

SAMPLE PAGES FOR
PASSING THE
GEORGLA HIGH SCHOOL
WRITING TEST

2008 EDITION



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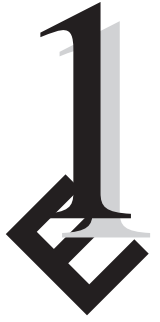
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Chapter One



CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION OF THE WRITING TEST

Purpose of the Georgia High School Graduation Writing Test

All Georgia students who entered ninth grade after July 1, 1991 are required to take and pass the Georgia High School Writing Test in order to receive a regular high school diploma. The Georgia High School Graduation Writing Test ensures that all Georgia graduates have achieved a minimum level of competency in writing. Students will be required to write a two page, persuasive paper on an assigned topic. This test is first administered in the **fall of the junior year**. Students will take the other sections of the Graduation Test (language arts, science, social studies, and mathematics) later in their junior year.

What are they looking for in my writing?

Basically, we want to know if you are capable of writing a paper which expresses your ideas in a clear, persuasive manner. The basic components of the writing test are as follows:

- **The student can respond to an assigned task.** This means they want to see if you can respond to a prompt or topic of their choosing. They will be looking to see that you write about their topic. Do not make up one of your own!
- **The student's paper clearly establishes a controlling idea.** This means that they want to see if you can establish a focus to your paper with a clear thesis.
- **The student's paper is developed with sufficiently relevant supporting ideas.** They want to see if you can choose appropriate ideas, details, and examples to support your thesis.
- **The student's paper has a clearly discernible order of presentation.** Here they are looking to see if your writing has a logical organization.
- **The student uses transitions which assist in the flow of ideas.** They will be looking to see that you have signaled to your audience when you move from one section of your paper to another.
- **The student's paper has a sense of completeness.** They want your paper to have a clearly established beginning, middle, and end. When they finish reading your paper, they want to have a feeling of completeness. **They are NOT looking for a set number of paragraphs. There is no such thing as a magic number of paragraphs for an essay.**

What is the GHSGWT going to be like?

The test lasts a total of 90 minutes with 10 additional minutes of writing time, if needed. Listed below are the recommended time frames for each part of the test. In preparation for the test, you are advised to practice each step or stage of the writing process. Then as you get more confident in what you are doing, you will be able to practice all or most of the stages in one sitting. Please keep in mind that these stages are suggested. You may actually spend more or less time in a stage. The stages or time frames are as follows:

1	Planning/Prewriting	15 minutes
1	Drafting	30 minutes
1	Revising/Editing	25 minutes
1	Final Draft	15 minutes
1	Proofreading	5 minutes

All students are allowed up to ten extra minutes, if needed.

Additional extra time is allowed for students with an IEP (Individual Education Plan), a Section 504 Plan, or TPP (Test Participation Plan). Please see your school's guidance counselor to see if you are in one of these categories.

What happens if I don't pass the Georgia High School Graduation Writing Test on the first attempt?

If you do not pass the Georgia High School Graduation Writing Test on the first administration in the fall of your junior year, there are five other testing times between your first attempt and your scheduled graduation. The best plan, of course, is to prepare and pass the examination on the first administration. This book will help you understand the test and to prepare for taking it. If you don't pass the test the first time, use this book to help you prepare for a retest.

How is the new writing test different from when it was first administered?

Beginning in September of 2007, there are some big changes in the writing test. The state of Georgia has been working on revamping the high school curriculum. Teachers previously taught from what is called the QCC or Quality Core Curriculum. Now, they are all teaching you using the GPS or Georgia Performance Standards. The difference is that the GPS is more rigorous. Simply put, we know that students in Georgia can learn and do more, and the GPS will ensure that all teachers teach with more depth, and in turn students will learn more.

So, what areas of the new GPS, or Georgia Performance Standards, will be tested on the Georgia Graduation Writing Test?

