

High School Level Writing Assessment

The PSSA Writing Assessment is given in grades 5, 8, and 11.

- Look at the Domain Scoring Guide included in your handout
- Look at the sample Writing Prompt Sheets included here and practice
- Read the directions carefully
- Ask to have the directions translated if possible
- You have to write using each of these three styles of writing in the 11th grade assessment
 - informational – share knowledge, instructions, or ideas – reporting, explaining, summarizing, cause and effect
 - narrative – series of events, reflect on experiences
 - persuasive – support a position, defend your opinion, or convince the reader
- You must complete all three prompts
- Do your best and write what you can – you can get partial credit, but if you leave it blank you will receive no points
- You may not use a dictionary or thesaurus
- Get involved and interested in what you will write
- Use prewriting skills
 - brainstorm
 - list
 - map
 - outline, organize
- Use a topic sentence and organize the body of your essay
- In the ending, restate your topic sentence and summarize
- Be sure to edit your writing when you are finished – look for content, organization, and proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation
- You will be scored in five domains or areas: focus, content, organization, style, and conventions
- You may use the Domain Scoring Guide – you may also ask to have this translated or explained in simpler language

PENNSYLVANIA WRITING ASSESSMENT DOMAIN SCORING GUIDE

FOCUS	CONTENT	ORGANIZATION	STYLE	CONVENTIONS	
4	The single controlling point made with an awareness of task (mode) about a specific topic. Sharp, distinct controlling point made about a single topic with evident awareness of task (mode)	The presence of ideas developed through facts, examples, anecdotes, details, opinions, statistics, reasons and/or explanations. Substantial, specific and/or illustrative content demonstrating strong development and sophisticated ideas	The order developed and sustained within and across paragraphs using transitional devices including introduction and conclusion. Sophisticated arrangement of content with evident and/or subtle transitions	The choice, use and arrangement of words and sentence structures that create tone and voice. Precise, illustrative use of a variety of words and sentence structures to create consistent writer's voice and tone appropriate to audience	The use of grammar, mechanics, spelling, usage and sentence formation. Evident control of grammar, mechanics, spelling, usage and sentence formation
3	Apparent point made about a single topic with sufficient awareness of task (mode)	Sufficiently developed content with adequate elaboration or explanation	Functional arrangement of content that sustains a logical order with some evidence of transitions	Generic use of a variety of words and sentence structures that may or may not create writer's voice and tone appropriate to audience	Sufficient control of grammar, mechanics, spelling, usage and sentence formation
2	No apparent point but evidence of a specific topic	Limited content with inadequate elaboration or explanation	Confused or inconsistent arrangement of content with or without attempts at transition	Limited word choice and control of sentence structures that inhibit voice and tone	Limited control of grammar, mechanics, spelling, usage and sentence formation
1	Minimal evidence of a topic	Superficial and/or minimal content	Minimal control of content arrangement	Minimal variety in word choice and minimal control of sentence structures	Minimal control of grammar, mechanics, spelling, usage and sentence formation

NON-SCORABLE	OFF-PROMPT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is illegible; i.e., includes so many indecipherable words that no sense can be made of the response • Is incoherent; i.e., words are legible but syntax is so garbled that response makes no sense • Is insufficient; i.e., does not include enough to assess domains adequately • Is a blank paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is readable but did not respond to prompt



**PENNSYLVANIA SYSTEM OF SCHOOL ASSESSMENT
FEBRUARY 2001**

**GRADE 11
WRITING PROMPT SHEET**

PROMPT #1

You will have one class period (but no more than 60 minutes if your class is longer) to plan, write and proofread your response, making any necessary corrections.

Planning:

- Think about what you want to write.
- Reread the prompt to make sure you are writing about the topic.
- Make notes. Use your prewriting skills, such as mapping or outlining.
- Carefully read the five statements below the prompt. Each statement refers to one of the scorable domains: focus, content, organization, style and conventions.

Writing:

- Write your essay on pages 5 and 6 of your writing booklet.
- Proofread your essay and make necessary corrections.

READ THE ENTIRE PROMPT CAREFULLY

The local school board plans to change the school year from ten to twelve months. The school board wants to know what students think about this plan. You decide to inform the school board of how this new plan will affect you personally.

As you write your paper, remember to:

- ★ Clearly state what you think of this plan to extend the school year to twelve months.
- ★ Include specific reasons, details, facts and examples to explain how this change will affect you personally.
- ★ Present your ideas in a clear and logical order, including an introduction, body and conclusion.
- ★ Use a variety of words and well-constructed sentences.
- ★ Correct any errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization and usage.

Proofread your essay and make necessary corrections.



PENNSYLVANIA SYSTEM OF SCHOOL ASSESSMENT
FEBRUARY 2001

GRADE 11
WRITING PROMPT SHEET

PROMPT #2

You will have one class period (but no more than 60 minutes if your class is longer) to plan, write and proofread your response, making any necessary corrections.

Planning:

- Think about what you want to write.
- Reread the prompt to make sure you are writing about the topic.
- Make notes. Use your prewriting skills, such as mapping or outlining.
- Carefully read the five statements below the prompt. Each statement refers to one of the scorable domains: focus, content, organization, style and conventions.

Writing:

- Write your essay on pages 7 and 8 of your writing booklet.
- Proofread your essay and make necessary corrections.

READ THE ENTIRE PROMPT CAREFULLY

Many times in life we avoid experiences because we are afraid to do them or dread the thoughts of a negative experience. Other times we have no choice and must do what we dread the most. In some instances our worst fears are realized, but more often we learn that our fears were unjustified. Write about an experience you dreaded but discovered was not nearly as bad as you had expected.

As you write your paper, remember to:

- ★ Write to show that this experience was not as bad as you had expected.
- ★ Include specific reasons, details, facts and examples to develop your narrative.
- ★ Present your ideas in a clear and logical order, including an introduction, body and conclusion.
- ★ Use a variety of words and well-constructed sentences.
- ★ Correct any errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization and usage.

Proofread your essay and make necessary corrections.



PENNSYLVANIA SYSTEM OF SCHOOL ASSESSMENT
FEBRUARY 2001

GRADE 11
WRITING PROMPT SHEET

PROMPT #3

You will have one class period (but no more than 60 minutes if your class is longer) to plan, write and proofread your response, making any necessary corrections.

Planning:

- Think about what you want to write.
- Reread the prompt to make sure you are writing about the topic.
- Make notes. Use your prewriting skills, such as mapping or outlining.
- Carefully read the five statements below the prompt. Each statement refers to one of the scorable domains: focus, content, organization, style and conventions.

Writing:

- Write your essay on pages 9 and 10 of your writing booklet.
- Proofread your essay and make necessary corrections.

READ THE ENTIRE PROMPT CAREFULLY

After participating in discussions in American government class, you decide that you would like to be in a position to make the laws that govern the society in which you live. Like other citizens, you agree with some laws and disagree with others. If you could either create a new law or eliminate a current law, what would it be and why? Write to persuade others as to why you would create a new law or eliminate a current one.

As you write your paper, remember to:

- ★ Clearly state why you would create or eliminate a specific law.
- ★ Include specific reasons, details, facts and examples to persuade other citizens to support your ideas.
- ★ Present your ideas in a clear and logical order, including an introduction, body and conclusion.
- ★ Use a variety of words and well-constructed sentences.
- ★ Correct any errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization and usage.

Proofread your essay and make necessary corrections.