

On Demand Writing — *Assessment*

Section 3: *On-Demand Writing Assessment* focuses on information pertaining to Kentucky's On-demand Assessment.

- **Chapter 13: *Fundamentals of Kentucky's On-Demand Writing Assessment*** states the purposes of on-demand writing. This chapter also provides the reader with specific information about the changes beginning with the 2006-2007 assessment.

Fundamentals of Kentucky On-Demand Writing Assessment

The following quote from the recently published *Writing On Demand* by Anne Gere provides a national perspective on on-demand writing:

“We live in a world of high-stakes testing and, in the area of writing, of testing on-demand writing. This is serious for secondary school students, who must learn to write effectively within a narrow window of time. . . Highly focused writing in response to a specific prompt, completed within a limited amount of composing time, and scored using a weighted rubric, is the norm for most large-scale writing samples currently required by states and schools, by the current Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and American College Test (ACT) writing exams, by some colleges, and by Advanced Placement (AP) English exams.”

On-Demand Writing in Kentucky

Beginning in 2006-2007, students at grades 5, 8 and 12 will complete a sample of writing that addresses a prompt provided by the Kentucky Department of Education. They will complete this task independently and under specific time constraints. A component of the grades 5 and 8 on-demand assessment will include 12 multiple choice questions on revision and editing skills. At Grade 12, students will complete two samples, one of which will be developed based on provided text. The writing samples completed by students for the on-demand assessment will be scored analytically using the *Kentucky Writing Scoring Rubric*.

In general, the following features apply to on-demand writing tests:

- Students write independently under monitored conditions.
- One or more prompts are provided by a testing contractor, a Department of Education, etc. Students do not know the exact prompt before taking the test.
- Purposes, audiences and forms may vary from test to test. In some cases, students know the general purposes for writing called for in the test (e.g., write to persuade, inform, narrate).
- Students write under specified time limitations. Often, students are permitted to plan, draft, revise, and edit their work within the allotted time.
- The writing is evaluated by reference to criteria in a specific rubric or scoring guide.
- Evaluation is conducted by persons other than the student’s teacher.
- Large-scale on-demand writing tests assess skill in writing, not content-area knowledge. However, students may draw on such knowledge in writing, as well as their experiences and thinking, as appropriate for the prompt.

Purposes in On-Demand Writing

The prompts for the on-demand writing assessment will ask students to write for one of the following purposes:

Narrate an Event for a Transactive Purpose

This means that students will use narrative (a story or an account) in order to support an idea, opinion, conclusion, interpretation, request, etc. The story, which might be based on the student's experience, **is a way of developing the writing in order to accomplish a realistic, transactive purpose.**

All writing for the on-demand writing test is transactive in nature, so when students develop their writing by using narrative, their purpose is **not** to complete, for example, a personal narrative. The story is a **means of helping students inform/persuade readers to accept their ideas, opinions, conclusions, etc.** The story is **one form of support and idea development** available to the writer in accomplishing his or her purposes.

Some ways to indicate this purpose:

- “Tell about a time . . .”
- “Refer to your own experience and . . .”
- “From your own experience, relate an incident that . . .”

Some ways teachers can include classroom experience in writing that uses narrative to accomplish a “transactive” purpose:

Ask students to write to

- use a narrative to demonstrate a problem or need and then explain what the problem reveals and why it is important
- help readers accomplish a personal or social goal by giving an example of their personal experience
- use narrative to inform readers about a needed change or improvement or to support ideas for a change
- provide a narrative in order to help readers perform a task better

Persuade

This means that students will write in order **to convince the reader to take some action or to accept the writer’s idea, request, opinion, conclusion, interpretation, plan, recommendation, etc.** Providing readers with appropriate information may well be a part of a persuasive writing, but student writers also should remember that their purpose is **to convince the reader to agree with the writer’s ideas or to take the action the writer advocates.** Students should show awareness of their audience in developing a persuasive writing. They should develop the writing in ways to convince the reader.

