

Alberta Provincial
Achievement Testing

Subject
Bulletin
2011–2012

GRADE
9

English Language Arts

we educate
éduquer

Government
of Alberta ■

Alberta ■

Freedom To Create. Spirit To Achieve.

This document was written primarily for:

Students	
Teachers	✓ Grade 9 English Language Arts
Administrators	✓
Parents	
General Audience	
Others	

Distribution: This document is posted on the Alberta Education website at education.alberta.ca.

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You can find [achievement-test-related materials](#) on the Alberta Education website at education.alberta.ca.

At the home page, click on the tab *Teachers*; then click on the link *Provincial Testing*. Next click on the link *Achievement Tests*, and then click on one of the specific links listed under the *Achievement Tests* heading.

Additional topics of interest are found in the [General Information Bulletin](#).

The Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test

General Description

The Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test consists of two parts—*Part A: Writing* and *Part B: Reading* (each worth 50% of test total).

Part A: Writing

Part A: Writing consists of two writing assignments—one narrative or essay and one functional—developed to be completed in two hours. For the first 10 minutes of the two hours, students may discuss both assignments with classmates in groups of two to four or may think alone about the prompts. The prompts are provided to stimulate and direct students’ writing. Students will engage in this discussion time without teacher participation. During this discussion time, students may write their ideas on the *Planning* pages provided. The allotted two hours, which includes the 10 minutes of discussion time, provides students with time for planning, drafting, and revising of both the narrative or essay and functional writing assignments. Students may take an additional 30 minutes to complete the test if necessary.

Those students for whom a dictionary or a thesaurus is a familiar reference tool are encouraged, but not required, to use a dictionary or a thesaurus during the editing phase of their writing. However, excessive use of a dictionary or a thesaurus throughout the writing test may interfere with a student’s ability to complete his or her writing.

Students may use **print versions** of commercially published dictionaries and thesauri, including bilingual dictionaries, when completing *Part A only*.

Students may do their writing using a computer. For information about using word-processing technology to complete the written component of the achievement test, see the *General Information Bulletin*.

Part B: Reading

Part B: Reading (multiple choice) is developed to be completed in 75 minutes; however, students may take an additional 30 minutes to complete the test if necessary. The test consists of 55 multiple-choice questions based on reading selections from fiction, nonfiction, drama, poetry, and visual/nonfiction media. *Part B: Reading* has two booklets—one containing reading passages and one containing corresponding questions. Students record their answers to all multiple-choice questions on a tear-out, machine-scorable answer sheet.

If a word that warrants definition is used on the test, it will be defined on the page on which it appears.

Description of English Language Arts Assessment Standards

The following statements describe what is expected of Grade 9 students at the *acceptable standard* and the *standard of excellence*, based on outcomes in the [2000 Program of Studies](#). These statements represent examples of the standards against which student achievement is measured. It is important to remember that one test cannot measure all the outcomes in the Program of Studies.

<i>Acceptable Standard</i>	<i>Standard of Excellence</i>
<p>Students who meet the <i>acceptable standard</i> in Grade 9 English Language Arts are able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• demonstrate sustained interest in reading, viewing, and listening to relatively short, uncomplicated stories, documentaries, and dramatic works• deal with uncomplicated, familiar details and ideas that are directly presented• expand, in writing, the narration of a personal experience, elaborate somewhat on their ideas, and sustain a topic for several pages of writing using appropriate but conventional details• organize concrete, factual materials that contain simple ideas• understand more complex techniques of literary structure or organization such as cause and effect, foreshadowing, flashback, and comparison and contrast; on occasion, they are able to apply that knowledge to unfamiliar literature or apply these techniques in their own writing• analyze and synthesize ideas in a familiar context when the experience is close in time to their own experiences• be successful in completing conventional tasks without assistance and in completing increasingly complex tasks with assistance and/or conscious effort• independently understand, organize, and articulate course-related ideas and concepts in a concrete, direct, personal, and relatively uncomplicated manner• read relatively simple short novels, nonfiction selections, and narrative poems, and then clearly articulate (orally and in writing) the main idea, sequence of events, key details, and features of character and form	<p>Students who meet the <i>standard of excellence</i> in Grade 9 English Language Arts are also able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• read confidently and widely (texts such as mystery, romance, adventure, speculative fiction, and poetry) and search for information in texts• deal with abstract, complex details and ideas, and readily take risks with unfamiliar materials• read, write, and reflect on print and non-print text from many perspectives• analyze and evaluate ideas received from a wide variety of sources and appreciate how analysis can deepen an appreciation of the work• coherently develop and organize abstract, complex material• establish an appropriate focus for communication, and select ideas and language to suit different purposes and audiences• identify, without assistance, areas in their own writing that need to be revised and/or elaborated• demonstrate interest, enthusiasm, and imagination when dealing with details and ideas that demand complex thought and understanding

Part A: Writing

Assignment I of *Part A: Writing* requires students to write a narrative or an essay in response to the topic identified in the assignment. Additional prompt materials are provided that students may refer to if they wish. The ability of students to present and develop ideas coherently and clearly is being tested. Assignment I includes a page labelled *Planning* as well as lined pages for student writing.

Assignment II of *Part A: Writing* is a functional piece of writing. This assignment requires students to write for a specific audience and to fulfill a specified purpose within a given context. The functional writing assignment requires students to write a business letter and correctly address a blank envelope. As in the Narrative /Essay Writing assignment, the student's ability to adjust content, order, tone, and diction to the situation is being tested. Assignment II includes a page labelled *Planning*, a sample envelope that is to be addressed properly, as well as lined pages for student writing.

