



California
Subject
Examinations for
Teachers®

TEST GUIDE

WRITING SKILLS

Test Structure,
Sample Questions and Responses,
and Scoring Information

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CS-TG-QRI42-04

Test Structure for CSET: Writing Skills

CSET: Writing Skills is composed of two constructed-response questions that assess a candidate's ability to write effectively.

CSET: Writing Skills	
Domains	Number of Constructed-Response Questions
Expository Writing	1
Expressive Writing	1
Total	2

One of the constructed-response questions asks candidates to analyze a given situation or statement. The other asks candidates to write about a specified personal experience. Candidates are not expected to demonstrate any specialized knowledge in their responses.

Sample Test Questions for CSET: Writing Skills

Below is a set of questions that are similar to the questions you will see on CSET: Writing Skills. For each constructed-response question, you are to prepare an essay of approximately 300–600 words.

Read each assignment carefully before you begin to write. Spend some time considering each assignment and organizing what you plan to write. You are encouraged to respond to the questions without looking at the responses provided in the next section. Record your responses on a sheet of paper and compare them with the provided responses.

1. **Complete the exercise that follows.**

A visitor from another country has only a short time to spend in the United States and would like to see one place in or near your home. In an essay to be read by an audience of educated adults, state where you would take the visitor and describe what the place would reveal about the culture and values of the United States.

2. **Complete the exercise that follows.**

Children develop ideas as they grow up about what jobs or careers they would like to have as adults. Sometimes they change their minds and sometimes they do not. In an essay to be read by an audience of educated adults, identify a job or career you once wanted to have, and explain why you do or do not have the same view of the job or career now.

Examples of Responses to Sample Questions for CSET: Writing Skills

Expository Writing

Question #1 (Score Point 4 Response)

". . . life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." This phrase from the Declaration of Independence represents to most Americans the culture and values of our country. To best illustrate the truth of this phrase, and thus present American culture and values, I would invite a visitor from another country to one of the world's most famous cities, San Francisco. In this beautiful "city by the bay," I can show my foreign friend how the United States truly exemplifies its formal values, particularly the various freedoms granted us by our Bill of Rights and our cultural diversity.

Because my home town of San Jose is approximately forty minutes away from San Francisco by car, the drive from my house to "The City" would be an opportune time to show my companion the beautiful landscape dotted with cows, as well as theme parks and high-tech business complexes. I would explain that, despite America's reputation for being on the cutting-edge of industry and entertainment, we have not forgotten our country's agricultural roots. In fact, many of our values tout individualism and the benefits of hard work, vestiges of a country of farmers which has become, over the past 200 years, a country of businessmen and entrepreneurs.

This point would become clearly evident as we enter the towering, gleaming sky scrapers of downtown San Francisco. I would point out the multitudes of suit-clad men and women rushing to and from their high-rise offices. Every race, age, size and shape of person can be seen taking advantage of the freedom of opportunity America offers all its citizens, indiscriminantly. Furthermore, my companion would see all types of places of worship along the streets of San Francisco. The various churches, mosques, and synagogues would prove that freedom of religion actually does exist peacefully in our country, unlike so many others around the world.

From Chinatown to the Italian flavor of North Beach, and even from the riske sections of Haight Street and the Mission district, my foreign friend would notice the cultural and ideological diversity of San Francisco. These freedoms of expression, speech, and political activism are so widely practiced across all fifty states of America, I would explain, that they are sometimes even taken for granted. Surely my visitor would learn from our lively excursion through the colourful streets of San Francisco that the United States upholds its world-famous values of the "inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Question #1 (Score Point 3 Response)

When a visitor from another country comes to visit the United States, take him or her to the mall. Any shopping center in Sacramento, such as the "Arden Fair Mall," provides many examples of the values and different cultures found most anywhere in the United States today.

All clothing stores, for example, found in any mall are excellent representatives of the different styles and fashions of clothing worn by most Americans. Accessories, such as jewelry, purses, shoes, and hats are also examples of how most Americans choose to present themselves. Even the salesperson can provide suggestions on what is currently fashionable in the United States.

Usually there are a variety of restaurants found in the mall also. These restaurants most definitely provide examples of the most popular kinds of food eaten by most Americans. Even food familiar to the foreigner may be found in any shopping center.

Other stores such as furniture stores and stores that sell technical and electrical equipment are other excellent examples of the American culture. The environment inside as well as outside any American home may be found in these types of stores.

