

Paraprofessionals Assessment Writing Study Guide

Writing is assessed in six different traits. The first four areas listed (ideas, organization, sentence fluency, and conventions) are the traits that will be scored on the paraprofessional writing assessment.

1. Ideas	Clarity of message backed by important, carefully chosen details and supporting information
2. Organization	Structure and order of writing
3. Sentence Fluency	Rhythm and sound of the writing as it is read aloud
4. Conventions	Correctness of spelling, punctuation, grammar and usage, capitalization, and paragraph indentation
5. Word Choice	Words chosen convey a specific meaning and help readers understand the point
6. Voice	Writer's own personal style

For the paraprofessional assessment, individuals will write up to two pages on a specified topic. The writing will be scored on ideas, organization, sentence fluency and conventions. A scoring guide is attached at the back of this packet. Scores must be at least a four in the above areas to pass the writing assessment.

Sample Writing Prompts

Choose one or more of these writing prompts to practice writing up to two pages. Review your writing draft with the writing guide to revision. When your writing is complete, analyze your writing piece using the attached scoring guide. Remember a score of four is passing.

1. Everyone is an “expert” at something. Think of something that you do well. Explain how to do this clearly and completely so your reader will understand just what it takes to be good at this activity.
2. You may have heard the expression, “Experience is the best teacher.” Think of an experience or situation in which you either learned something or taught something to someone else. Explain what was learned or taught by this experience.
3. Most people, at some time in their lives, have had to wait for something they wanted very much. It might have been a certain event they looked forward to or a certain object or thing they wanted. Think of a time in your life when you had to wait for something and tell what happened.
4. Think about a change that you would make in your community. What would that change be? Why? Write a letter to the mayor or a city council person outlining your proposed change.

WRITER'S GUIDE TO REVISION

Use the checklist below to help you revise your writing.

IDEAS AND CONTENT

- My paper has a clear purpose or makes a point.
- I choose clear details and examples to help the reader understand my message.
- I stick to the main idea. I leave out details that do not matter.
- I am writing about something I know.
- I can easily answer the question: What is the point of this paper or story?

ORGANIZATION

- My introduction would make a reader want to keep reading.
- I tell things in an order that makes sense.
- Details in my paper go together.
- My paper ends in a good spot. It doesn't stop suddenly or drag on too long.
- Connections are clear so a reader can see how details link to the main idea.
- My conclusion or summary wraps things up well.

SENTENCE FLUENCY

- My sentences make sense. They are clear.
- I vary the length of my sentences.
- My sentences are not wordy.
- Sentences begin in different ways. (They do NOT all begin with the same words.)
- My paper would be easy to read out loud.
- If I used dialogue, the parts sound natural.

CONVENTIONS

- My paragraphs begin in the right spots.
- My capitalization and punctuation are correct.
- I have used correct grammar, which contributes to the clarity of my paper.
- I have proofread my paper.
- My spelling is accurate; I have checked words I did not know.

VOICE

- My writing shows what I really think and feel.
- I like what I have written.
- My writing sounds like me, and not like someone else.
- I have thought about my reader. I have tried to make my writing clear to the reader.
- The tone (serious, friendly, humorous) and style (casual, formal) are just right for my topic and my audience.

WORD CHOICE

- The words I choose will make my meaning clear.
- My words paint a picture in the reader's mind.
- I have tried to find my own way to say things.
- Sometimes I have tried to say something in a new or different way.
- I have considered my reader and used words that are appealing, informative, and understandable.