Some ways to indicate this purpose:

- “Convince readers to”
- “Write to help others accept your opinion about”
- “Urge readers to”

Some ways teachers can engage students in persuasive writing:

Ask students to write to convince readers to

- accept an opinion about an issue or to change the reader’s view of something
- take action to solve a problem or accomplish a goal
- understand something in a different way; accept a different interpretation
- accept a plan or provide support for efforts to make an improvement
- make the right choice or decision about something

Inform

Writing to inform means that students will write in order **to present information and provide explanation that can help readers understand something relevant to students’ lives and experiences (e.g., issue, problem, need, event) or to accomplish a task/procedure, achieve a goal, solve a problem, etc.**

Students should be reminded that merely providing information is not enough for writing such as that called for in the on-demand writing test. Explanation (idea development) is needed. In writing to inform, students should reveal their thinking and their ability to communicate effectively with readers. Writing to inform, then, will provide explanation, information, and other support to accomplish a realistic purpose. In developing the writing, students should show their ability to communicate effectively with readers, not merely repeat information they have learned, as in writing to demonstrate learning to the teacher.

Some ways to indicate this purpose:

- “Help readers understand that . . . “
- “Share your knowledge. . . ”
- “Provide information that will . . .”

Some examples of ways to help students in the classroom gain experience in writing to inform:

Ask students to write to help readers

- understand something about a subject that might have been overlooked or misunderstood
- know how to perform a task or procedure better or in a different way
- better understand a problem, event, product, condition
- understand effective ways to reach a personal or social goal
- make decisions
- answer important, realistic questions that are important to them

Note: Providing students in the classroom with a prompt like one used in the on-demand writing test and asking them to plan, draft, revise, and edit that piece is one way of helping them develop as writers and prepare for the on-demand writing assessment. A number of other options are available.

- Help students read and talk about prompts like those used in the test.
- Model how you might approach a sample prompt, and ask students to talk about how they might approach it.
- Ask students to complete and share a quick-write for a sample prompt
- Maintain a file of samples of students' writing and ask students to read and talk about the work, especially applying the criteria for writing in the *Kentucky Writing Scoring Rubric*.
- Lead students individually or in groups to analyze two samples of writing, determining which is better and why.
- Ask students to complete entries in a writer's notebook or learning journal in which they use a particular writing technique, for example, using a narrative to support an opinion or controlling idea.
- Conduct mini-lessons on strategies that will help students develop as writers, as well as prepare for the on-demand writing test. For example, after helping the students understand a technique, ask them to work together on a task applying the technique. Then ask the students individually to try out the technique and share their efforts.
- Provide students with a "bare-bones writing." Ask them to use particular techniques in revising it and then to share the before and after writing.
- Lead students in annotating a sample of writing, applying criteria indicated in the *Kentucky Writing Scoring Rubric*.

Types of Prompts and Questions in Kentucky’s On-Demand Writing Assessment

Direct Prompts

Direct prompts ask students to narrate an event for a purpose, inform or persuade. Students are asked to write in the appropriate forms given the grade level (Grade 5—letter, article; Grades 8 and 12—article, letter, editorial, speech). Students are given a situation and then are asked to respond to a task.

Examples: Students will be given a choice of two prompts to which they may respond.

**Sample Prompt
Grades 5 and 8
(Narrate an Event for a Purpose)**

Situation: Sometimes children on the school playground get into fights, break rules, misuse playground equipment and cause injuries. The school newspaper would like to publish articles that show how kids can solve playground problems safely and fairly.

Writing Task: Write an **article*** for your school newspaper that explains to students how to solve playground problems safely and fairly. To help support your ideas, tell about a time when you or someone you know had to solve a problem on the playground. Be certain to support your response to show how kids can solve playground problems safely and fairly.

