



Writing Section Benchmarks

2014

Writing Prompts

The two writing prompts on which the benchmarks were written are below. Please refer back to these prompts when reviewing the samples.

Prompt 1

New Law Against Cell Phones

Early this week it was reported that two passengers on a city bus got into a fight. One was angry because the other was talking loudly on his cell phone. Today the city announced that cell phones may no longer be used on public transportation. Anyone caught using a cell phone on city buses or trains will face a fine of \$500.

Task 1: Letter

Do you support the policy banning cell phone use on public transportation? Write a letter to the mayor explaining your opinion. Begin your letter, "Dear Mayor."

Task 2: Essay

Most people have had the experience of being near someone who was using a cell phone impolitely. Do you think cell phone use in public is a serious problem or just an occasional annoyance? Give examples to support your opinion.

Prompt 2

Reader Survey of the Week

Next week, the Superheroes Comic Book Convention will be held in our city. In connection with this, our Survey of the Week question is: Superheroes in comic books have many different superpowers. If you could have any one superpower, what would it be and why? What would you do with this power? Submit your responses to Gary Goodwin, Special Features editor.

Task 1: Letter

The City Times will publish readers' responses to the question of the week. Write a letter stating which superpower you would like to have. In your letter, be sure to explain why you would like to have this power and what you would do with it. Begin your letter, "Dear Mr. Goodwin."

Task 2: Essay

Superhero comic books have been popular for many years. Why do you think so many people, both children and adults, like this type of literature? Give detailed reasons to support your opinion.

Dear Mr. Goodwin

I write to you for to say what superpower I would like to have. I would like to fly. It's my dream!!

If I have this superpower I will could to fly all of the world. I will could to go until Egypt. I will could to go with my friends under of the sea and we to saw the people under from our. What we to do it. If I will to go very-very far away I will go very faster and don't need to pay something money.

On the other hand if I had this superpower will use for save people by everything bad where have if this problem was England with the one flying will aren't but if there is other problem Greece with the one minute will arrive and this.

If I could to make something to take this superpower I will be very happy But my mom tell me how it's something who don't began never.

Write letter soon!!

Scores and Commentary on Writing Sample 1

Content and Development	Organization and Connection of Ideas	Linguistic Range and Control	Communicative Effect
2	2	1	1

Content and Development: 2

The development of this text is inadequate, but the content is relevant to the prompt. A few basic ideas are shared in the first body paragraph, and meaning can be derived from this part. But in the second half of the text, the language is so inaccurate that despite there being a second body paragraph, the development in this section of the response seems extremely limited due to the reader not being able to extract meaning.

Organization and Connection of Ideas: 2

The writer has attempted to organize the essay. There is a limited introduction and a brief concluding paragraph. There are two body paragraphs but the ideas presented are disjointed and insufficiently developed. “On the other hand” is used to begin the second body paragraph but it does not successfully link ideas across paragraphs.

Linguistic Range and Control: 1

Every sentence in this response is inaccurate, and the severity and quantity of error cause significant confusion: “If I will to go very-very far away I will go very faster and don’t need to pay something money.” The writer’s limited language is evident in that even brief sentences contain error: “I will could to go until Egypt.”

Communicative Effect: 1

Although the writer has presented some original points and has attempted to provide supporting detail, the level of error makes it difficult to decipher meaning from the text. Because the reader has to make a great effort to interpret the letter, this response cannot be scored higher than 1 for Communicative Effect.

Dear Mayor

Hi, my name is _____ and I am a student in the first year of high school. I'm writing this letter to express my opinion about the problem.

First of all I agree don't needs the cell phones on public place because this isn't good because perhaps the other people who is side-by-side don't want to us listen. Second, perhaps they have problem a cell phone. Third, perhaps the people can't us listen to talking loudly on cell phone.

Other people have other opinion. They want to talking on public area because they believe that the cell phone is necessary. And they believe that the cell phone must be take with them because they needs.

One year ago had became the same problem my village. They mayor announced with us that won't permitted a cell phone on public area. We was listen him did noisy but nothing. The law became for ever.

In conclusion I believe that shouldn't be needs cell phone on public areas.

Scores and Commentary on Writing Sample 2

Content and Development	Organization and Connection of Ideas	Linguistic Range and Control	Communicative Effect
2	2	1	2

Content and Development: 2

The beginning of the text does not specifically reference the prompt and could be introducing any topic, which suggests that it is rehearsed and therefore not representative of the writer's true ability. The content of the second paragraph relies heavily on information provided in the prompt. The author makes an effort to address the other side of the issue in the third paragraph, which strengthens the text. The fourth paragraph attempts to support the argument with an example from the writer's own experience, but falls short due to the writer's language limitations. Development is further weakened by lack of content.

