

Guidelines for Writers of Writing Tests

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Guidelines for Item Writers

Prompt Selection

- Use prompts that are clear. Consider using pictures / drawings as prompts, but ensure that they are black and white, photocopiable (in size max. A4) and appropriate for the age.
- Provide enough information in the input but not so much that the task becomes a reading task.
- Where possible, input texts should be authentic (e.g. advertisements, articles, leaflets, brochures, letters, etc.) Where this is not possible (e.g. personal notes, diary entries, etc.) make sure the text is written in correct and appropriate English.
- The language level of verbal prompts should be below the tested level.
- The input text (edited/simplified versions of authentic texts) is as short as possible. Ideally, it should not be longer than 50 words.

Task Selection

- The task should be realistic and plausible, and should be within the candidate's range of experience.
- Do not test candidate's background knowledge of the world.
- Make sure that the task does not require creativity or imagination from students. You should provide appropriate prompts which determine what students should write, give enough information for them to write about, and can elicit the required amount of language.
- Make sure that if personal data or information is required, this should be provided in an input text or in other prompt(s) so as to standardise correct answers.
- Special care must be taken that the task does not turn into copying.

Task Design

- In order to make the task realistic and communicative, create a complete task environment: it should be clear for students to whom, why, when, where, about what and how they are supposed to write.
- The required length must conform to the Specifications.
- Edit each task on one A4 page, or two facing pages.
- Provide enough space to complete tasks. The space where students respond must be lined.

- If there is an authentic input text, edit its layout so that it resembles the original as closely as possible.

Rubrics

- Use standardised and simplified rubrics, well under the candidate's expected level.
- Avoid using exclamation marks and repetitions.
- Give all rubrics in English.
- Indicate the reason for writing, the audience and the required text-type.
- Word rubrics so that they cannot be copied to complete the task.
- If students are required to write about several things, organise these requirements in bullet points (rather than list them in a continuous line) so that they are easier to follow.
- Indicate the required length in number of words.
- Indicate where to write answers.