



National Evaluation Series™

NES

PROFILE

Essential Academic Skills Subtest II: Writing (002)

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NES Profile: Essential Academic Skills Subtest II: Writing (002)

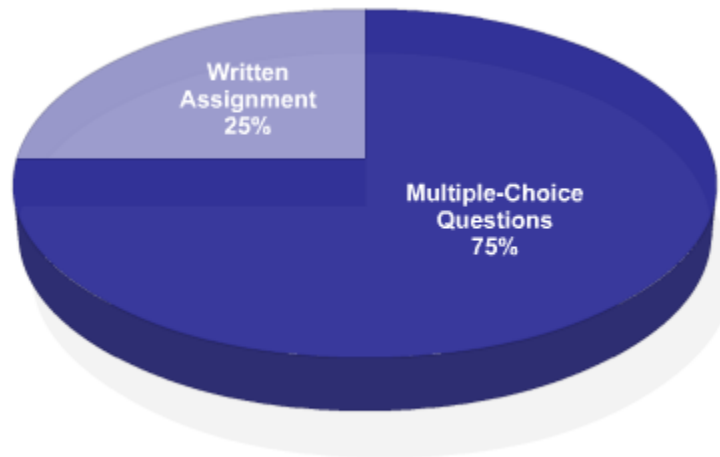
Overview

This *NES Profile* provides information about the test, including the complete set of the competencies and descriptive statements that define the content of the test—the test framework.

This *NES Profile* includes the following materials:

- » the test competencies associated with this test
- » a set of descriptive statements that further explain each competency
- » sample test questions aligned to the competencies
- » any applicable reference materials, as noted below

Test Field	Essential Academic Skills Subtest II: Writing (002)
Test Format	Multiple-choice questions and constructed-response items
Number of Questions	Approximately 36 multiple-choice items, 1 written assignment
Test Duration	Up to 75 minutes
Reference Materials	Written Assignment Directions Written Assignment Scoring Scale



Key	Approximate Percentage of Test	Test Question Format	Range of Competencies
75%		Multiple-Choice Questions	0001–0003
25%		Written Assignment	0004

Competencies 0001–0003

Read the passage below; then answer the questions that follow.

Note: One or more errors of grammar, mechanics, or organization have been included in the passage.

¹The human body depends on feedback systems. ²These systems are self-regulating, allowing the body to maintain critical life-supporting functions, such as constant body temperature and the proper balance of blood sugar, water, and minerals. ³When these and other functions are in equilibrium, the body is said to be in a state of *homeostasis*. ⁴Humans and other living creatures regulate their bodies through a series of carefully timed chemical and biological adjustments that keeps their internal environments stable.

⁵The body's regulation of temperature is a classic feedback system and illustrates how living organisms maintain equilibrium. ⁶All mammals are warm-blooded creatures which means that their internal temperature is held constant even when the external temperature varies considerably. ⁷The body has several mechanisms for maintaining this temperature. ⁸ _____, when a person is outside on a very hot day, the brain will sense even a tiny increase of heat in the blood. ⁹At such moments, the brain activates nerves that induce sweating, which cools the skin, blood, and internal organs. ¹⁰ _____, when a person is cold, the brain sends signals to make the body shiver and develop "goose bumps." ¹¹Both these responses help the body's core stay warm. ¹²In this way, the body's internal temperature is carefully controlled through a complex, but highly efficient, feedback system.

Competencies:

0001 Understand purpose, audience, organization, and development in writing.

Descriptive Statements:

- » Recognize writing that is effective for a given purpose, audience, and occasion.
- » Recognize methods of organizing paragraphs and passages.
- » Recognize effective thesis statements, topic sentences, and supporting details.
- » Select revisions that improve the unity and focus of a piece of writing or that improve cohesion and the effective sequence of ideas.
- » Recognize shifts in point of view (e.g., from first to third person).
- » Recognize details that distract from the development of the main idea of a paragraph or passage.
- » Select appropriate transitional words or phrases to convey text structure and to help readers understand the sequence of a writer's ideas.

Sample Item:

Which words or phrases, if inserted in order into the blanks in Parts 8 and 10, would best help the reader understand the sequence of the writer's ideas?

- A. As a result; Consequently
- B. However; Nevertheless
- C. Therefore; For this reason
- D. For example; On the other hand

Correct Response and Explanation

D. This question requires the examinee to select appropriate transitional words or phrases to convey sentence structure and to help readers understand the sequence of a writer's ideas. Parts 8 and 9 provide information about the body's response to heat, while Parts 10 and 11 provide information about the body's response to cold. The phrases "For example" and "On the other hand" help guide the reader through these opposing but closely connected explanations of how the body maintains a constant internal temperature.