Organization and Connection of Ideas: 2

Connectors are used mechanically and ideas are organized within the text in a simple manner. The author lacks the appropriate transitions to connect the support of the argument, the opposite opinion, and an example.

Linguistic Range and Control: 1

Lack of basic syntactic control and the high quantity of errors impair meaning. Repetitious vocabulary and structures such as "perhaps," "because," and "don't us listen" prevent the writer from formulating a coherent argument. Besides the rehearsed introduction, each sentence contains significant and distracting grammatical errors.

Communicative Effect: 2

The content suggests that the author understands the prompt but struggles to successfully communicate meaning. A sympathetic reader must reformulate meaning throughout the text to understand the author's points. Therefore, the response cannot be scored higher than a 2 for Communicative Effect.

It is a common belief that superhero comic books are known and likeable to people of all ages. How could we take it into our consideration?

To begin with, nowadays there are a lot of these books which help us to have a personal entertainment. For instance, if it hadn't been for Superman, we would have bored. Moreover, the heroes of these comic books have little children spend their free time reading these books. Furthermore, the authors of superhero books demonstrate new episodes, which are very exciting for children and adults. Last but not least, there are many people who believe that each comic book that contains superheroes are appropriate for their children.

To sum up, in my opinion, if all people dedicate little time in these books, they gain different things, so that they can deal with, each problem which doesn't let them to enjoy their free time.

Scores and Commentary on Writing Sample 3

Content and Development	Organization and Connection of Ideas	Linguistic Range and Control	Communicative Effect
2	2	3	2

Content and Development: 2

The main content paragraph addresses three ideas regarding the prompt but fails to develop each idea. The author references entertainment, use of free time, and appropriateness of comics to support the reason for their popularity. These sentences are merely stated and therefore inadequately developed or supported.

Organization and Connection of Ideas: 2

The author overuses standard connectors. In addition to the frequency of connectors, the use is not always appropriate. The connectors do not contribute to the organization of the text or to any conclusion of an idea.

Linguistic Range and Control: 3

The writer repeatedly misspells “superhero” and “hero” despite the word being readily available in the prompt. Grammatical control is not consistent and can be clumsy: “To begin with, nowadays there are a lot of these books which help us to have a personal entertainment.” Ambitious words such as “consideration” and “demonstrate” are used incorrectly and contribute to the awkwardness of certain sentences. The response is scored a 3 for Linguistic Range and Control because errors in the grammar and vocabulary do not impede overall reader comprehension.

Communicative Effect: 2

Frequent errors distract the reader by requiring reformulation. Lack of original content, support, and development of ideas diminishes the text’s effectiveness. The reader must infer the meaning of enough of the sentences that the text does not fully express its intended message.

Nowadays, more and more people have one or sometimes two cell phones, to make their life easier to communicate with their friends when its out or with their families. That situation was good and bad effects in our daily life.

Firstly a cellphone there is a very usefull thing, we bring it everywhere. We can phoned each other when we have a problem when we are happy or sub. Furthermore people sometimes are very annoying with people who use it for example on the bus people express their feeling without looking around. Unfortunately the goverment must care this problem. He must caught using cell phone in public transportation to not angry anyone. Everyone who can that pay a fine Another solution is to speak to phone but very quite without annoying other people.

To put that in a nutshell the cell phone is a part of our life we can't live without it because it is very necessary for us. It is a modern type of communicate.

Scores and Commentary on Writing Sample 4

Content and Development	Organization and Connection of Ideas	Linguistic Range and Control	Communicative Effect
3	2	2	2

Content and Development: 3

The examinee's argument is adequately developed. The response is on-topic, but the development of the ideas presented is limited. This is not a 2 rating, however, because the writer provides original, relevant content and does not copy a lot from the prompt.

Organization and Connection of Ideas: 2

The writing sample is organized in a simple "advantages then disadvantages" layout. The information the test taker presents in the essay is disorganized. In the second paragraph, the examinee writes that cell phones are useful and then uses the connector "Furthermore," but the next idea presented is that cell phones can occasionally be annoying. Additionally, the writer uses the inappropriate connector "Unfortunately" and then claims that the government should do something about the cell phone problem, which leads to confusion for the reader. However, connectors like "Firstly" and "To put that in a nutshell" can help the reader follow the simple, basic arrangement of the ideas in the essay.

