

Preparing for the OSSLT
March 29th, 2006

Writing

Topic	Page(s)
OSSLT Score Breakdown	2
Writing Tasks Tips	3
Transition Words and Phrases	4
Writing a Summary Paragraph	5 – 8
Writing a News Report	9 – 13
Writing a Series of Paragraphs Expressing an Opinion	14 – 16
Multiple-Choice Questions	17 – 18

TO ACCESS PRACTICE EXERCISES:

Go to: www.eqao.com

Click on: *Student Resources*

- then *Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test*
- then *Sample Test Booklet Session 1*
- and/or *Sample Test Booklet Session 2)*

Created by A. Daniel

OSSLT Score Breakdown

Reading	
Reading, understanding, and responding to an information paragraph	11%
Reading, understanding, and responding to a news report	11%
Reading, understanding, and responding to a dialogue (narrative)	12%
Reading, understanding, and responding to a real-life narrative	10%
Reading, understanding, and responding to a graphic text	6%
Reading	50%
Writing	
Short prompts (one or two sentence, paragraph, and summary paragraph responses)	9%
Series of paragraphs expressing an opinion	17%
News report	17%
Multiple-choice questions relating to structure of content, organization of ideas, and using conventions when writing	7%
Writing	50%
Total	100%

Tips on Writing Tasks

There are three types of writing questions on the OSSLT:

- short writing tasks (you will be given six blank lines to use);
- multiple-choice writing tasks;
- two longer writing tasks - the news report (you will be given one page of blank lines to use) and the series of paragraphs expressing an opinion (you will be given two pages of blank lines to use).

Through the combination of these tasks, the OSSLT focuses on three writing skills:

- developing a main idea with sufficient supporting details;
- organizing information and ideas in a coherent manner;
- using conventions (spelling, grammar, punctuation) in a manner that does not distract from clear communication.

General Tips for Success on the Writing Section of the OSSLT

The more you practise these tasks and skills, the better!

- All writing tasks must be written in complete sentences, unless otherwise stated.
- The purpose and audience for your writing are indicated in the instructions preceding each writing task. (You will notice that the audience is always an adult. This indicates that the language and ideas in your writing should be written in standard Canadian English. Offensive or inappropriate responses are not acceptable).
- Each writing task is different. It is important to follow the instructions for each task. For example, if you are asked for a minimum of three paragraphs, write at least three paragraphs.
- Paragraph divisions must be clear. You may choose to use indentations or to leave an extra line between paragraphs.
- Writing that is off-topic or not in the specified form cannot be marked. (Note: the series of paragraphs expressing an opinion may be the only writing task that focuses on your opinion.)
- The space provided for your written work indicates the approximate length of the writing required. Your writing skills cannot be assessed if you have not written enough.
- Make sure your handwriting is clear. Make changes to your writing as neatly and as clearly as you can. Illegible handwriting cannot be marked.
- Use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation so that your ideas are communicated clearly.

Modified by A. Daniel

Transition Words and Phrases

Order:

First
Second
Third
Fourth
Next
Finally

Time Sequence:

After a while
Afterward
At last
At length
During
Eventually
Immediately
In the future
In the past
Meanwhile
Soon
Today
Tomorrow
Next week
Yesterday
Until
When
Later

Importance:

The least important
The most important
A major factor
A minor consideration

Cause and Effect:

Accordingly
As a result
Because
Consequently
For this reason
Since
Therefore
Thus

Comparison:

Again
Also
By way of comparison
In a similar way
Likewise
Similarly
Just as

Contrast:

Although
At the same time
But
Despite this
Even though
However
In contrast
In spite of
Different from
While
Instead
Nevertheless
One difference
On the contrary
On the other hand
Still
Though
Unlike
Whereas
However

Summary:

In brief
In conclusion
In general
In short
In summary
With this in mind

Location:

Above
Across
Along
Around
Behind
Below
Beneath
Beyond
Elsewhere
Near
Farther
Here
There
Inside
Outside
In front of
In back of
On top of
On the other side of
Opposite

Emphasis:

Additionally
Again
Also
At the same time
Besides
Equally important
In fact
Lastly
Moreover
Furthermore
In addition

Clarification:

For example
For instance
In other words
In particular
For this reason
Specifically

Compiled by A. Daniel

Writing a Summary Paragraph

A summary paragraph is a concise, condensed version of a longer piece of writing. A summary restates the main idea and the most important supporting details. Do not include your personal opinion in a summary paragraph. The summary paragraph task on the Literacy Test requires you to reduce a text of approximately 200 words to fewer than 100 words. Limit your summary to the number of words specified.