WRITER'S SCORING GUIDE

	Ideas and Content	Organization	Sentence Fluency	Conventions	Word Choice	Voice
6	The writing is very clear, focused and interesting. It holds the reader's attention all the way through.	The writing shows careful and effective planning. The order of ideas moves the reader easily through the text.	Sentences are carefully crafted; they flow smoothly and effectively with a natural rhythm.	Spelling, capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing, and usage are effective and make the writing easy to read and understand.	The writer thoughtfully chooses words that make the message unusually clear and interesting.	The writer shows deep involvement with the topic. The writer skillfully matches the way the message sounds with the purpose and the audience.
5	The writing is clear, focused and interesting. It holds the reader's attention.	The writing shows careful planning. The order of ideas helps the reader follow and understand the paper from beginning to end.	Sentences are carefully crafted and flow smoothly with a natural rhythm from one to the next. The writing is easy to read aloud and understand.	Spelling, capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing and usage are correct and make the writing easy to read and understand.	The writer thoughtfully chooses words that make the message clear and interesting.	The writer shows strong involvement with the topic. The reader can picture the writer behind the words. The writer effectively matches the way the message sounds with the purpose and audience.
4	The writing is clear and sticks to the topic. It holds the reader's attention.	Ideas and details are presented in a way that makes sense. The paper is easy to follow.	Sentences make sense and flow from one to the other. The writing is easy to read aloud.	Spelling, capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing and usage are mostly correct. If there are a few errors, they don't make the paper difficult to read and understand.	The writer chooses words that help make the message clear.	The writer is involved with the topic. The reader can tell who the writer is behind the words. The message sounds like it matches the purpose and the audience.
3	The reader can understand what the writer is trying to say, but the paper may not hold the reader's attention all the way through.	The writer has tried to present ideas and details in a way that makes sense, but the paper may sometimes be hard to follow.	Most sentences are understandable, but not very smooth.	Spelling, capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing and usage show some minor problems. The reader can follow what is being said; however, there are enough mistakes that the reader really notices them and may have some difficulty following what the writer is saying.	The writer uses words that get the message across, but only in an ordinary way.	The writer is not always very involved with the topic. The reader gets hints of who the writer is behind the words. The writer begins to match the way the message sounds with the purpose and the audience.
2	The writing is somewhat unclear and has few appropriate details.	The writing lacks a clear structure, which makes it difficult to follow. Rereading may help, but sometimes the piece is too short to show an orderly development.	The sentences that are often choppy or rambling make much of the writing difficult to follow or read aloud.	There are frequent significant errors that make it difficult to read the paper.	The writer uses words that take away from the meaning and impact of the writing.	The writer shows little involvement with the topic, purpose or audience.
1	The writing is unclear and seems to have no purpose.	The writing is difficult to follow. The reader has to reread often and may still be confused.	Sentences that are incomplete, rambling or awkward make the writing hard to read and understand.	There are so many errors that the reader has a very hard time getting through the paper. Parts may be impossible to follow.	The writer has a difficult time finding the right words.	The writer seems to make no effort to deal with the topic, purpose or audience in an interesting way.

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Tips to Strengthen Writing Traits

Ideas

1. Make sure that you have plenty of information before you write. Brainstorm a list of possible ideas before starting.
2. Don't try to tell everything. Pick out main ideas and relevant information.
3. Focus on the details that matter and would be interesting to a reader.

Organization

1. Have a plan on what ideas you will group together for your writing and organize your writing by an order that would make sense for your reader.

Chronological order: time of events or milestones that are relevant

Specific content: different paragraphs on supporting details for main topic

Perspective: clear statement on position, then evidence against that position

2. Begin with a strong lead sentence.

"It's a funny thing about mothers and fathers. Even when their own child..."

"When an ancient streamside conifer falls down into the water, a complex process of .."

3. Use connecting words and phrases, sometimes called transitions, to help your reader see how one idea ties to another.

To show location use words such as above, beneath, in front of, beyond, etc.

To show time use first...second, later, after a while, soon, etc.

To compare or contrast use however, even though, similarly, etc.

To add information use for example, besides, in addition, etc.

To conclude or summarize consider words such as finally, as a result, etc.

4. Check your order to make sure details go together.
5. End your paper with a powerful statement.

Sentence Fluency

1. Read it aloud to determine if any parts require you to slow down or pause. These are areas that can be smoothed out by re-writing.
2. Have someone else read it aloud to you.
3. Write out the first four words in every sentence and see if you have a variety.
4. Check to make sure that you don't have lots of short, choppy sentences. If you do, work on combining these into a longer, more interesting sentence.

We went to the beach. It was fun. We met friends. We flew kites.

Last Saturday, we met friends at the beach for some kite flying fun.

5. Check to make sure that you don't have a long run-on sentence that is not hooked together by several clauses such as and, but, then, and because.

Conventions

1. Look for one type of error at a time. Look for grammatical errors by reading aloud. Look next for punctuation errors. Use a highlighter to check for spelling.
2. Begin to read at the bottom of the page (last paragraph) and read up the page.
3. Read writing slowly.
4. Use writing tools to support (dictionary, handbook for punctuation and grammar).