For both assignments of *Part A: Writing*, students are asked to produce only one copy of their work. They are encouraged to make revisions and corrections directly on this copy. Because of the limited testing time, students benefit most from spending their time composing and revising their work rather than from perfecting a "good copy."

Important Reminders

Students whose writing is unclearly related to the topic or prompts for *Assignment I: Narrative /Essay Writing* will be scored accordingly under **Content**. The bullet regarding "exploration of the topic" in the **Content** scoring category should be applied in accordance with the context established in each student's writing. If the marker can discern **no evidence of an attempt to address the task** presented in the assignment, a score of **Insufficient** will be awarded.

Students whose writing is unrelated to the task presented in *Assignment II: Functional Writing* will be awarded a score of **Insufficient**.

Written-Response Achievement Descriptors

The descriptors for levels of student achievement in the scoring guides are evaluative words rather than numbers. To continue to maximize fairness for all students, and to maintain consistency across all grade levels, the achievement descriptors in the Grade 9 English Language Arts scoring guides are identified by specific words that describe student achievement in each scoring category. The achievement descriptors correspond to the values of the numbers that are used to calculate student marks. The scoring criteria statements, which are used to assess student work, inform markers of the level of student achievement in each scoring category at each achievement level.

Because students' responses to the *Narrative/Essay Writing Assignment* vary widely—from philosophical discussions to personal narratives to creative approaches—assessment of the *Narrative/Essay Writing Assignment* on the achievement test will be in the context of Louise Rosenblatt's suggestion that "the evaluation of the answers would be in terms of the amount of evidence that the youngster has actually read something and thought about it, not a question of whether, necessarily, he has thought about it the way an adult would, or given an adult's 'correct' answer."

Rosenblatt, Louise. "The Reader's Contribution in the Literary Experience: Interview with Louise Rosenblatt." By Lionel Wilson. *English Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (Spring, 1981): 3–12.

Consider also Grant P. Wiggins' suggestion to assess students' writing "with the tact of Socrates: tact to respect the student's ideas enough to enter them fully—even more fully than the thinker sometimes—and thus the tact to accept apt but unanticipatable or unique responses."

Wiggins, Grant. P. *Assessing Student Performance: Exploring the Purpose and Limits of Testing*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1993, p. 40.

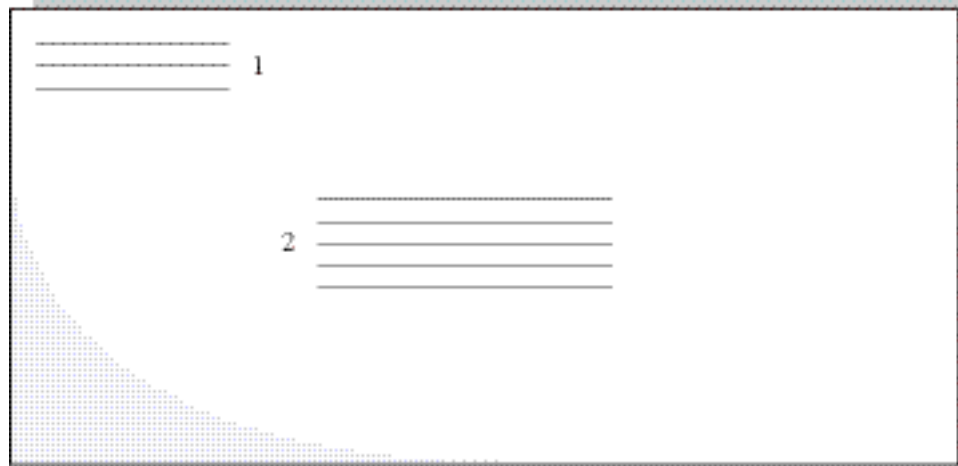
Classroom teachers are encouraged to discuss and use the scoring criteria, including the achievement-level descriptors, with their students during the year. When student writing is marked centrally, these achievement-level descriptors are used.

School and school authority reports will be produced using both the achievement-level descriptors and numeric values. Individual Student Profiles (ISPs) will report numeric values and achievement of standards.

The achievement-level descriptors and their numeric equivalents are:

Excellent = 5/5
Proficient = 4/5
Satisfactory = 3/5
Limited = 2/5
Poor = 1/5

Addressing an Envelope



1. Return Address

The return address is the name and address of the person sending the letter. The return address appears in the top left corner of the envelope and consists of your name, post office box number (if applicable), apartment or unit number followed by a hyphen (if applicable), street address (if applicable), city or town, province, and postal code.

JEAN BROWN
PO BOX 8207
TORONTO ON L2R 3V6

JEAN BROWN
905-12963 61 ST
TORONTO ON L2R 3V6

2. Mailing Address

The mailing address is the name and address to which the letter is being sent. It always appears in the centre of the envelope. In a business letter, the address on the envelope is the same as the inside address of the letter. There may be separate lines for the title of the addressee (Editor, Director, President), the division or department in which the person works, and the name of his or her company, business, or organization.