How to Write a Summary:

- Quickly read over the passage you are being asked to summarize so you understand the topic.
- Begin re-reading the first paragraph of the passage. Highlight or underline the main idea of the passage. (Hint: the main idea is almost always in the first paragraph. It is usually found in the first or last sentence of that paragraph as well.) Take the main idea and use it to write the topic sentence for your summary.
- Continue re-reading the passage. Highlight or underline any details that support your topic sentence. After you've highlighted these details, choose the most important ones to include in your summary. Include only the essential information such as names, dates, times, places, events, and facts. Examples, descriptive details and adjectives aren't usually important. You may wish to write them down in point form first, and then put them into sentence form afterwards.
- Try to write each point-form detail in one clear sentence. You should likely have two to four supporting ideas for the length of the summaries required for the OSSLT. Use your own words to write your summary whenever possible. (Don't include your own opinion.)
- Use a concluding sentence that ties all of your points together.
- When completed, your summary should be from one half to one quarter of the original length. (Be sure to adhere to the maximum word count noted on the Literacy Test.)
- Re-read your summary and be certain it includes the information that seems most important.
- You must write your summary in complete sentences in the lined space provided.
- Make changes to your writing as neatly and as clearly as you can.
- Use correct spelling, spelling, grammar, and punctuation so your ideas are clear.

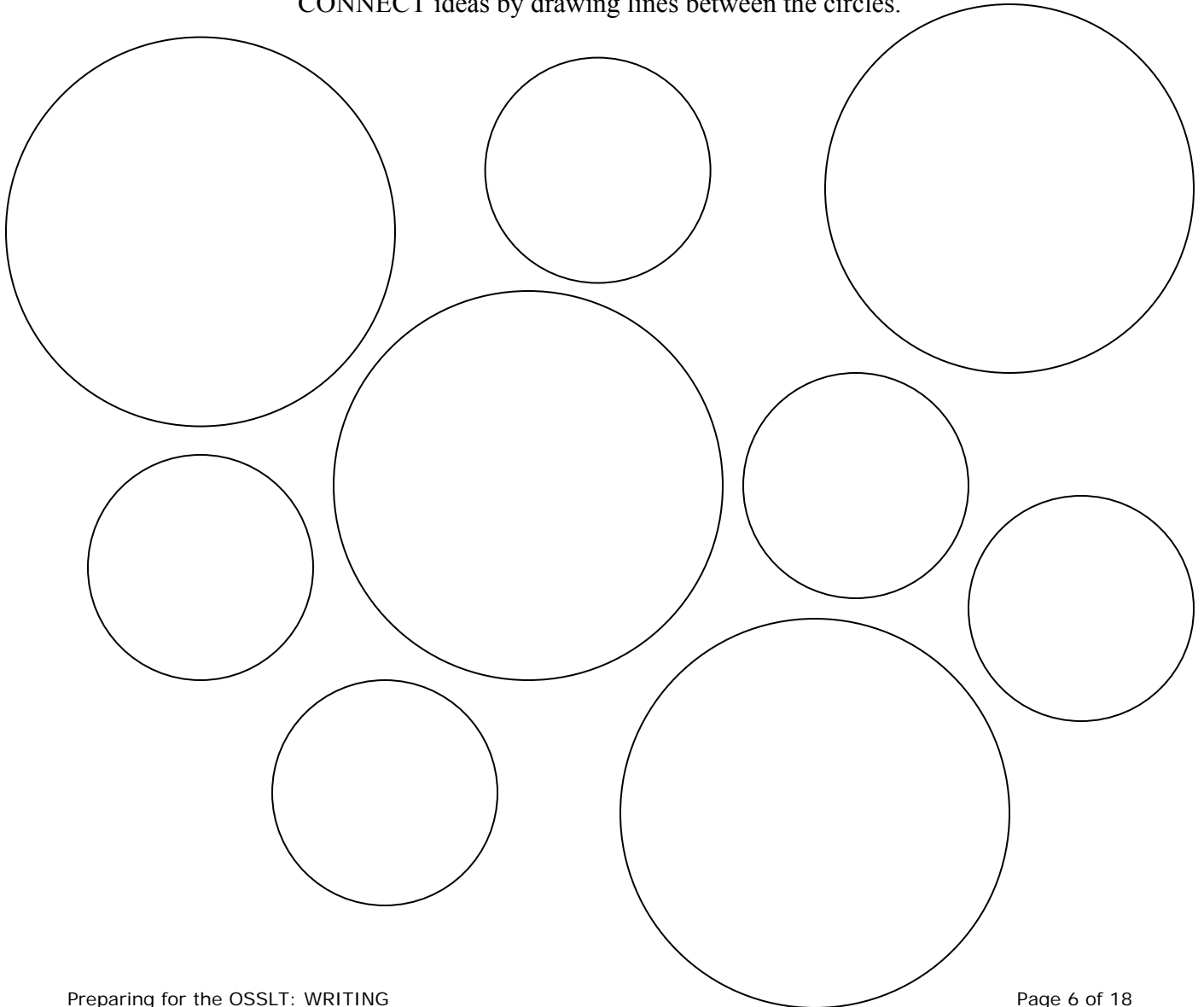
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Finding the Main Idea