After visiting the "Arden Fair Mall" in Sacramento, a foreigner should become very familiar with the values and culture of the United States. Through the many examples of fashion, food, and environmental surroundings, the "American Way" is clearly exemplified. The "Arden Fair Mall" may be the best tourist attraction in Sacramento to a foreigner.

Question #1 (Score Point 2 Response)

Having the opportunity to ever show a visitor from a foreign country our culture and values would be a honor. Disneyland would be the place to go. Many Americans see it as part of our culture, values and opportunities we have.

Disneyland is not just part of our country its a symbol of our values. It shows freedom of expression. It shows the business opportunities you may develop. Disneyland will also show all of the different geographical, racial, and religious cultures we have all across the United States.

Disneyland is the main museum for representing the United States of America. It would give our foreign friend all the culture and values of this country in one visit.

Question #1 (Score Point 1 Response)

I would take a visitor who is here for a short time to one place he can appreciate the culture and values of this country. Such a place is a museum.

I live in Los Angeles and the museum for Arts and culture is located within a few blocks from where I live. This museum contains works of arts and culture that are very educational about the way of live of the people of America.

This museum is housed in an antique building that is in itself a landmark in Los Angeles.

Expressive Writing

Question #2 (Score Point 4 Response)

When I was old enough to learn what a psychiatrist did, I was fascinated. I was an avid reader and observer of people. I concluded that society was full of people with problems, many with peculiar behavior, and I would learn how to "fix their brains." I thought that the brain was like a broken appliance!

As soon as I was told that the brain determined how people behaved and managed their lives, I decided that I would simply learn to adjust the broken organ.

I pictured myself sitting behind a desk giving out sage advice and consolation in addition to doing surgery on the cranium.

As I matured, I began learning more about the profession. I majored in psychology in college and worked in institutions during summers. The more I learned about the field the more I realized how little we knew about the complicated brain. The ignorance in the field outweighed any advances they (have) made. I changed my mind about the profession as my learning about it increased. I weighed all the theories, many conflicting, and unsupported, and decided that the career would not suit me as an adult. Cases of individuals remaining in institutions or under therapy for long periods of time, and sometimes permanently, discouraged me. My youthful attitude of "I'll fix-it" was a bubble that burst.

I'm not surprised that ideas on careers change from childhood to adulthood. When media glamorizes certain professions, and storybooks have happy endings, certain careers appear more rewarding than they actually are. With maturity and learning, exposure to the realistic facets of a career can change its appeal. My view of the job certainly changed.

Question #2 (Score Point 3 Response)

As a child, I wanted to become a teacher. This desire was fostered by personal experiences with loving, caring teachers of my own. I also was taught, by my parents, a love of reading. Books were one of my most favorite things. I had a need to be around other people; which helped me decide that a people-oriented career would suit me the best. Teaching seemed to be a respected profession. Another appealing advantage was having the summer off.

As an adult, my views have partially changed. I did become a teacher. I still have my love of books and reading. I am still very much people-oriented, or children-oriented. I am saddened, as an adult, by the lack of respect given to teachers. As a child, teaching seemed to be such a noble profession. It is also disappointing to see the budget problems, low esteem of a profession, schools closing, and the public's misunderstanding that teachers are paid "well."

My childhood aspirations will mesh with my adult ideas on teaching when the financial aspects of education are solved.

Question #2 (Score Point 2 Response)

When I was young and not too bright I wanted to become a Microbiologist.

I worked in a school that had an extensive science department, that no one was using. I was enrolled in a physiology class at this school and my teacher seemed to sense my curiosity.

Mr. Borrows (my teacher's name) would allow me free run of the labs. All the school's equipment were made available to me, for the asking, and I asked for a lot.

It wasn't long before I was making slide presentations for microorganisms. I photographed what I saw and developed the film in the photo lab.

It was a wonderful year, but as with all things, it came to an end. My family was forced to move to another state and all that goes with a relocation. My passion for science and Microbiology was silenced for years.

I am a man now, all grown up. Many things have come and gone in my life, yet, still deep inside a ember burns of a long past, half forgotten dream that won't die. I have enrolled in college; and I am working hard.

Perhaps someday my half forgotten dream will become a reality.

Question #2 (Score Point 1 Response)

Being that I am in sales. I Base my Career on work hard. But I got older and I realize that work hard is not everything. So I decide to go in the Job world as a prinicpal in the Education Department. I feel that teaching Something that I like best I will enjoy more because of the fun I will have doing it. Becoming a teacher will take hard work and time, I have all the time is willing to give more. there are two fields that I will like to teach and that grade school or high school if I can teach there or be a Coach then my goal will be forfile. This has been my life and now it my dream.