SAM HUNT
DIRECTOR
THE KNITTING MILL
1409 3 AVE
TORONTO ON L3V 7O1

Envelope Format

1. Addresses should be typed or written in upper-case or block letters.
2. All lines of the addresses must be formatted with a uniform left margin.
3. Punctuation marks (such as commas and periods) should not be used unless they are part of a place name (e.g., ST. JOHN'S).
4. The postal code should always appear on the same line as the municipality and province or territory name, and should be separated from the province by two spaces.
5. The two-letter abbreviation for the province name should be used wherever possible (see next page); abbreviations for street (ST), avenue (AVE), and boulevard (BLVD) should also be used.
6. The return address should be formatted in the same way as the mailing address.

For more information, refer to the "Addressing Guidelines" in the *Canada Postal Guide* on the Canada Post website at canadapost.ca.

Format of a Business Letter

There are three basic business-letter formats. Any of these formats is appropriate and acceptable for the test. What is most important is that students choose one format and use it consistently so that the overall appearance of the letter is attractive.

Note: Students should double space word-processed work in order to make revisions more easily. This should be applied only to the body of the letter and not to the other parts.

Parts of the Business Letter

(see illustrations on the next page)

1. Heading

The heading consists of your address and the date.

PO Box 8207
Toronto ON L2R 3V6
May 14, 2012

905-12963 61 St
Toronto ON L2R 3V6
May 14, 2012

2. Inside Address

The inside address consists of the name and address of the person to whom you are writing. It usually appears four lines below the heading if a word processor is used or one line below if it is handwritten.

Sam Hunt, Director
The Knitting Mill
1409 3 Ave
Toronto ON L3V 7O1

3. Salutation

The most traditional salutation or greeting for a business letter is Dear followed by Mr., Ms., Mrs., or Miss, and the person's last name, followed by a colon.

Dear Mr. Smith: Dear Mrs. Brown:
Dear Ms. Black: Dear Miss Green:

4. Body

The body is the main part of the letter in which you write what you have to say to the addressee. Skip one line after the salutation.

- Be concise. Ensure that sufficient information is given so that your purpose is clearly understood and your request is well received.
- Business letters are usually formal, so the language that you use should also be formal.

5. Closing

The closing is the ending to your letter. It appears at the bottom of the letter, directly under the body. Only the first word in the closing should be capitalized. It is always followed by a comma.

Yours truly,
Sincerely,

6. Signature

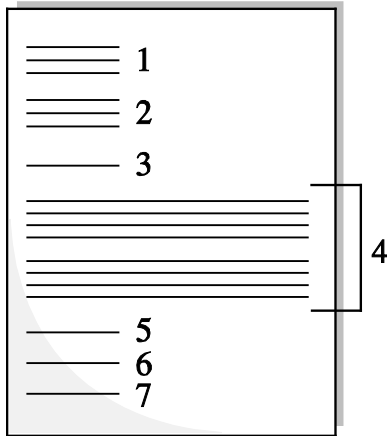
The signature is your full name signed. Your signature should appear directly below the closing. It should always be written in ink.

7. Your Name Printed

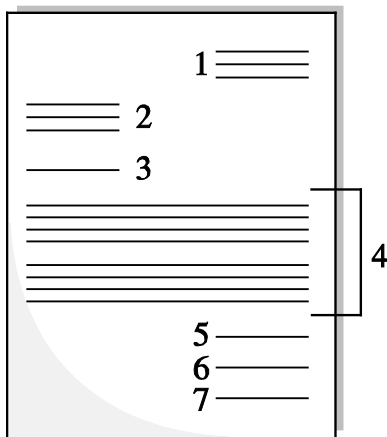
8. Commonly Used Abbreviations for Provinces and Territories

Province/Territory	Abbreviation
Alberta	AB
British Columbia	BC
Manitoba	MB
New Brunswick	NB
Newfoundland	NL
Northwest Territories	NT
Nova Scotia	NS
Nunavut	NU
Ontario	ON
Prince Edward Island	PE
Quebec	QC or PQ
Saskatchewan	SK
Yukon	YT

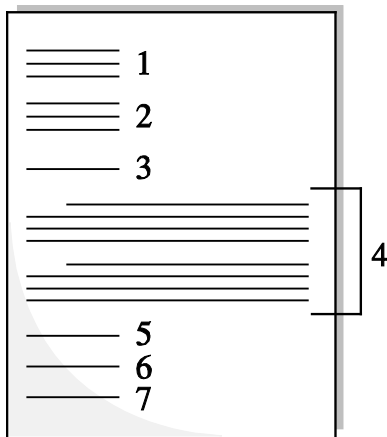
Business Letter Formats



The block format. In this format, all parts of the letter run along the left side of the page (margin). No paragraphs in the body are indented.



The modified block format. In this format, the heading, the closing, and the signature run along the right margin. All the other parts run along the left margin.



The semi-block format. This format is the same as the block format, except that the paragraphs in the body are indented.

Blueprint for Part A: Writing

The blueprint for *Part A: Writing* identifies the scoring/reporting categories by which student writing is assessed and by which summary data are reported to schools and school authorities; it also provides a description of the writing assignments and the achievement standards.