All ideas are not created equally...

- Use this graphic organizer to distinguish the big ideas from the small ideas. This will help you to write the summary paragraph.
- Jot down any ideas as you are reading. You might want to use pencil since you may change your mind after you have read the entire passage about which ideas are big or small.
- Look at what you recorded and connect the related ideas by drawing a line between the circles. You may wish to use colour to help you visually identify all the ideas that are connected.

Write the **BIGGEST** ideas in the **LARGEST** circles.
Write the *smallest* ideas in the *smaller* circles.
CONNECT ideas by drawing lines between the circles.



Summary Paragraph Template

ROUGH DRAFT

Sentence This is the sentence that indicates the main idea of what you are summarizing so the reader knows what is coming...	
First Supporting Detail This is the first important point from the passage that you are summarizing...	
Transition word/phrase...	
Second Supporting Detail This is another, but perhaps less important detail from the passage you are summarizing...	
Transition word/phrase...	
Optional third point...	
Concluding Sentence This is when you re-state the main point using other words so you're not being repetitive...	

FINAL COPY (don't forget transition words/phrases)

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Checklist for Writing a Summary Paragraph

Reading:

I have...

- Shown an understanding of the original text
- Found the main idea of the original text and at least 2 supporting details
- Taken the whole text into account
- Made appropriate connections to the original text
- Taken notes on key points

Planning:

I have...

- Planned my summary using rough notes

Writing:

I have...

- Written my summary using complete sentences
- Omitted non-essential information and unnecessary words
- Used transitions to link my ideas
- Conveyed an effective tone through word choice and level of language
- Not included opinion statements
- Written an effective paragraph
- Consistently used third person point of view
- Created a beginning, middle, and end that flow using connecting words
- Used a consistent verb tense

Revising and Editing:

I have...

- Checked my grammar, spelling, and punctuation
- Created a summary that will appeal to my audience and meet the required purpose

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Writing a News Report

The news report is worth 17% of your OSSLT score.

A news report is an objective and factual report about an event. For this writing task, you will be given a picture and a headline. You will have to pretend you are a news reporter and make up the event and details for the report based on that picture and headline. Your news report may be written for a community, national, or international newspaper. It should not be an advertisement and should **not** include your personal opinion.