0002 Understand problems in sentence formation.

Descriptive Statements:

- » Identify sentence fragments and run-on sentences.
- » Identify errors in subject-verb agreement.
- » Replace imprecise and inappropriate words and phrases.
- » Recognize wordiness, redundant expression of ideas, ineffective repetition of words or phrases, and other errors in sentence formation (e.g., incorrect placement of modifiers, lack of parallel structure, double negatives).

Sample Item:

Which part contains an error in subject-verb agreement?

- A. Part 3
- B. Part 4
- C. Part 5
- D. Part 6

Correct Response and Explanation

B. This question requires the examinee to identify errors in subject-verb agreement. In Part 4, the verb "keeps" should be changed to the plural "keep" so that it agrees in number with its plural subject, "chemical and biological adjustments."

0003 Understand conventions of Standard Written English grammar, usage, and mechanics.

Descriptive Statements:

- » Identify and edit errors in the standard use of verb forms.
- » Identify and edit errors in the standard use of pronouns.
- » Identify and edit errors in the standard formation and use of adverbs and adjectives.
- » Identify and edit errors in the standard use of comparatives, superlatives, and possessives.
- » Identify and edit errors in standard punctuation.
- » Identify and edit errors in standard American spelling and capitalization.

Sample Item:

Which change is needed in the passage?

- A. Part 2: Insert a comma after "temperature."
- B. Part 3: Delete the comma after "equilibrium."
- C. Part 6: Insert a comma after "creatures."
- D. Part 9: Delete the comma after "moments."

Correct Response and Explanation

C. This question requires the examinee to identify and revise errors in standard punctuation. In Part 6, a comma should be inserted after "creatures" because the noun is followed by a nonrestrictive adjective clause that provides additional information but is not essential to the meaning of the sentence.

Competency 0004: Written Assignment

In response to an assignment, demonstrate the ability to compose a developed composition in Standard Written English on a given topic.

Descriptive Statements:

- » Use language and style appropriate to the specified audience and purpose.
- » State and maintain focus on a thesis statement.
- » Provide reasoned, relevant, and specific support to develop the thesis statement and to expand on ideas and assertions.
- » Employ an organizational structure that enhances meaning and is logically sequenced from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph.
- » Use precise word choice and accurate, effective, and varied sentence structure.
- » Employ correct grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

Directions for the Written Assignment

This section of the test consists of one constructed-response written assignment. You are to prepare a written response on the assigned topic. You should use your time to plan, write, review, and edit your response to the assignment.

Read the assignment carefully before you begin to write. Think about how you will organize your response.

Your response will be scored on the extent to which you effectively communicate a whole message to the specified audience for the stated purpose. You will be assessed on your ability to express, organize, and support opinions and ideas, not on the position you take. Your response to the assignment will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

Purpose and Appropriateness: The extent to which the composition addresses the assigned topic and uses language and style appropriate to the specified audience

Unity and Focus: The extent to which the composition clearly states and maintains a thesis statement

Development: The extent to which the composition provides reasoned, relevant, and specific support to develop the thesis statement

Organization: The extent to which the composition uses an organizational structure that enhances meaning and is logically sequenced from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph

Usage and Sentence Structure: The extent to which the composition shows precise word choice and employs correct, effective, and varied sentence structure

Grammar and Mechanical Conventions: The extent to which the composition demonstrates correct grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation

You are to prepare a written response of approximately 300–400 words to this assignment. Be sure to write about the assigned topic. You may not use any reference materials. Your response must be your original work, written in your own words, and not copied or paraphrased from some other work. Remember to review what you have written and make any changes you think will improve your written response. The final version of your response should conform to the conventions of edited English as used in the United States.

Scoring Scale

The four points of the scoring scale correspond to varying degrees of performance.