Writing Assignment and Scoring/Reporting Category	Description of Writing Assignment	Achievement Standards
Assignment I—Narrative/Essay Writing		
<p>Content* (2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.3)** (selecting ideas and details to achieve a purpose) Students respond to a given topic by writing a narrative or an essay. Students establish their purpose, select ideas and supporting details to achieve the purpose, and communicate in a manner appropriate to their audience.</p>	<p>The Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment requires students to respond to a prompt that consists of a topic, as well as a collection of materials that students may use if they wish. These materials include graphics, quotes, and short literary excerpts. Students may use ideas from previous experience and/or reading. Students are to respond by writing a narrative or an essay.</p>	<p>Student achievement in each scoring/ reporting category will be described according to the following achievement descriptors: Excellent Proficient Satisfactory Limited Poor Insufficient</p>
<p>Organization* (3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.3)** (organizing ideas and details into a coherent whole) Students organize their ideas to produce a unified and coherent narrative or essay that links events, details, sentences, and paragraphs, and that supports the purpose.</p>		
<p>Sentence Structure (4.1, 4.2)** (structuring sentences effectively) Students control sentence structure and use a variety of sentence types, sentence beginnings, and sentence lengths to enhance communication.</p>		
<p>Vocabulary (4.1, 4.2)** (selecting and using words and expressions correctly and effectively) Students choose specific words and expressions that are appropriate for their audience and effective in establishing a voice/tone that will help to achieve their purpose.</p>		
<p>Conventions (4.2)** (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) Students use conventions accurately and effectively to communicate.</p>		
Assignment II—Functional Writing		
<p>Content* (2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.3)** (thought and detail) Students develop, organize, and evaluate ideas for a specified purpose and audience.</p>	<p>The Functional Writing Assignment requires students to write to a specified audience in the context of a business letter. They are also required to address a blank envelope correctly.</p>	
<p>Content Management* (4.1, 4.2)** (using the conventions of written language correctly and effectively) Students communicate accurately and effectively by selecting words and phrases appropriate to their purpose. Students demonstrate control of sentence structure, usage, mechanics, and format.</p>		

* These scoring categories are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other scoring categories.

**Numbers in parentheses refer to outcomes in the Program of Studies for Grade 9 English Language Arts to which the reporting categories are cross-referenced.

Local Marking

Classroom teachers are encouraged to assess students' writing, using the scoring guides contained in this bulletin, before returning the tests to Alberta Education. All papers are scored centrally in Edmonton in July.

Locally awarded scores submitted to Alberta Education will be used as the first reading of a student's response. Local markers are to use the "**For Teacher Use Only**" section on the back of each *Part A: Writing* test booklet to record their scores by filling in the appropriate circles. The "School Code" and "ACCOMMODATIONS USED" sections should also be completed (see accommodations in the *General Information Bulletin* for information). If a teacher wants to know how his or her locally awarded scores compare with the scores that the tests received when scored centrally, then he or she must create a three-digit identification number and enter it in the section labelled "**ID No.**" on the back of each student booklet. It is important that no two teachers from the same school create and use the same identification number.

To facilitate fair and valid assessment of all students during both local and central marking, **teachers must not** mark or write in student booklets. Teacher-created scoring sheets, which may be used during local marking, are **not** to be included in student test booklets.

To assess locally those students with special test-writing needs, specifically a scribed response (test accommodation 5) or a taped response (test accommodation 10), teachers are to refrain from scoring **Conventions** for *Assignment I: Narrative/Essay Writing* as well as **Content Management** for *Assignment II: Functional Writing*.

Teachers have approximately a week to return the *Part A: Writing* tests to Alberta Education. The papers will then be scored centrally by Alberta Education as the second reading. Both sets of scores contribute to the student's final mark. In the case of a discrepancy between the two sets of scores, papers will receive a third reading, which will determine the final scores that the paper is awarded. In this way, valid and reliable individual and group results can be reported.

Papers that are not assessed locally by teachers will be scored centrally only once. At least once a day, all central markers mark a copy of the same paper for inter-rater reliability.

After central marking has been completed and school reports have been sent to the schools, teachers who submitted their scores with an identification number will receive a confidential report on their marking. This report is called the Local Marker Report and includes the locally awarded scores, the centrally awarded scores, third-read scores if applicable, and the final scores assigned.

To support local marking, Alberta Education provides, along with the test materials, samples of student writing that exemplify the scoring criteria and levels of student achievement. These exemplars are not to be shared with students and must be returned to Alberta Education with the tests. Throughout the school year, teachers may use the *Examples of the Standards for Students' Writing* documents that are posted on the Alberta Education website.

A total score for a student's writing may be calculated by the procedure on the next page.

To determine a student's mark, convert the word descriptors to the following numeric values:

- Excellent = 5
- Proficient = 4
- Satisfactory = 3
- Limited = 2
- Poor = 1

Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment

1. Assign a score of 1 to 5 for each of *Content, Organization, Sentence Structure, Vocabulary, and Conventions.*
2. Multiply the scores for *Content* and *Organization* by 2, as these categories are worth twice as much as the other categories.

Maximum score possible for Narrative / Essay Writing = 35

Functional Writing Assignment

1. Assign a score of 1 to 5 for each of *Content* and *Content Management.*
2. Multiply these scores by 2.

Maximum score possible for Functional Writing = 20

Total Part A: Writing Score

Add the Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment and Functional Writing Assignment scores.

Total score for Part A: Writing	
Narrative / Essay Writing	__/35 (63.6%)
+ Functional Writing	__/20 (36.4%)
= Total Score	__/55 (100%)

The mark for *Part A: Writing* is worth 50% of the total mark for the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

Note: Teachers may make a photocopy of a student's writing from the Part A: Writing test for inclusion in a portfolio of the student's work for the year. Copies can also be made for parents who request them.

Information for Teachers Participating in Central Marking

The Assessment Sector will contact superintendents in the spring for their marker nominations. The teachers selected will reflect proportional representation from the various regions of Alberta.