You should be familiar with the following terms:

- **Headline** (the title of your news report)
- **Caption** (a one-sentence description that supports the picture included with your news report)
- **Lead** (the first paragraph of your news report that identifies the who, what, where, when, why and how of the story)
- **Important Facts** (details that will interest the reader – they might be quotes from bystanders)
- **Facts** (less important details that might interest the reader – they might also be quotes)

When planning your news report, consider the following points:

- Study the headline and picture to make up the event as the basis for your news report.
- Think of some facts and information about the event. These should include answers to some or all of the following questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? Remember you have to make up the facts and information.
- Consider making up quotations from participants or bystanders for your news report.
- Write enough information to ensure your readers would feel fully informed about the event.
- Divide your news report appropriately into short paragraphs.
- To help the reader follow and understand your news report, organize your ideas clearly.
- Use transitions to link your ideas.
- Make changes to your writing as neatly and as clearly as you can.
- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation so that your ideas are clearly communicated.

Compiled by A. Daniel

Writing a News Report

News reports are most frequently written in the “inverted pyramid” style. The essential facts are presented near the beginning of the report. Imagine your reader only has the time or the inclination to read the first paragraph of your news report. The reader will therefore need to learn the most important points in the first paragraph.

1. Catch the reader’s interest in the lead by including interesting facts, answering the questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
2. Use quotations to make the report more interesting, and to reveal the person’s point of view on the subject. Use dialogue tags such as “said” or “like” to maintain the impression that you are reporting objectively.
3. Include accurate facts to illustrate your topic.
4. Write in short, independent paragraphs that are two to three sentences long.
5. Provide a caption for any photograph included with the report.

Use the following organizer prior to writing a news report.

Be sure to use transition words and phrases to create flow in your news report.

Write in full sentences, using correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.