There are specific writing standards that you will have to master. They are listed below with the specific elements related to them that you must demonstrate mastery on the writing test. *Note: The Georgia Performance Standards are the property of the Georgia Department of Education.*

ELA10W1 [English Language Arts, Grade 10, Writing, Standard 1]

The student produces writing that establishes an appropriate organizational structure, sets a context and engages the reader, maintains a coherent focus throughout, and signals closure.
The student:

- a. Establishes a clear, distinctive, and coherent thesis or perspective and maintains a consistent tone and focus throughout.
- b. Selects a focus, structure, and point of view relevant to the purpose, genre expectations, audience, length, and format requirements.
- e. Writes texts of a length appropriate to address the topic or tell the story.
- f. Uses traditional structures for conveying information. (i.e., chronological order, cause and effect, similarity and difference, and posing and answering a question).
- g. Supports statements and claims with anecdotes, descriptions, facts, statistics, and specific examples.

Note: Why only a, b, e, f, and g? We're only listing the elements in the GPS standards that you will be required to demonstrate on your Georgia Graduation Writing Test.

ELA10W2 [English Language Arts, Grade 10, Writing, Standard 2]

The student produces persuasive writing that structures ideas and arguments in a sustained and logical fashion; the student:

- a. Engages the reader by establishing a context and developing reader interest.
- b. Develops a controlling idea or formulates an arguable thesis that makes a clear and knowledgeable judgment.
- c. Uses specific rhetorical devices to support assertions. (i. e., appeal to emotion or ethical belief, personal anecdote, case study, analogy, and/or logical reasoning)
- d. Clarifies and defends positions with precise and relevant evidence. (i. e., facts, expert opinions, quotations, or expressions of commonly accepted beliefs)
- e. Excludes information and arguments that are irrelevant.
- f. Organizes points of argument effectively to achieve desired outcome.
- g. Addresses readers' concerns, counterclaims, biases, and expectations.
- h. Achieves closure by summarizing main points of argument, appealing to reason, ethics, or emotion, or encouraging action.

ELA10C1 [English Language Arts, Grade 10, Conventions, Standard 1]

The student demonstrates understanding and control of the rules of the English language, realizing that usage involves the appropriate application of conventions and grammar in both written and spoken formats. The student:

- a. Demonstrates an understanding of proper English usage and control of grammar, sentence and paragraph structure, diction, and syntax.
- b. Correctly uses clauses (i.e., main and subordinate), phrases (i.e., gerund, infinitive, and participial), and mechanics of punctuation (i. e., end marks, commas, semicolons, quotation marks, colons, ellipses, hyphens).
- c. Demonstrates an understanding of sentence construction (e.g. subordination, proper placement of modifiers, parallel structure) and proper English usage (i. e., consistency of verb tenses, agreement).

ELA10C2 [English Language Arts, Grade 10, Conventions, Standard 2]

The student demonstrates understanding of manuscript form, realizing that different forms of writing require different formats. The student:

- a. Produces writing that conforms to appropriate manuscript requirements
- b. Produces legible work that shows accurate spelling and correct use of the conventions of punctuation and capitalization.
- c. Reflects appropriate format requirements, including pagination, spacing, and margins, and integration of source material with appropriate citations.

*** Source for Georgia Performance Standards: Georgia State Department of Education. These standards are reviewed regularly. Please consult the Georgia Department of Education.*

Wait a minute, I'm a junior, so why do the standards say grade 10?

Remember that the Georgia Graduation Writing Test is given in the fall of your junior year. You are being tested on everything you have learned previously, thus the tenth grade Georgia Performance Standards are used on the test. The focus of writing instruction in the tenth grade is on persuasive writing which will prepare you to write a persuasive piece of writing on the test.

What if I don't understand all the terms used in the standards? What do they mean anyway?

Don't panic. As we prepare you for the test, we'll go into more detail on the standards and the rubrics they will use.

Can I just write about anything I want to on the test?

Unfortunately, no, you cannot. You will be required to write a persuasive paper on a specific topic. An off topic paper is a failing paper.

☞ What is persuasive writing?

Persuasive writing has a special purpose. It attempts to convince someone else, your audience, to accept your position on a topic as being right or valid. Persuasive Writing might try to convince the audience to adopt a certain position or point of view. It might try to inspire the audience to take some particular action.

☞ How long will I have to write my paper?

You will have 90 minutes of actual writing time, not including the time it takes the testing proctor to distribute and collect the testing materials. Any student will be allotted 10 extra minutes to complete the test. Students with IEP, TPP, and 504 plans will be tested according to the provisions in their plans.