To qualify for nomination by a superintendent, a prospective marker must satisfy the following conditions:

- have a valid permanent Alberta Teaching Certificate
- have taught Grade 9 English Language Arts within the past three years
- be currently employed by a school authority or private school
- be present on all scheduled days

Markers will be contacted in May, and the list of markers will be finalized no later than the middle of June. Group leaders will meet the day before the marking session for training.

In some subjects, more teachers may be nominated to mark than are needed. There must be a balance of first-time and experienced markers; regional representation by zone, school authority, and school; and gender balance when markers are selected. Unfortunately, not everyone whose name is submitted will be selected.

Because the time allotted for marking is limited, markers may be required to mark on Saturday and Sunday. The marking floor is open from 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., and markers are expected to be available to mark during those hours.

Scoring Guides for 2011–2012

Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment

Content

When marking **Content** appropriate for the Grade 9 Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment, the marker should consider how effectively the student

- explores the topic
- establishes a purpose
- presents ideas
- supports the response
- considers the reader

Cross-Reference to Outcomes in the Program of Studies for Grade 9 English Language Arts: 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.3

Excellent E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student’s exploration of the topic is insightful and/or imaginative. • The student’s purpose, whether stated or implied, is deliberate. • The ideas presented by the student are perceptive and/or carefully chosen. • Supporting details are precise and/or original. • The writing is confident and/or creative and holds the reader’s interest.
Proficient Pf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student’s exploration of the topic is adept and/or plausible. • The student’s purpose, whether stated or implied, is intentional. • The ideas presented by the student are thoughtful and/or sound. • Supporting details are specific and/or apt. • The writing is considered and/or elaborated and draws the reader’s interest.
Satisfactory S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student’s exploration of the topic is clear and/or logical. • The student’s purpose, whether stated or implied, is evident. • The ideas presented by the student are appropriate and/or predictable. • Supporting details are relevant and/or generic. • The writing is straightforward and/or generalized and occasionally appeals to the reader’s interest.
Limited L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student’s exploration of the topic is tenuous and/or simplistic. • The student’s purpose, whether stated or implied, is vague. • The ideas presented by the student are superficial and/or ambiguous. • Supporting details are imprecise and/or abbreviated. • The writing is uncertain and/or incomplete and does not appeal to the reader’s interest.
Poor P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student’s exploration of the topic is minimal and/or tangential. • The student’s purpose, whether stated or implied, is insubstantial. • The ideas presented by the student are overgeneralized and/or underdeveloped. • Supporting details are irrelevant and/or scant. • The writing is confusing and/or lacks validity and does not interest the reader.
Insufficient INS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The marker can discern no evidence of an attempt to address the task presented in the assignment, or the student has written so little that it is not possible to assess Content.

Note: *Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other scoring categories.*

Student work must address the task presented in the assignment. Responses that are completely unrelated to the topic and/or prompts will be awarded a score of **Insufficient**.

Organization

When marking **Organization** appropriate for the Grade 9 Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment, the marker should consider how effectively the writing demonstrates

- focus
- coherent order
- connections between events and/or details
- closure

Cross-Reference to Outcomes in the Program of Studies for Grade 9 English Language Arts: 3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.3

<p>Excellent</p> <p>E</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction is engaging and skillfully establishes a focus that is consistently sustained. • Events and/or details are developed in a judicious order, and coherence is maintained. • Transitions, either explicit or implicit, fluently connect events and/or details within sentences and/or between paragraphs. • Closure is effective and related to the focus.
<p>Proficient</p> <p>Pf</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction is purposeful and clearly establishes a focus that is capably sustained. • Events and/or details are developed in a sensible order, and coherence is generally maintained. • Transitions, either explicit or implicit, clearly connect events and/or details within sentences and/or between paragraphs. • Closure is appropriate and related to the focus.
<p>Satisfactory</p> <p>S</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction is functional and establishes a focus that is generally sustained. • Events and/or details are developed in a discernible order, although coherence may falter occasionally. • Transitions, either explicit or implicit, tend to be mechanical and are generally used to connect events and/or details within sentences and/or between paragraphs. • Closure is related to the focus and is mechanical and/or artificial.
<p>Limited</p> <p>L</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction lacks purpose and/or is not functional; any focus established provides little direction and/or is not sustained. • The development of events and/or details is not clearly discernible, and coherence falters frequently. • Transitions, either explicit or implicit, are lacking and/or indiscriminately used to connect events and/or details within sentences and/or between paragraphs. • Closure is abrupt, contrived, and/or unrelated to the focus.
<p>Poor</p> <p>P</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction, if present, is obscure and/or ineffective; any focus established provides no direction and/or is undeveloped. • The development of events and/or details is haphazard and/or incoherent. • Transitions, either explicit or implicit, are absent and/or inappropriately used to connect events and/or details within sentences and/or between paragraphs. • Closure is ineffectual or missing.
<p>Insufficient</p> <p>INS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response has been awarded an INS for Content.

Note: Content and Organization are weighted to be worth twice as much as the other scoring categories.

Sentence Structure

When marking **Sentence Structure** appropriate for the Grade 9 Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment, the marker should consider the extent to which

- sentence structure is controlled
- sentence type and sentence length are effective and varied
- sentence beginnings are varied

Proportion of error to length and complexity of response must be considered.