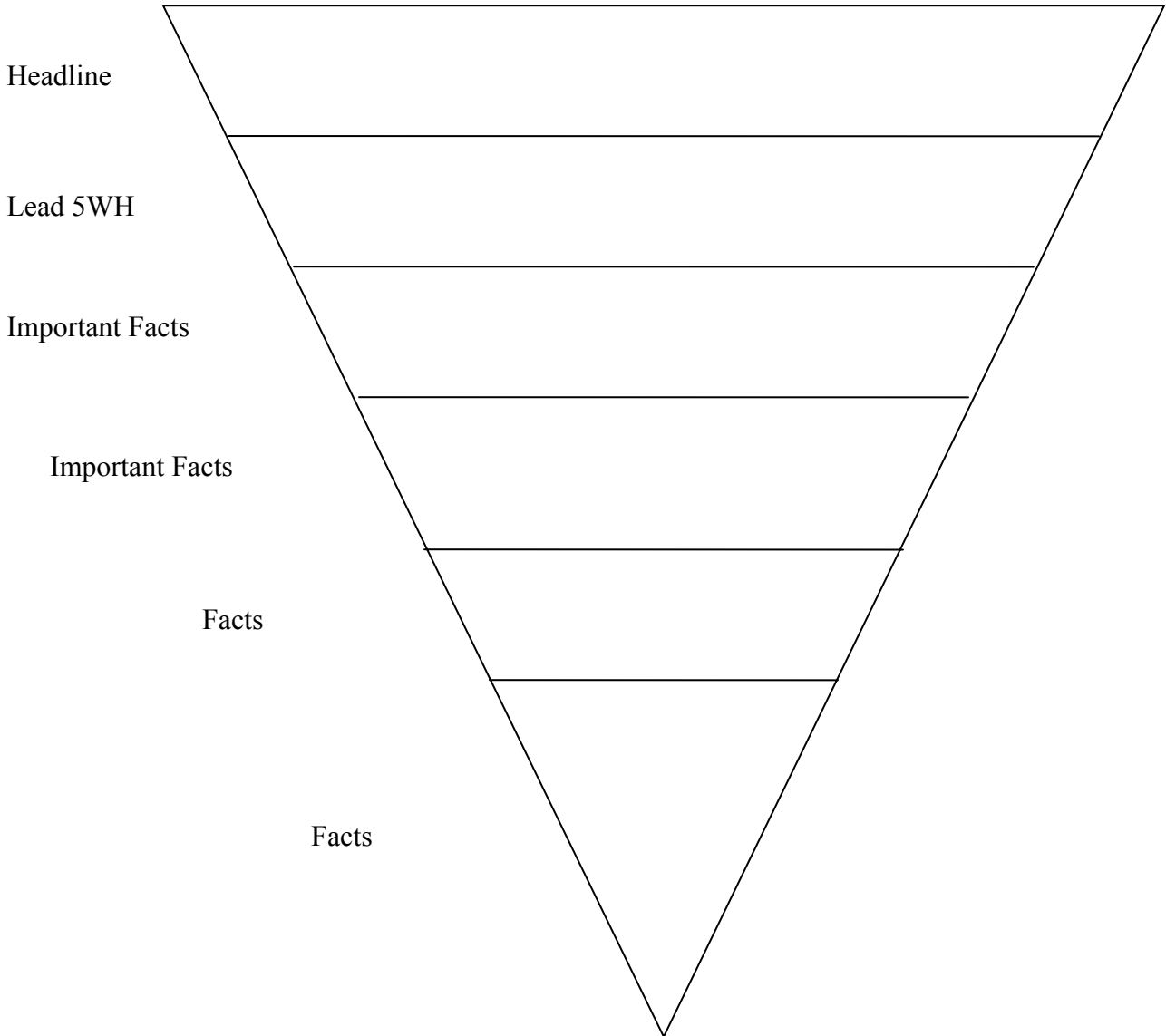
Modified by A. Daniel

Writing a News Report

Use the following organizer prior to writing a news report.

Be sure to use transition words and phrases to create flow in your news report.

Write in full sentences, using correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.



Writing a News Report

Use this organizer when planning your news report:

Enter Headline

Enter Lead

Enter the 5Ws in these boxes

--	--	--	--	--

Enter the three less important details and/or quotes in these boxes.

--	--	--

Enter the least important detail in the final box.

Checklist for Writing a News Report

Reading:

I have...

- Demonstrated an understanding of the headline and the picture

Planning:

I have...

- Planned my news report using rough notes or an organizer

Writing:

I have...

- Used complete sentences
- Written separate paragraphs
- Used transitions to link my ideas
- Conveyed an effective tone through word choice and level of language
- Created a beginning (lead that includes the 5Ws), middle (less important details and made-up quotes), and end (least important detail)
- Used a consistent verb tense

Revising and Editing:

I have...

- Ensured my response reads like a news report, **not** like an advertisement or short story
- Not** included my opinion
- Written a news report that is related to the headline and picture
- Demonstrated a clear and consistent focus on an event that is thoughtfully developed
- Included sufficient specific and relevant supporting details
- Organized my news report in a logical and coherent manner
- Checked my grammar, spelling and punctuation
- Created a news report that will appeal to my audience and meet the required purpose

Created by A. Daniel

Writing a Series of Paragraphs Expressing an Opinion

Writing a series of paragraphs expressing an opinion is worth 17% of your OSSLT score.

What is a series of paragraphs supporting an opinion?

Basically, you will write a simple three- or four-paragraph essay consisting of an introductory paragraph, one or two body paragraphs and a concluding paragraph.

In the introductory paragraph you will:

- Introduce the general essay topic
- Clearly present your opinion on the given topic (thesis statement)
- Establish the major points you will include in your essay

In the body paragraph(s) you will:

- Begin with a topic sentence (a sentence to inform the reader about the content of the paragraph)
- Include several supporting details (proof, facts, examples, etc.) that explain and give reasons for your opinion
- Start a new body paragraph for each new argument (but remember you are only required to write one body paragraph)

In the concluding paragraph you will:

- Re-state your introduction (but use different words to avoid repetition)
- Summarize your opinion

Overall, you will:

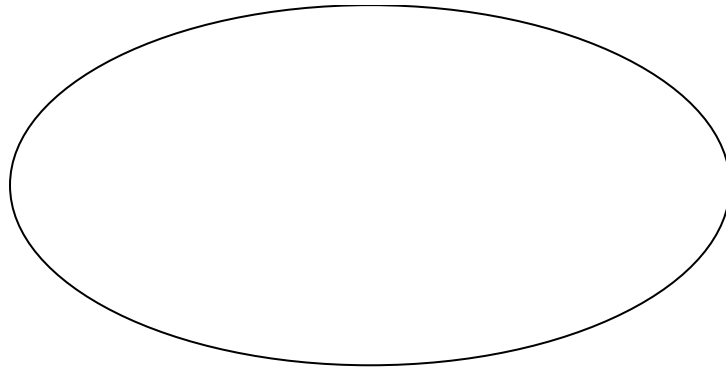
- Use complete sentences
- Organize your ideas clearly to help your reader follow and understand your opinion
- Use transitions words or phrases to link your ideas
- Make sure the divisions between paragraphs are clearly marked
- Use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation so that your ideas are clearly communicated
- Make changes to your writing as neatly and as clearly as you can

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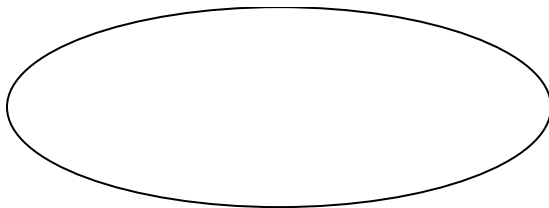
Writing a Series of Paragraphs Expressing an Opinion

Use this organizer to prepare for this writing task:

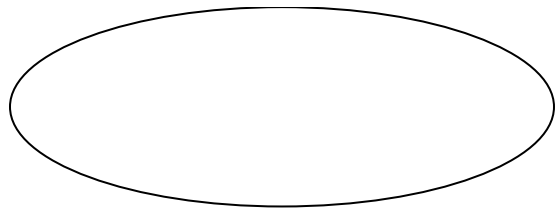
Your opinion (thesis)



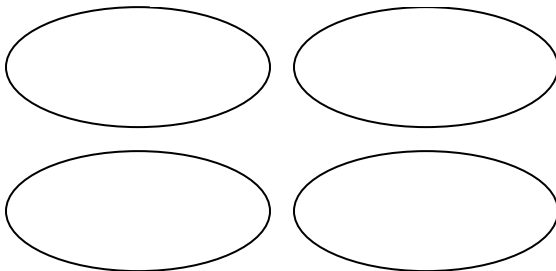
Body Paragraph 1



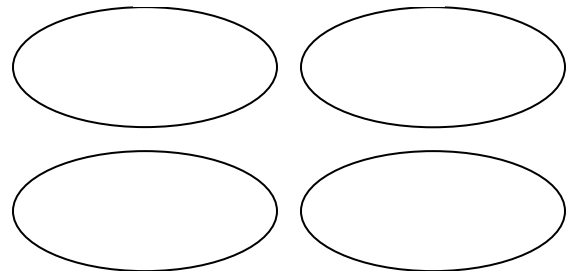
Body Paragraph #2



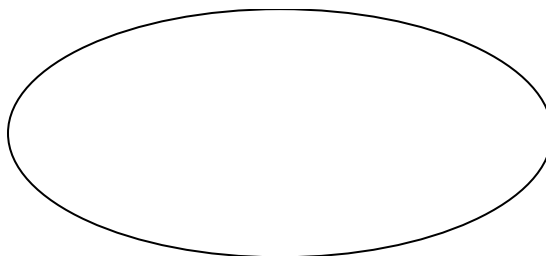
Supporting Details



Supporting Details



Concluding Points



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Checklist for Writing a Series of Paragraphs Expressing an Opinion

Reading:

I have...

- Demonstrated an understanding of the topic

Planning:

I have...

- Planned my response using rough notes

Writing:

I have...