Scoring Information for CSET: Writing Skills

There are two constructed-response questions in CSET: Writing Skills. Responses to the constructed-response questions are scored by qualified California educators using focused holistic scoring. Scorers will judge the overall effectiveness of your responses while focusing on the performance characteristics that have been identified as important for this subtest (see below). Each response will be assigned a score based on an approved scoring scale (see page 11).

Your performance on the subtest will be evaluated against a standard determined by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing based on professional judgments and recommendations of California educators.

Performance Characteristics for CSET: Writing Skills

The following performance characteristics will guide the scoring of responses to the constructed-response questions on CSET: Writing Skills.

RHETORICAL FORCE	The clarity with which the central idea or point of view is stated and maintained; the coherence of the discussion and the quality of the writer's reasoning.
ORGANIZATION	The clarity of the writing and the logical sequence of the writer's ideas.
SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT	The relevance, depth, and specificity of supporting information.
USAGE	The extent to which the writing shows care and precision in word choice.
STRUCTURE AND CONVENTIONS	The extent to which the writing is free of errors in syntax, paragraph structure, sentence structure, and mechanics (e.g., spelling, punctuation, and capitalization).
APPROPRIATENESS	The extent to which the writer addresses the topic and uses language and style appropriate to the given audience and purpose.

Scoring Scale for CSET: Writing Skills

Scores will be assigned to each response to the constructed-response questions on CSET: Writing Skills according to the following scoring scale.

SCORE POINT	SCORE POINT DESCRIPTION
4	<p>A "4" is a well-formed writing sample that effectively communicates a whole message to the specified audience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer clearly presents a central idea and/or point of view and maintains focus on that topic; the response is well reasoned. • Ideas or points of discussion are logically arranged, and their meaning is clearly communicated. • Generalizations and assertions are well supported with relevant, specific, and detailed development. • Choice of words is precise; usage is careful and accurate. • The writer composes sentences of syntactic complexity and variety and constructs coherent paragraphs, although the response may contain minor flaws in mechanical conventions. • The response completely addresses the topic and uses language and style appropriate for the given audience and purpose.
3	<p>A "3" is an adequately formed writing sample that communicates a message to the specified audience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer presents a central idea and/or point of view, and the focus is generally maintained; the response is adequately reasoned. • Organization of ideas is generally clear and effective, and the meaning is generally clear. • Generalizations and assertions are adequately supported, although perhaps unevenly. • Word choice and usage are adequate; some errors exist but do not impede meaning. • The writer's response may have errors in paragraphing, sentence structure, and/or mechanical conventions, but they are neither serious nor frequent enough to distract or confuse the reader. • The response may not fully address the topic (i.e., one of the tasks in the assignment may be neglected or may be vaguely or incompletely addressed), but language and style are appropriate for the given audience and purpose.
2	<p>A "2" is a partially formed writing sample that attempts to communicate a message to the specified audience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer may state a central idea and/or point of view but loses focus on that idea; the response is simplistically reasoned. • Organization of ideas may be evident, but is largely ineffective, and the response is generally unclear. • Generalizations and assertions are only partially supported; the response may contain irrelevant, insufficient, or imprecise details. • Word choice and usage are generally imprecise and distracting. • The writer's response may have distracting errors in paragraphing, sentence structure, mechanical conventions, and/or dependence upon short, choppy sentences with minimal modification. • The response incompletely addresses most tasks of the assignment and/or inadequately uses language and/or style appropriate for the given audience and purpose.
1	<p>A "1" is an inadequately formed writing sample that fails to communicate a message to the specified audience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer fails to state and/or to remain focused on a central idea and/or point of view; the response lacks coherence and reason. • Organization of ideas is ineffective and seriously flawed; meaning is unclear throughout. • Generalizations and assertions are not supported or are severely underdeveloped; the presentation of details is confused. • Word choice and usage are largely imprecise, and there are severe distracting errors. • The writer commits serious and numerous errors in paragraphing, sentence structure, and/or mechanical conventions. • The response demonstrates little or no understanding of any of the assignment's tasks; language and style may be inappropriate for audience and purpose.
U	<p>The response is unscorable because it is off topic, illegible, primarily in a language other than English, or of insufficient length to score.</p>
B	<p>The essay response box/sheet is blank.</p>