Cross-Reference to Outcomes in the Program of Studies for Grade 9 English Language Arts: 4.1, 4.2

<p>Excellent E</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is effectively and consistently controlled. • Sentence type and sentence length are consistently effective and varied. • Sentence beginnings are consistently varied.
<p>Proficient Pf</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is consistently controlled. • Sentence type and sentence length are usually effective and varied. • Sentence beginnings are often varied.
<p>Satisfactory S</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure is generally controlled, but lapses may occasionally impede meaning. • Sentence type and sentence length are sometimes effective and/or varied. • Some variety of sentence beginnings is evident.
<p>Limited L</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure often lacks control, and this may impede meaning. • Sentence type and sentence length are seldom effective and/or varied; syntactic structures are frequently awkward. • There is little variety of sentence beginnings.
<p>Poor P</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence structure generally lacks control, and this often impedes meaning. • There is essentially no variation in sentence type or sentence length; syntactic structures are unintelligible. • There is essentially no variety of sentence beginnings.
<p>Insufficient INS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response has been awarded an INS for Content.

Vocabulary

When marking **Vocabulary** appropriate for the Grade 9 Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment, the marker should consider the

- accuracy of the words and expressions
- effectiveness of the words and expressions
- appropriateness and effectiveness of the voice/tone created by the student

Proportion of error to length and complexity of response must be considered.

Cross-Reference to Outcomes in the Program of Studies for Grade 9 English Language Arts: 4.1, 4.2

<p>Excellent E</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are used accurately and deliberately. • Precise words and expressions are used to create vivid images and/or to enrich details. • The voice/tone created by the student is convincing.
<p>Proficient Pf</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are often used accurately. • Specific words and expressions show some evidence of careful selection and/or some awareness of connotative effect. • The voice/tone created by the student is distinct.
<p>Satisfactory S</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are generally used appropriately. • General words and expressions are used adequately to clarify meaning. • The voice/tone created by the student is discernible but may be inconsistent or uneven.
<p>Limited L</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are often used inexactly. • Imprecise words and expressions predominate; specific words, if present, may be improperly used. • The voice/tone created by the student is not clearly established or is indistinct.
<p>Poor P</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions are generally used inaccurately. • Ineffective words and expressions predominate; specific words, if present, are frequently misused. • The voice/tone created by the student is not evident or is indiscreet.
<p>Insufficient INS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response has been awarded an INS for Content.

Conventions

When marking **Conventions** appropriate for the Grade 9 Narrative / Essay Writing Assignment, the marker should consider the extent to which the student has control of

- mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, indentation for new speakers, etc.) and usage (subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent agreement, etc.)
- clarity and flow of the response

Proportion of error to length and complexity of response must be considered.

Cross-Reference to Outcomes in the Program of Studies for Grade 9 English Language Arts: 4.2

<p>Excellent</p> <p>E</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is enhanced because it is essentially error-free. • Any errors that are present do not reduce clarity and/or do not interrupt the flow of the response.
<p>Proficient</p> <p>Pf</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is sustained because it contains only minor convention errors. • Any errors that are present rarely reduce clarity and/or seldom interrupt the flow of the response.
<p>Satisfactory</p> <p>S</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is sustained through generally correct use of conventions. • Errors occasionally reduce clarity and/or sometimes interrupt the flow of the response.
<p>Limited</p> <p>L</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is weakened by the frequently incorrect use of conventions. • Errors blur clarity and/or interrupt the flow of the response.
<p>Poor</p> <p>P</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the writing is impaired by the consistently incorrect use of conventions. • Errors severely reduce clarity and/or impede the flow of the response.
<p>Insufficient</p> <p>INS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response has been awarded an INS for Content.

Functional Writing Assignment

Content

When marking **Content** appropriate for the Grade 9 Functional Writing Assignment, the marker should consider the extent to which

- ideas and development of the topic are effective
- the purpose of the assignment is fulfilled with complete and relevant information
- the tone is appropriate for a business letter, and awareness of audience is evident

Cross-Reference to Outcomes in the Program of Studies for Grade 9 English Language Arts: 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.3

Excellent E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ideas are perceptive, and development of the topic is clear and effective. • Pertinent information is presented, and this information is enhanced by precise details that effectively fulfill the purpose of the assignment. • A tone appropriate for the addressee is skillfully maintained.
Proficient Pf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ideas are thoughtful, and development of the topic is generally effective. • Significant information is presented, and this information is substantiated by specific details that fulfill the purpose of the assignment. • A tone appropriate for the addressee is clearly maintained.
Satisfactory S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ideas are appropriate, and development of the topic is adequate. • Relevant information is presented, and this information is supported by enough detail to fulfill the purpose of the assignment. • A tone appropriate for the addressee is generally maintained.
Limited L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ideas are superficial and/or flawed, and development of the topic is inadequate. • Information presented is imprecise and/or undiscerning. Supporting details are insignificant and/or lacking. The purpose of the assignment is only partially fulfilled. • A tone appropriate for the addressee is evident but not maintained.
Poor P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ideas are overgeneralized and/or misconstrued, and development of the topic is ineffective. • Information is irrelevant and/or missing. Supporting details are obscure and/or absent. The purpose of the assignment is not fulfilled. • Little awareness of a tone appropriate for the addressee is evident.
Insufficient INS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The marker can discern no evidence of an attempt to address the task presented in the assignment, or the student has written so little that it is not possible to assess Content.

Note: *Content and Content Management are equally weighted.*

Student work must address the task presented in the assignment. Letters that are completely unrelated to the context established in the assignment will be awarded a score of **Insufficient**.