- Used complete sentences
- Written a minimum of three separate paragraphs
- Used transitions to link my ideas
- Conveyed an effective tone through word choice and level of language
- Created a beginning (introduction), middle (body), and end (conclusion) that flow using connecting words
- Written an effective body paragraph(s) that includes a topic sentence and supporting details
- Used a consistent verb tense

Revising and Editing:

I have...

- Written a response that is related to the assigned prompt and expresses and supports a consistent opinion
- Developed a clear and thoughtful opinion
- Provided sufficient specific and relevant supporting details
- Organized my response in a logical and coherent manner
- Checked my grammar, spelling, and punctuation
- Created a response that will appeal to my audience and meet the required purpose

Created by A. Daniel

Multiple Choice Questions

Multiple choice questions are worth 41% of your OSSLT score.

- You will be asked to respond to between 57 and 61 multiple choice questions.
- Everyone will be asked 48 standard questions.
- EQAO, the group that administers this test, also includes between 9 and 13 “field test” questions. (A field test question is a question that is embedded in the test for trial purposes for potential use in future tests).
- You will not be scored on field test questions but, since you won’t know which are field test questions and which are “real” questions, you must try your best with all multiple choice questions.

Reading and Writing Tasks	Number of Multiple-Choice Questions
Reading & responding to an information paragraph	7
Reading & responding to a news report	7
Reading & responding to a dialogue (short fictional narrative)	8
Reading & responding to a real-life narrative	11
Reading & responding to a graphic text	7
Responding to questions related to structuring content, organization of ideas and using conventions when writing	8
Total Official Multiple Choice Questions	48
Possible Field Test Questions	9 - 13
Total Multiple Choice Questions	57 - 61

Responding to Multiple Choice Questions

You might anticipate a multiple choice question to be simply a matter of recognising the true statement. However, research on multiple choice questions shows that you are often asked to do more than just recognise a true statement.

Answering multiple choice questions often requires distinguishing between true and nearly true answers.

You will have to use a number of higher-order critical thinking skills to be successful with answering multiple choice questions. You will be required to recognize, synthesize, analyze, and apply.

Therefore, you must read the question very carefully and take time to think about each of the answers.

Compiled by A. Daniel

Tips for Answering Multiple Choice Questions

(The stem is the question and the alternatives are the choices).

Read the instructions carefully. Sometimes the alternatives may be partly correct. Sometimes the alternatives seem correct but not when joined to the stem. The instructions may say: "choose the most correct answer."

*Read **all** of the stem and **every** alternative.*

Use your time well. Some questions will take you only a few seconds, while others will require more time for thought.

Read every question carefully but quickly, answering only those of which you are 100% certain. Leave the questions that need more thought. Then, examine/study the questions not yet answered. Answer those you are reasonably sure about without pondering too long on each. Finally, re-read the remaining unanswered questions. If you cannot come to a decision by reasoning or if you run out of time, guess.

Use the process of elimination procedure. Eliminate the obviously incorrect alternatives.

Read the stem with each alternative to take advantage of the correct sound or flow that the correct answer often produces. Also, you can eliminate any alternatives that do not agree grammatically with the stem.

You might find it effective to read the stem and anticipate the correct alternative before actually looking at the alternatives.

Consider "all of the above" and "none of the above." Examine the "above" alternatives to see if all of them or none of them apply *totally*. If even one does not apply totally, do not consider "all of the above" or "none of the above" as the correct answer.

Note negatives. If a negative such as "none", "not", "never", or "neither" occurs in the stem, know that the correct alternative must be a fact or absolute and that the other alternatives could be true statements, but not the correct answer.

Note superlatives. Words such as "every", "all", "none", "always", and "only" are superlatives that indicate the correct answer must be an undisputed fact.

Note qualifying words. "Usually", "often", "generally", "may", and "seldom" are qualifiers that *could* indicate a true statement.

Changing Answers. Research has shown that changing answers on a multiple choice question is neither good nor bad if you have a good reason for changing your answer, change it.

Source: <http://www.coun.uvic.ca/learn/program/hndouts/multicho.html> Modified by A. Daniel