Score Point	Score Point Description
4	<p>The "4" response reflects a thorough understanding of written performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The composition fully addresses the topic and uses appropriate language and style. • The thesis statement is clearly expressed and effectively maintained. • Development is specific, ably reasoned, and relevant. • Organization enhances meaning; there is a logical sequencing of ideas from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph. • Word choice is precise; sentence structure is correct, effective, and varied. • The composition includes very few errors in grammar, spelling, capitalization, or punctuation.
3	<p>The "3" response reflects a general understanding of written performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The composition addresses the topic and uses generally appropriate language and style. • The thesis statement is expressed and generally maintained. • Development is general, but mostly reasoned and relevant. • Organization conveys meaning; most sentences and paragraphs are logically sequenced. • Minor errors in word choice and sentence structure occur, but they do not impede meaning. Sentence structure shows some variety. • Minor errors in grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation may occur, but they do not impede meaning.
2	<p>The "2" response reflects a limited understanding of written performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The composition partially addresses the topic and may use inappropriate language and style. • The thesis statement is expressed but may be only partially maintained. • Development is incomplete, partially reasoned, redundant, and/or somewhat irrelevant. • Weaknesses in organization may interfere with meaning; sentences and paragraphs may lack logical sequencing. • Noticeable and distracting errors in word choice and sentence structure may impede meaning. Sentence structure is mostly simple and unvaried. • Many errors in grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation occur and may impede meaning.
1	<p>The "1" response reflects little understanding of written performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The composition addresses little of the topic and uses inappropriate language and style. • A thesis statement may be expressed but is not maintained. • Development, if present, is deficient, irrelevant, and/or confusing. • Meaning is largely obscured by a lack of organizational structure; sentences and paragraphs demonstrate little or no logical sequencing. • Errors in word choice and sentence structure may be so numerous and serious that they impede meaning. • Numerous errors in grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation often impede meaning.
U	<p>The response is unrelated to the assignment, is unreadable, is primarily in a language other than English, or does not contain a sufficient amount of original work to score.</p>
B	<p>There is no response to the assignment.</p>

Sample Written Assignment:

An American poet and essayist once observed that "the less government we have, the better."

Write a composition, to be read by an audience of educated adults, in which you:

- » **discuss why you agree or disagree with this observation; and**
- » **defend your position with logical arguments and specific examples.**

Sample Responses

Sample Strong Response

It is easy to understand why some people believe having less government is better: no one enjoys paying taxes, and a smaller government costs less to operate. Others object to government interference in the economy, arguing that the freer people are to run their businesses as they see fit the more prosperous all of us are likely to be. And whatever political party someone votes for, no one wants to have government snooping into her or his personal affairs. Although these arguments have validity, we should not reduce government to its bare essentials. There are some needs that we have as a community that cannot be met without the help of government.

We cannot maintain our highways, build and operate parks, protect the environment, or ensure that our food is safe except through government. Such tasks require organization, budgeting, and oversight at a very high level. Moreover, there are many situations in which no responsible person would wish to see government doing as little as it could. For instance, when the nation is under attack, when individual rights are threatened, when there is a public health crisis, or when a natural disaster has destroyed a community, good citizens want government to do whatever is necessary to solve the problem. At such moments, no one wants to hear that "the less government we have, the better."

I think that when people say they want "less government" they usually mean that they want government to do the public's work efficiently, effectively, and without waste or corruption. To cite one recent example, people in Boston weren't unhappy that the government built new highways and tunnels to ease congestion in the downtown area; they were unhappy that some of the construction was poor quality and that the project was exorbitantly over budget. When Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, people weren't upset that government tried to help the victims of flooding. They were angry because government did such a poor job.

There are many important tasks in our society that individuals can't do by themselves. For those jobs we need government—that is all of us, collectively—to lend a hand. What we should be asking for is not less government, but better government.

Sample Weak Response

I do think that the less government the better. The government can get too involved in our lives if we let them. The government likes to watch what we are doing, they even have cameras in streets and on red lights and if you run them they can find you. Also they tax us too much, and they spend the money on worthless projects. If the government has less money there will be less pork spending.

Mostly I think smaller government is best because it makes too many restrictions on people. There are already rules about business ownership and payrolls, where we can drill oil wells, and also free speech is a thing of the past. When free speech becomes a thing of the past, then truth becomes a thing of the past. A lot of truths are painful to hear. But if we don't hear them, we can't address the issues.

Finally, big government tend to have a lot of red tape, you can't get anything done without spending alot of time and trouble. Burocracies start expanding so large that nothing gets done because so many workers have to sign off on it. This is good if you work in a government burocracy because you will have good benefits and job security. Maybe for years on end. But it is bad for the country.

So the poet and essayist, he was right to say "the less goverment, the better." Obviously we need some goverment, but it should be by the people and for the people. And people have different ideas about how to run their schools, there businesses, and there lifes.

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