Content Management

When marking **Content Management** appropriate for the Grade 9 Functional Writing Assignment, the marker should consider the extent to which

- words and expressions are used accurately and effectively
- sentence structure, usage, and mechanics (spelling, punctuation, etc.) are controlled
- the formats of an envelope and a business letter are consistently applied

Proportion of error to length and complexity of response must be considered.

Cross-Reference to Outcomes in the Program of Studies for Grade 9 English Language Arts: 4.1, 4.2

<p>Excellent</p> <p>E</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions used are consistently accurate and effective. • The writing demonstrates confident and consistent control of correct sentence structure, usage, and mechanics. Errors that may be present do not impede meaning. • The envelope and letter are essentially free from format errors and/or omissions.
<p>Proficient</p> <p>Pf</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions used are usually accurate and effective. • The writing demonstrates competent and generally consistent control of correct sentence structure, usage, and mechanics. Errors that are present rarely impede meaning. • The envelope and letter contain few format errors and/or omissions.
<p>Satisfactory</p> <p>S</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions used are generally accurate and occasionally effective. • The writing demonstrates basic control of correct sentence structure, usage, and mechanics. Errors may occasionally impede meaning. • The envelope and letter contain occasional format errors and/or omissions.
<p>Limited</p> <p>L</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions used are frequently vague and/or inexact. • The writing demonstrates faltering control of correct sentence structure, usage, and mechanics. Errors frequently impede meaning. • The envelope and letter contain frequent format errors and/or omissions.
<p>Poor</p> <p>P</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words and expressions used are inaccurate and/or misused. • The writing demonstrates a lack of control of correct sentence structure, usage, and mechanics. Errors severely impede meaning. • The envelope and letter contain numerous and glaring format errors and/or omissions.
<p>Insufficient</p> <p>INS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response has been awarded an INS for Content.

Note: Content and Content Management are equally weighted.

Part B: Reading

Part B: Reading of the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test requires students to read selections that include a variety of informational, narrative, and poetic texts with explicit and implicit ideas and details. There are 55 multiple-choice questions based on the readings.

Blueprint for Part B: Reading

The blueprint below identifies the reporting categories and language functions by which questions are classified and reported to schools and school authorities. The number of questions in each reporting category is approximate.

Reporting Category	Language Function		Number (Percentage) of Questions
	Informational	Narrative/Poetic	
<p>Identifying and Interpreting Ideas and Details (2.1, 2.2, 2.3)*</p> <p>Students construct meaning by interpreting ideas and details pertaining to setting/atmosphere/context, character/narrator/speaker (actions, motives, values), conflict, and events.</p>	<p>6 (11%)</p>	<p>11 (20%)</p>	<p>17 (31%)</p>
<p>Interpreting Text Organization (2.2, 2.3)*</p> <p>Students identify and analyze literary genres. Students identify and analyze the text creator's choice of form, tone, point of view, organizational structure, style, diction, rhetorical techniques (e.g., repetition, parallelism), text features (e.g., alliteration, onomatopoeia, imagery, dialogue, foreshadowing, suspense), and conventions.</p>	<p>5 (9%)</p>	<p>6 (11%)</p>	<p>11 (20%)</p>
<p>Associating Meaning (2.2, 2.3)*</p> <p>Students use contextual clues to determine the denotative and connotative meaning of words, phrases, and figurative language (e.g., simile, metaphor, hyperbole, personification, irony, symbolism).</p>	<p>5 (9%)</p>	<p>6 (11%)</p>	<p>11 (20%)</p>
<p>Synthesizing Ideas (2.1, 2.2)*</p> <p>Students draw conclusions and make generalizations by integrating information in order to identify the tone, purpose, theme, main idea, or mood of a passage.</p>	<p>6 (11%)</p>	<p>10 (18%)</p>	<p>16 (29%)</p>
<p>Number (Percentage) of Questions</p>	<p>22 (40%)</p>	<p>33 (60%)</p>	<p>55 (100%)</p>

*Numbers in parentheses refer to outcomes in the Program of Studies for Grade 9 English Language Arts to which the reporting categories are cross-referenced.

Preparing Students for the English Language Arts Achievement Test

Suggestions for Preparing Students

The best way to prepare students for writing the achievement test is to teach the Program of Studies well and to ensure that students know what is expected. Many of the skills and attitudes that support test writing are, in fact, effective skills and strategies for approaching all kinds of learning tasks.

Teachers are encouraged to familiarize their students with the format of both *Part A: Writing* and *Part B: Reading* by working through the questions from previously released achievement tests.

All unused or extra Grade 9 English Language Arts *Part A: Writing* test booklets are released following the May administration of the test and may be kept at the school.

All *Part B: Reading* Readings and Questions test booklets are secured and must be returned to Alberta Education.

Released items from previously secured *Part B: Reading* tests have been posted on the Alberta Education website every second year in the fall since 2007.

Teachers should also familiarize students with the scoring guides in this bulletin. With instruction, students may be able to use these guides effectively when evaluating their own writing or that of peers.

[*Examples of the Standards for Students' Writing*](#) for Grade 9 English Language Arts are available on the Alberta Education website. These samples are intended to be used to enhance the quality of students' writing and to assist teachers in assessing student writing relative to the standards embedded in the scoring criteria in the scoring guides.

Teachers are also encouraged to share the following information with their students to help them prepare for the Grade 9 English Language Arts Achievement Test.

