing a title if you would like, but it is not necessary.
-  You may **NOT** use a dictionary. If you do not know how to spell a word, sound the word out and do the best you can.
-  You may either print or write in cursive.
-  Write clearly! Any erasures or strike-throughs should be as clean as possible.

Writing Task 2:

Some students at your school expressed an interest in making the school more attractive by getting rid of the trash on the school grounds.

Write a persuasive essay for your school paper in which you convince the readers of the importance of getting rid of the trash and making the school more attractive. Convince your readers through the use of specific reasons and examples.

Checklist for Your Writing

The following checklist will help you do your best work. Make sure you:

- Read the description of the task carefully.
- Organize your writing with a strong introduction, body, and conclusion.
- State your position, support it with specific examples, and address the reader's concerns.
- Use words that are appropriate for your audience and purpose.
- Vary your sentences to make your writing interesting to read.
- Check for mistakes in grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence formation.

NOTE: The following pages provide a sample student essay for this writing task at each of the four score points, with commentary and rationale for the given score. The student responses have been typed with the students' own content, grammar, spelling, capitalization, and spelling. The CAHSEE Response to Writing Prompt Scoring Guide for this writing task may be found on page 55.

RESPONSE TO WRITING PROMPT

4

**Score Point 4
Student Response**

Would you enjoy taking your classes at the city dump? Trash is not beautiful. It is a well-known fact that students learn better when they're in a clean environment. To be more attractive, trash on our school grounds must be picked up. The importance of picking up trash is to beautify our campus and make our school a healthier place to learn.

We want our campus to be attractive and clean, right? When rival schools come to compete against us, we don't want them going home criticizing us because of our campus. We don't want our mascot become a rat or a pig in their eyes. We want to keep our campus clean to show that we're not slobs and are educated enough to pick up our own garbage.

Who would want to eat lunch inside a dumpster? Or exercise in a gym that smells like rotten eggs and spoiled milk? We need a campus that will make it easier and healthier to learn. Would essays show the student's best if they brainstormed ideas while looking out the window at old food, used bandaids, empty soda cans and gum wrappers? The way this campus looks influences the way we perform in our classrooms. To get the maximum quality work done, we need clean and sanitary workspaces.

In conclusion, picking up any trash around school will be beneficial to everybody, especially us. If you see a piece of paper blowin around stop it with your foot and bend down, pick it up, then throw it away. There's no reason why our campus needs to be anything other than attractive. With everyone's help, it can be attractive and provide a better learning atmosphere.

Commentary

In this response, the writer addresses all parts of the persuasive writing task: stating a position about the importance of cleaning up trash, defending the position with evidence, and anticipating the reader's concerns. The first paragraph gives the writer's position ("trash on our school grounds must be picked up") and then gives two reasons that picking up trash is important ("to beautify our campus and make our school a healthier place to learn"). These two ideas become the focus for the rest of the essay.

The writer uses the questions that open each of the next two paragraphs to anticipate objections to cleaning up trash, thereby addressing the reader's potential concerns. The second paragraph provides several images to support the argument that a more attractive campus would provide specific benefits (e.g., "We don't want our mascot to become a rat or a pig in their [rival schools'] eyes"). Although the third paragraph provides little detail about the health aspect of the argument, it does use specific details to develop the concept that a clean environment is conducive to learning. The essay provides a strong conclusion that not only restates the writer's position but also extends the argument with a call to action: "If you see a piece of paper blowin around, stop it with your foot and bend down, pick it up, then throw it away".

The essay demonstrates the control of organization that is required for a 4-point paper, and the stated position is developed with details. Although there is a misplaced modifier ("To be more attractive, trash . . ."), and a few additional errors in conventions, overall the writer demonstrates the control of conventions. The essay also uses a variety of sentence types and precise, descriptive language. Overall, this essay is a sample of a 4-point response.

RESPONSE TO WRITING PROMPT

3

**Score Point 3
Student Response**

Nobody would like it if people stopped picking up trash and let our school become filled with trash. It is very important to keep our school clean to provide an appropriate learning environment. If everyone would help out our school would look more attractive.

A clean school campus would offer a nicer and appropriate learning environment. A dirty school makes it harder to concentrate on school work. If trash covered the campus students might be looking out classroom windows for what awaits them after class and wondering why someone is not cleaning it up. A clean school would help the students concentrate so grades might raise not only making the school look better on the outside but academically as well.

No one enjoys being in a dirty environment. Before school, snack, lunch, and after school would be much less enjoy-able to both the students and faculty if our campus was dirty. People do not like eating in trash filled lunch areas and so there would be more students leaving school permitted or not for lunch. Basically, students and teachers would not be able to stand being in a dirty environment during school hours.

In conclusion living environments are kept clean and so it is equally important to keep learning environments clean as well. Both the students and faculty spend large portions of their days here so to make school a little better and more attractive our school needs to be kept clean. It would be easy if everyone just did their part.

Commentary

In this response to the writing prompt, the writer begins with a paragraph that states three positions about picking up trash—that “Nobody would like” a school “filled with trash,” that a clean school provides “an appropriate learning environment,” and that a clean school would “look more attractive.” The paragraphs that follow discuss each of these ideas.

The second paragraph of the essay focuses on the learning environment, explaining that students can concentrate better if there is no trash on campus. The third paragraph addresses the idea that “no one enjoys being in a dirty environment.” The final paragraph restates the idea that the school could look more attractive if everyone helped.

In general, the paper defends the three positions with some details and examples, but the development is not as thoughtful or thorough as that in a 4-point paper. In the third paragraph, for example, each sentence restates the topic sentence and adds only a few additional details.