***Grades 5 and 8 will have a specific form indicated in the prompt.**

**Sample Prompt
Grade 12
(Persuade)**

Situation: Each year many college scholarships are given to students for academic and athletic achievement. At times, athletic scholarships are given to athletes who do not show as much academic promise as students who are eligible to receive academic scholarships. This causes some people to question the true purpose of college—sports or academics?

Writing Task: Write an **editorial or a speech*** to persuade a college scholarship committee to consider the fairest way for them to distribute scholarship money.

***Students in Grade 12 will be provided an option to write in one of two logical forms.**

Passage-Based Prompts (Grade 12)

At the high school level, one of the prompts will provide students with a passage as a component of the task. Students must read and draw on the passage to accomplish their purposes and respond well to the given task. Other than the reference to the passage, the on-demand prompts are constructed similarly.

For example, the student is given a short, non-fiction passage about a current event. The prompt will be constructed similarly to the purposes (to narrate an event for a purpose, to inform, to persuade) and forms (letter, article, speech, editorial) in the direct prompt. The only difference is that the student would be asked to draw on the information in the passage to support his or her answer.

It is important to remember that the passage is provided for students to draw on to support their ideas in writing. The passage-based prompt is not intended as a reading assessment. Rather, it simply provides all students with the same base of information to begin the writing task.

Example

Read the following passage about inappropriate teenage cell phone use. (An appropriate passage would be provided to students).

Situation: Because we live in an age of technology, teenagers are often getting into difficult situations because of inappropriate cell phone use. For example, some teenagers use cell phones at school when it is against the rules. Others drive their vehicles while talking on their cell phones, sometimes paying more attention to the conversation than to the road. The second example has caused great concern in the community.

The number of teenagers involved in automobile accidents caused by inappropriate cell phone use has been increasing at an alarming rate. Local law enforcement has considered passing stricter rules for teenagers while driving and their cell phone use.

Task: Drawing on the information provided in the passage, write a letter or an editorial to readers of your local newspaper to persuade them to support your views regarding teenagers and cell phone use while driving.

Multiple Choice (Grades 5 and 8)

Example: Students will be provided a passage (to model how real editing and revising works) and several multiple choice questions that direct them to certain lines of the passage.

The Clam Dig

1 “Clam tide!” my brother yelled as he leaped out of the bed and threw on his clothes. I got up and peeked out the window.

2 The water is so far out that it looked like a shiny silver line beyond the beach.

3 “Can I go?” I asked, stifling a yawn and trying hard to look wide awake.

4 “Naw,” he said. He laces up his old tennis shoes. “Its hard work, and you’re too little.” The door banged as he rushed out.

5 “Mama-a-a!” I hollered in my loudest, saddest voice. “Kelly won’t take me clam digging.” I started to cry because I was disappointed, but mostly because I was mad at my brother.

6 Soon , I began following him down to the tide flats.

Choose the correct way to write the underlined part in line 2.

- A. water were
- B. water has been
- C. water was
- D. No change needed

On-Demand Forms

Grade 5

letter
article

Grades 8 and 12

letter speech
article editorial

One major difficulty teachers face when developing on-demand writing tasks is distinguishing them from open-response questions. The chart below highlights the major differences between open-response and on-demand writing.

Differences Between Open-Response Questions and On-Demand Prompts		
Scoring criteria	Individualized scoring guide tailored to each question—focus on content	<i>Kentucky Writing Scoring Rubric</i> criteria—focus on audience/purpose, idea development/support, organization, sentence structure, use of language and correctness issues
Writer’s Purpose	To show what student knows and can apply	To show student’s writing skill
Form	Short answer and/or mathematical representation	Various authentic genres (forms) written for a specific audience and purpose as specified in the prompt
Conferencing with others	No	No
Students should	Look for specific questions asked, underline key words and phrases, identify what needs to be answered, and then answer only what is asked	Look for audience, purpose, and form stated in the prompt; develop response according to the <i>Kentucky Writing Scoring Rubric</i> criteria
Assesses	Content knowledge	Writing ability