Suggestions for Writing the Test

Part A: Writing

- *Plan your time carefully.* Use all the time available to you to *read* the assignment carefully and to *think* about what you are being asked to do; to *plan* your writing so that it is focused, unified, and coherent; and to *proofread* your writing.
- *Read all the instructions carefully and do what the assignments ask you to do.* The time you spend reading and thinking about the assignments is time well spent. Many students find that highlighting or underlining key words helps them to focus on what is expected.
- *Plan your writing using the pages provided.* You should choose a planning strategy that helps you to focus your ideas.
- *Use your reference materials.* You are allowed to use **print versions** of commercially published dictionaries and thesauri, including bilingual dictionaries, when writing ***Part A only***. Use a dictionary to look up the meanings of words that you want to use but are not completely sure about, and to ensure that you spell words correctly. Use a thesaurus if you need to find a more precise word for the context you are developing, but be careful not to overuse either a dictionary or a thesaurus.

- *Keep in mind the characteristics of effective writing.*
 - Awareness of audience (appropriateness of tone and use of correct language)
 - Completeness of information (enough detail to fulfill the purpose)
 - Relevance of information (all details pertain to the purpose)
 - Clarity of information (all details are specific and easily understood by the reader)
- *Proofread your work and correct errors directly on your first draft.* You may double-space your writing if you think it will allow you to make corrections more easily. If double-spacing your business letter, apply this to only the body of the letter.
- *Familiarize yourself with the format of a business letter and the addressing of an envelope.*

Part B: Reading

- *You may **not** use a dictionary, a thesaurus, or other reference material when writing Part B.*
- *Read the material using the strategies that work best for you.* You should either
 - read the selection and think carefully about it before you try any of the multiple-choice questions associated with the reading selection **OR**
 - read the questions first and then read the selection, keeping in mind the questions you will need to answer

Each set of multiple-choice questions is designed to take you through the reading selection in a certain way. The questions are ordered according to the location of the answers in the passage. For example, the answer to the first question will likely appear near the beginning of the passage, and so on. Questions relating to the reading selection as a whole will appear at the end of the set of questions.

- *Feel free to write or highlight in either of the test booklets.* Identifying key words of the questions or sections of the reading selections in this way may help you to more easily determine an answer.
- *Consider all forms of information provided.* Information will be presented not only in words but also in visual forms such as cartoons, pictures, or charts.
- *Take the time to reread the lines that are referred to in a question.* Many questions contain quotations from the selection with line references indicated. It is always worthwhile to reread the lines that are referenced and to consider the meanings of these lines in both their immediate context in the selection and in the context of the selection as a whole.
- *When answering “best answer” questions, be sure to carefully read all four alternatives (A, B, C, and D) before choosing the answer that you think is best.* These questions will always include a boldfaced qualifier such as **best**, **most strongly**, or **most clearly** in their stems. More than one of the alternatives (A, B, C, and/or D) may be, to some degree, correct, but one of the alternatives will be “best” in that it takes more of the information into account or can be supported most strongly with reference to the information.
- *Work from partial knowledge when it is appropriate to do so.* Read all the choices and see which one best fits the answer. If a correct or best answer does not become obvious fairly quickly, you may want to eliminate the answers that seem least appropriate and then use your judgment to select an answer from those that remain.
- *Double check to make sure that you have answered every multiple-choice question.*

Opportunities to Participate in Test Development Activities

Field Testing

All Achievement Testing Program test questions are field tested before use. By “testing” the test questions, students who write field tests have an opportunity for a practice run at writing questions that could be used on future achievement tests. As well, the teachers have an opportunity to comment on the appropriateness and quality of the test questions.

The [*Paper Format Field Test Request Form*](#) and the [*Digital Format Field Test Request Form*](#) to request Grade 9 English Language Arts field tests are available on Alberta Education’s website in late August for the April–June administrations of field tests. Principals must consent to having their schools participate in the Field Testing Program in the upcoming school year by submitting a [*Field Test Participation Consent Form*](#). Complete and accurate forms may be returned to the Field Test Coordinator at field.test@gov.ab.ca.

Once the completed request forms are received by the Assessment Sector, classes will be selected to ensure that a representative and sufficiently large sample of students from across the province take part in the field test. Every effort will be made to place field tests as requested; however, because field tests are administered to a prescribed number of students, it may not be possible to fill all requests. Once the field tests are placed, a confirmation letter of test placements will be sent to designated school field test contacts and principals with memos to the teachers who will be participating in the field testing.

For further information about achievement field testing, see the [*Field Testing*](#) section of the *General Information Bulletin*.

Working Groups

Teacher involvement in the development of provincial achievement tests is important because it helps to ensure the validity and appropriateness of the assessments.

To be selected to participate in a working group, a teacher must be nominated by a school administrator or superintendent, and that nomination must be approved by the superintendent. To ensure that selected working-group members have appropriate subject matter training and teaching experience, nominees are asked to provide their information to their school administrator so that it can be forwarded to the Assessment Sector at Alberta Education through the superintendent.

Test Development

Teacher working groups are used throughout the test development process to create raw forms of test questions and to review and revise draft forms of provincial achievement tests. These working groups usually meet for one or two days, two or three times per year. Occasionally, these meetings are held on weekends.

To be eligible to serve on a test development working group, a teacher must currently be teaching Grade 9 English Language Arts and must have a minimum of two years of experience teaching the course.

Teachers participating in test development and/or test review working groups are selected from the working-group nominees provided by superintendents of school jurisdictions.

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