The paper addresses readers’ concerns and expectations in a general way by stating that “Nobody would like it if people stopped picking up trash” and “No one enjoys being in a dirty environment,” and thus a general sense of audience is evident throughout the essay.

There are a few errors in the conventions of written English, but they do not interfere with the reader’s understanding. Overall, this essay is an example of a 3-point response to this writing task.

RESPONSE TO WRITING PROMPT

2

**Score Point 2
Student Response**

The importance of getting rid of garbage on school camps is very important. The importance of getting rid of the garbage is making are school look nice, giving less work for the teachers and janitors to do. Another reason it is important because if I don't look oke people are going to think that it isn't a good school.

I think that this a good subject to write on because the trash on school campus is terrible. School campuses have alot of garbage because people don't care about throwing there trash away. But people need to think more reasonsivly because they are destroying the earth if they do not pick up there garbage. So people from now on when you have garbage don't throw it on the ground throw it in the garbage can.

Another reason it is important for people not to litter because this where we live and we don't need to destroy where we live. Pluse what would other people come to our school meaning the district office people think of us if we just left our trash all over the ground that would make us look bad.

Commentary

In this response to the writing prompt, the writer begins by stating three reasons that picking up trash is important: "makeing are school look nice," "giving less work for the teachers and janitors to do," and preventing people from thinking "that it isn't a good school."

Although the paper states these positions with some authority, it fails to support them in the paragraphs that follow. The second paragraph focuses on a new, although related, topic, that people should pick up their trash to avoid destroying the earth. The third paragraph moves from the idea that trash destroys the earth to the idea that it destroys "where we live." This paragraph also contains an attempt to develop the third position in the opening paragraph, that having trash around suggests that this isn't a good school: "if we just left our trash all over the ground that would make us look bad."

This essay provides little or no support for its thesis, shows little control over organization, and demonstrates an inconsistent tone and focus. It also fails to anticipate readers' concerns. These factors, in addition to the lack of control over the conventions of written English, particularly spelling, make this essay an example of a 2-point response.

RESPONSE TO WRITING PROMPT

1

**Score Point 1
Student Response**

It would be a good idea to clean up our envirement, maybe if there was more trash cans well you could make our schlool cleaner if just everybody picked up on thing our schlool would not be 3/4ths clean that's how bad our mess has gotten to who wants to attend a school that's now for the trash and ants and roaches etc. No one does that's why we should clean our school & our great re-ward in the end a clean & safe and healthy envirement and school.

Commentary

In this response to the writing prompt, the writer begins with the position that cleaning up the environment is a good idea. This statement is followed by two suggestions—that there could be more trash cans and that everyone should help pick up trash. Another topic which is a description of the extent of the trash problem at school, and then the final sentence of the response reaffirms that cleaning up trash will have beneficial results.

This response offers several ideas related to the topic but fails to support these ideas with details or examples. In addition, the response lacks consistency of focus and fails to demonstrate a control of organization. The serious errors in the conventions of written English, particularly in sentence boundaries, interfere with the reader's understanding of the essay and result in a score of 1.

SCORING GUIDE

CAHSEE Scoring Guide
Response to Writing Prompt

4 The essay —

- *clearly* addresses all parts of the writing task.
- provides a *meaningful* thesis, demonstrates a consistent tone and focus, and illustrates a *purposeful* control of organization.
- *thoughtfully* supports the thesis and main ideas with *specific* details and examples.
- provides a *variety* of sentence types and uses *precise, descriptive* language.
- demonstrates a *clear* sense of audience.
- contains *few, if any, errors* in the conventions of the English language. (Errors are generally first-draft in nature.)*

A Persuasive Composition:

- states and maintains a position, *authoritatively* defends that position with precise and relevant evidence and *convincingly* addresses the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

3 The essay —

- addresses all parts of the writing task.
- provides a thesis, demonstrates a consistent tone and focus, and illustrates a control of organization.
- supports the thesis and main ideas with details and examples.
- provides a *variety* of sentence types and uses *some descriptive* language.
- demonstrates a *general* sense of audience.
- may contain *some errors* in the conventions of the English language. (Errors do **not** interfere with the reader's understanding of the essay.)*

A Persuasive Composition:

- states and maintains a position, *generally* defends that position with precise and relevant evidence and addresses the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

2 The essay —

- addresses *only parts* of the writing task.
- *may* provide a thesis, demonstrates an *inconsistent* tone and focus and illustrates *little, if any,* control of organization.
- *may* support the thesis and main ideas with *limited, if any,* details and/or examples.
- provides *few, if any,* types of sentence types, and *basic, predictable* language.
- demonstrates *little or no* sense of audience.
- may contain *several errors* in the conventions of the English language. (Errors **may** interfere with the reader's understanding of the essay.)*

A Persuasive Composition:

- defends a position with *little* evidence and *may* address the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

1 The essay may be too short to evaluate or —

- addresses *only one part* of the writing task.
- *may* provide a *weak, if any,* thesis; demonstrates *little or no* consistency of tone and focus; and illustrates *little or no* control of organization.
- *fails* to support ideas with details and/or examples.
- may provide **no** sentence variety and uses *limited* vocabulary.
- may demonstrate **no** sense of audience.
- may contain *serious errors* in the conventions of the English language. (Errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the essay.)*

A Persuasive Composition:

- *fails* to defend a position with any evidence and *fails* to address the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

non-scorable

B = Blank **L** = Written in a language other than English **T** = Off-topic **I** = Illegible/Unintelligible

* *Conventions of the English language refer to grammar, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and usage.*