☞ What if I'm sick on the day of the test?

There is a makeup date, but you will have a different topic.

☞ How will they grade my paper?

The writing test is scored in what is called **Domains**. These are simply **areas** that the raters or readers will use to evaluate your paper. The domains which will be used beginning in September, 2007 are as follows:

IDEAS ORGANIZATION STYLE CONVENTIONS

You will be able to earn up to a **5** in each domain. A **5** is not a perfect paper, but it represents the highest level of performance in that domain.

☞ Do all of these areas or domains count the same?

Good question. No, they don't. They are "weighted" as follows:

Ideas	2	×	the raters' scores	(40% of your score)
Organization	1	×	the raters' scores	(20% of your score)
Style	1	×	the raters' scores	(20% of your score)
Convention	1	×	the raters' scores	(20% of your score)

***The Georgia High School Graduation Test domains are the property of the Georgia Department of Education.*

☞ Let's look at what each of these areas will include.

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IDEAS

When the raters read your paper, they will be trying to decide the degree to which you have established a controlling idea and elaborated your main points with examples, illustrations, facts, or details that are appropriate to the purpose of your paper and the audience as identified in the prompt. Keep in mind that this portion is worth 40% of your total score. That means that the raters are very interested in what you have to say about the topic.

ORGANIZATION

When the raters read your paper, they will be looking to see that you have arranged your ideas in a clear order and that the order is appropriate to the task you have been assigned. It's important that your audience be able to follow what you are trying to tell them. Clear organization will do that. We'll look more in depth at the different ways you can organize your paper which are appropriate for a persuasive paper in a later chapter. This portion is worth 20% of your total score.

STYLE

When the raters read your paper, they will be looking to see how you control language to engage your reader. This means that they want to see how interesting your reading is for your audience. This portion is worth 20% of your total score.

CONVENTIONS

When the raters read your paper, they will be looking to see how you form your sentences, use language correctly, and use the mechanics of punctuation. Sentence formation and usage are weighted more heavily than mechanics in determining the overall conventions score. This portion is worth 20% of your total score.

Exercise 1:

Truly understanding the standards will ensure that you know what they are looking for on the Georgia High School Graduation Writing Test. Now, let's look at the standards and see if you can select which areas on the scoring domain each address. A standard can be tested in more than one domain. Place a check under each domain that you believe the standard may address. *Note: The Georgia Performance Standards are the property of the Georgia Department of Education.*

Standard Number	GPS Standard	Domain 1: Ideas	Domain 2: Organization	Domain 3: Style	Domain 4: Conventions
ELA10W1 [English Language Arts, Grade 10, Writing, Standard 1]	The student produces writing that establishes an appropriate organizational structure, sets a context and engages the reader, maintains a coherent focus throughout, and signals closure.				
ELA10W2 [English Language Arts, Grade 10, Writing, Standard 2]	The student produces persuasive writing that structures ideas and arguments in a sustained and logical fashion.				

Standard Number	GPS Standard	Domain 1: Ideas	Domain 2: Organization	Domain 3: Style	Domain 4: Conventions
ELA10C1 [English Language Arts, Grade 10, Conventions, Standard 1]	The student demonstrates understanding and control of the rules of the English language, realizing that usage involves the appropriate application of conventions and grammar in both written and spoken formats.				E
ELA10C2 [English Language Arts, Grade 10, Conventions, Standard 2]	The student demonstrates understanding of manuscript form, realizing that different forms of writing require different formats.		L		

Exercise 2:

Now, let's do the same thing with the more specific elements under the standards.

Remember that an element could be tested in more than one domain. Place a check under each domain that you believe the element best address.

Standard Number	GPS Standard	Domain 1: Ideas	Domain 2: Organization	Domain 3: Style	Domain 4: Conventions
ELA10W1 [English Language Arts, Grade 10, Writing, Standard 1]	a. Establishes a clear, distinctive, and coherent thesis or perspective and maintains a consistent tone and focus throughout.				
	b. Selects a focus, structure, and point of view relevant to the purpose, genre expectations, audience, length, and format requirements.				
	e. Writes texts of a length appropriate to address the topic or tell the story.				

