

Getting Ready for the OSSLT Literacy Test Primer



What will the test include?

The test is designed to include questions that test both the reading and writing abilities of students. The test has short and long writing tasks, and multiple choice questions that focus on three writing skills required in school and daily life.

In reading, students are given examples of different types of reading selections:
the information paragraph

- a news report
- dialogue
- real-life narrative
- graphic selection

Students are then tested on their comprehension of what they have read.

Students are required to demonstrate their writing skills through different formats:

- short writing tasks that require a response in six lines
- a series of paragraphs expressing an opinion
- a news report
- a summary

There are also multiple choice questions testing writing skills.

Reading on the OSSLT

The OSSLT's informational, narrative and graphic reading selections focus on three reading skills. To be successful on these readings you will have to:

- understanding *explicitly* (**directly, literally**) stated ideas and information
- understanding *implicitly* (**indirectly, inferences**) stated ideas and information
- make *connections* (**interpretations**) between information and ideas in a reading selection and personal knowledge and experience

The reading selections include:

- **information paragraph:** presents ideas and information on a topic
- **news report:** presents information in the form of a news story
- **dialogue:** presents a conversation between two or more people
- **real-life narrative:** an account of a significant time in an individual's life
- **graphic text:** presents ideas and information with the help of graphic features, such as diagrams, photographs, drawings, sketches, patterns, timetables, maps, charts or tables



Types of Reading Questions

Types of questions

1 Multiple-choice

- Each reading text is followed by a number of multiple-choice questions Students select the best or most correct answer from a list of four options

2 Open-response

The information paragraph

- News report
- One or two open response questions Students construct a response based on the reading selection They should respond on the six lines provided

Reading tips for the test

1 Multiple Choice

- Read the entire question carefully
- Choose the most correct answer
- When you are asked to provide the "best meaning" of a word "as used in" the reading selection, refer back to the selection and choose the option that describes the word as used in that specific sentence

2 Written Answers

- Read each question carefully
- Since this is a reading test, many questions may be answered in a single word or phrase
- The space provided indicates the approximate length of the answer expected
- When a question requires you to give a reason or explain your answer, consider including the word "because" in your answer

Graphical Text

- Get an idea about the information in the reading section by scanning the text and the pictures before you attempt to answer the question
- Attempt to block out sections of the graphical text when attempting to answer a question so you are not distracted by the rest of the images and words on the page
- Read one question at a time
- Find the information in the text that helps you answer the question

Informational Text

- Read the entire selection
- Look at the graphic(s) to get additional information
- Read one question at a time
- Record your answer to the question
- Find the information in the text that helps you answer the question
- Go to the next question

Literary Text

- Read the entire selection
- Read one question at a time
- Record your answer to the question
- Go to the next question
- Find the information in the text that helps you answer the question



The SQ3R Strategy and the Literacy Test

Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Review

S stands for SURVEY

Look around the page for clues:

1. Check out the title – they will give you clues about the reading
2. Notice any words in bold, underlined, or set aside in sub- headings: this is how the author has organized his or her work
3. Notice any graphics (pictures, charts, illustrations): they are there to give you clues and support the reading
4. Look at the questions the OSSLT asks you – this will help you spot the answers as you read

Q stands for QUESTION

1. While you are surveying, change the titles, headings, or subheadings into questions
2. Ask yourself, "What do I already know about this topic?"

R1 stands for READ

As you read:

1. Look for answers to the questions you created and the answers to the OSSLT questions – underline the answers if you find them!
2. Re- read the captions under pictures graphs
3. Read more slowly for difficult sections
4. Stop and re- read any sentences or paragraphs which aren't clear

R2 stands for RECITE

At the end of each section (eg each paragraph):

1. Ask yourself "Have I answered the questions I created?"
2. Write down any confusing passages in your own words

R3 stands for REVIEW

At the end of the reading selection:

1. Look at the questions the OSSLT asked
2. Complete the answers to the questions you know immediately
3. Go back and look at your underlining or highlighting – do these sections help you answer the questions?
4. Re- read difficult sections to help you answer the reading questions you had not answered immediately



Writing on the OSSLT

The test has short and long writing tasks, and multiple-choice questions that focus on three writing skills required in school and daily life:

- developing a main idea with sufficient supporting details
- organizing information and ideas in a coherent manner
- using conventions (spelling, grammar, punctuation) in a manner that does not distract from clear communication

It is important that you follow the instructions and write in the required form. Read the assigned topic for each task carefully before you begin to write. Make sure your work is on- topic and is in the required form. For the long and short writing tasks, use full and correctly written sentences.