Standard Number	GPS Standard	Domain 1: Ideas	Domain 2: Organization	Domain 3: Style	Domain 4: Conventions
	f. Uses traditional structures for conveying information. (i.e. chronological order, cause and effect, similarity and difference, and posing and answering a question).				
	g. Supports statements and claims with anecdotes, descriptions, facts, statistics, and specific examples.				
ELA10W2 [English Language Arts, Grade 10, Writing, Standard 2]	a. Engages the reader by establishing a context and developing reader interest.				
	b. Develops a controlling idea or formulates an arguable thesis that makes a clear and knowledgeable judgment.				
	c. Uses specific rhetorical devices to support assertions. (i.e., appeal to emotion or ethical beliefs, personal anecdote, case study, analogy, and/or logical reasoning)				
	d. Clarifies and defends positions with precise and relevant evidence. (i. e., facts, expert opinions, quotations, or experiences of commonly accepted beliefs)				
	e. Excludes information and arguments that are irrelevant.				
	f. Organizes points of argument effectively to achieve desired outcome.				
	g. Addresses readers' concerns, counterclaims, biases, and expectations.				
	h. Achieves closure by summarizing main points of argument, appealing to reason, ethics, or emotion, or encouraging action.				

Standard Number	GPS Standard	Domain 1: Ideas	Domain 2: Organization	Domain 3: Style	Domain 4: Conventions
ELA10C1 [English Language Arts, Grade 10, Conventions, Standard 1]	a. Demonstrates an understanding of proper English usage and control of grammar, sentence and paragraph structure, diction, and syntax.				E
	b. Correctly uses clauses (i.e., main and subordinate), phrases (i.e., gerund, infinitive, and participial), and mechanics of punctuation (i.e., end marks, commas, semicolons, quotation marks, colons, ellipses, hypens).		L		
	c. Demonstrates an understanding of sentence construction (e.g., subordination, proper placement of modifiers, parallel structure) and proper English usage (i. e., consistency of verb tenses, agreement).				
ELA10C2 [English Language Arts, Grade 10, Conventions, Standard 2]	a. Produces writing that conforms to appropriate manuscript requirements.				M
	b. Produces legible work that shows accurate spelling and correct use of the conventions of punctuation and capitalization.				
	c. Reflects appropriate format requirements, including pagination, spacing, and margins, and integration of source material with appropriate citations.				

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How did you do?

It's okay if you didn't get them all right. What is important is that you begin to understand what the state of Georgia is expecting from you on the test. We aren't finished with the standards, and you'll understand them more as we continue, so don't worry. We'll let you know as you go through the format of the test which standard you are actually addressing. Let's take a minute to review.

- ___ 1. Everyone should give to the hurricane relief fund because we have so much more than the people who are struggling to survive after the devastating storm.
- ___ 2. Many people are still living in FEMA trailers more than a year after the storm.
- ___ 3. Thousands of people have no homes to return to.
- ___ 4. While on a mission trip with my church, I saw slabs of concrete where homes used to be. I can't imagine losing everything that I own.
- ___ 5. If the average American simply gave to the Hurricane Relief Fund the equivalent of the cost of two combo fast food meals, millions of dollars could be raised in one month.
- ___ 6. If you could have talked to the teenagers and children that I did and seen the loss they experienced and the grief on their faces after having lost their family members and all of their possessions, you would understand the true needs these people have.
- ___ 7. In the past week there were several articles about the hurricane relief efforts in my local paper.
- ___ 8. I know that I feel much better after giving of my time and talents to the relief effort. I know that I'll continue to work with other relief efforts in the future.

Exercise 5:

Now, let's begin by writing on a practice prompt.

Diagnostic Writing Topic

Writing Situation: Many adolescents have found the transition from middle school to high school to be a difficult one. In response to this problem, your school is asking for advice from older high school students concerning this problem. You have been asked to contribute to a Handbook for Freshmen which will advise these students on how to be successful in high school. What do you feel are the characteristics of a good high school student?

Writing Directions: Your school would like to pass along advice to incoming ninth graders in the fall. Write an article for the handbook outlining the characteristics of a good high school student and how these characteristics will help them be successful. Support your advice with reasons, examples, or evidence from your own personal experience and your observation of others.

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