The four tasks are of different types that represent the range of writing required in school and daily life:

- a summary
- a series of paragraphs expressing an opinion
- a news report
- an information paragraph

Basic Tips for Students Writing the OSSLT

- All writing tasks must be written in complete sentences.

The purpose and audience for your writing are indicated in the instructions preceding each writing task. You will notice that the audience is always an adult. This indicates that the language in your writing should be standard Canadian English and your ideas should be appropriate for an adult audience. Offensive or inappropriate language and ideas are not acceptable.

- There is to be absolutely **NO** webspeak, slang, jargon or abbreviations used on the literacy test.

Each writing task is different. It is important to follow the instructions for each task. For example, the information paragraph must be written in a single paragraph. The series of paragraphs expressing an opinion asks for a minimum of three paragraphs. You may write more than three, but do not write fewer than three paragraphs.

Some Basic things to keep in mind:

- Paragraph divisions must be **clear**. You may choose to use indentations or to leave an extra line between paragraphs.
- Be sure to **write** on the given topic in the form required by the **task instructions**.
- Writing that is off- topic or not in the specified form will receive a **failing mark**. Note: The series of paragraphs expressing an opinion is the only writing task that focuses on your opinion.
- To help your reader follow and understand your written work, **organize** your ideas clearly. Use **transitions** to link your ideas.
- The space provided for your written work indicates the **approximate length** of the writing required. Your writing skills cannot be assessed if you have not written enough.
- Make sure your **handwriting is clear**. Make changes to your writing as neatly and clearly as you can. Illegible handwriting cannot be marked.

(Many thanks to Mississauga SS for allowing us to use their materials)
(Some material posted on this website is also taken from EQAO website)



- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation, so that your ideas are communicated clearly

Tips for Writing a Summary

Before You Begin to Write

- While reading the original text, underline, circle or highlight important words
- Find the main idea of the text and at least two important details that support it Take into account the whole text
- Plan your summary using the Rough Notes space provided beside the text you are summarizing

While You Write

- Write your summary in complete sentences in the lined space provided
- You can reduce the number of words in several ways These include leaving out nonessential information and unnecessary words, using one general word to substitute for several specific words and reducing the number of examples
- Organize your ideas clearly to help your reader follow and understand your summary Use transitions to link your ideas
- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation, so that your ideas are clearly communicated
- Make changes to your writing as neatly and as clearly as you can

Writing a Series of Paragraphs Expressing an Opinion

Before you Begin to Write

- Determine your opinion on the topic question and consider your reasons for thinking this way
- Form a plan

While you are Writing

- Write your series of paragraphs in complete sentences on the lined pages provided
- In the introductory paragraph, clearly present your opinion; your opinion is your main idea
- In the body paragraph(s), include supporting details (proof, facts, examples, etc) that explain and give reasons for your opinion In order to include enough supporting details, each body paragraph requires several sentences
- In the concluding paragraph, summarize your opinion
- Organize your ideas clearly to help your reader follow and understand your opinion Use transitions to link your ideas
- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation, so that your ideas are clearly communicated
- Make changes to your writing as neatly and as clearly as you can



Tips for Writing a Newspaper Report

Before you begin to write

- Study the headline and picture to get ideas about an event that you will make up for your news report
- Plan your news report Think of some specific facts and information that answer the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? Remember, you have to make up the facts and information Jot down your ideas in the Rough Notes

When you write

- Write your news report in complete sentences in the lined space provided
- Write enough to ensure that your reader will feel fully informed about the event
- Include quotations from participants in the event or bystanders
- Organize your ideas clearly to help your reader follow and understand your news report Use transitions to link your ideas
- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation, so that your ideas are clearly communicated
- Make changes to your writing as neatly and as clearly as you can

Tips for a Short Writing Task

Before you begin to write

- Remember that you are limited by the number of lines available in the writing booklets
- You will want to focus on using about five (5) sentences

When you write

- Write your short writing task in complete sentences in the lined space provided
- In your topic sentence, clearly state the main idea about the specific aspect of the topic you selected
- In the next two or three sentences, include information on 2- 3 supporting points
- In your concluding sentence, summarize your main idea
- Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation, so that your ideas are clearly communicated
- Make changes to your writing as neatly and as clearly as you can