Linguistic Range and Control: 2

Control of grammar and vocabulary is inconsistent; errors are frequent and sometimes interfere with the reader's comprehension. Morphology is imprecise in examples such as "angry" (instead of the verb *anger*) or "quite" (instead of *quiet*). The writer does demonstrate some variety of syntax, producing complex sentences with subordination, such as the second-to-last sentence ("To put that in a nutshell the cell phone is a part of our life we can't live without it because it is very necessary for us.").

Communicative Effect: 2

With her/his effective use of essay paragraph structure, the examinee seems to be aware of the audience and understand the purpose for writing. However, because of the lack of cohesion throughout the essay, the reader occasionally has trouble logically following the text. The mention of "the government must care this problem" in paragraph 3 makes the piece of writing more like a letter than an essay task.

Dear Mr. Goodwin,

I'm a regular reader of your newspaper "City Times". We all know that everyone want to have a superpower.

First of all, the power that I want to have is to "read" the think of other. This way I learn what the other think for me. Moreover when someone is a little sad and he doesn't want to say to me, I will understand the problem that he will has and I will help him. So we will have a better relationship with many people that I want.

Secondly, with this power I can succeed in many thinks. For example, if I want to find a job, I can "read" the think of the headmaster and to take the job easily. Also, I can impresse many people, Just doing right wathever they think.

Finally, I can fall in love with a girl that I'm very impressed

I hope that the technology will do something to many people take the power that they want easily.

Yours faithful

Scores and Commentary on Writing Sample 5

Content and Development	Organization and Connection of Ideas	Linguistic Range and Control	Communicative Effect
3	3	2	3

Content and Development: 3

The content and development in the paragraphs are limited to two paragraphs with relevant content but poor development and one other paragraph with only one sentence. The author only adequately develops the idea of each paragraph.

Organization and Connection of Ideas: 3

The writer has organized the essay into an opening, three content paragraphs and a closing. The introduction and closing are brief and rely on the prompt. The second paragraph's ideas are clear (however the reader must reformulate the meaning) but poorly connected by "moreover." The three content paragraphs are weakly linked together by connectors. The final statement is not supported by the prompt.

Linguistic Range and Control: 2

Errors such as using the verb "think" instead of the intended noun *thoughts* distracts the reader. Simple errors as in, "that he will has" or "that I'm very impressed," show limited linguistic control. Vocabulary, tense, and syntax errors are frequent and distracting.

Communicative Effect: 3

The errors require some effort from the reader to piece together ideas and draw conclusions about the intended meaning. The ideas are original and the flow of the text is adequate.

Dear Mr Goodwin,

I read your article last week in the City times newspaper and I decided to write to you because I would like to express my opinion about this subject

First of all, when I was young (at the age of 5 years old) I read a lot of comic books. I read a lot of comic books I used to read Batman, iron-man, Spiderman and Scooby doo But at the age of 7 years old I considered who is the best superhero for me. "I would like to be Spiderman,, I said So, what's the reason of my choice? Mmm,... it's little difficult to say and explain why Spiderman is my best superheroe.

Well, I chose this superhero for one reason. He saves a lot of people in New York He is very strong and brave and he doesn't care of himself. Also, I like his face because is the "Bosse's pet,,. Peter Parker of course. We see that a variety of children and adults not only in the USA but in many parts of the word love Spiderman and I'm very surprised. His famous character and his beautiful suit make people like him very much.

If I was Spiderman, I would like to use his superpower because if I had a rensposibility, it would be to save people all over the word and to ban the worse.

I hope my letter is of some interest to you and I wish to publish it in your newspaper.

Scores and Commentary on Writing Sample 6

Content and Development	Organization and Connection of Ideas	Linguistic Range and Control	Communicative Effect
3	4	3	3

Content and Development: 3

The writer adequately develops an argument, responding thoroughly to the first half of the prompt but only briefly addressing the second part, which asks what the test taker would do with a superpower. The only explanation given for this question is “If I was Spiderman, I would like to use his superpower because if I had a responsibility, it would be to save people all over the world and to ban the worse.” The introduction and conclusion of the letter are unoriginal, but the body text is relevant to the topic.

Organization and Connection of Ideas: 4

The examinee organizes and connects ideas appropriately and clearly. Without always using traditional connective devices, the writer helps the ideas move along logically with language that links the content together, such as the sentence at the end of the second paragraph and “Well” at the beginning of paragraph 3.

Linguistic Range and Control: 3

The syntax is controlled, and some compound and complex sentences are used properly: “We see that a variety of children and adults not only in the USA but in many parts of the world love Spiderman and I’m very surprised.” However, the range of vocabulary is limited, which lets the writer fulfill the task but not convey meaning as accurately as a 4 sample might. There are some noticeable spelling errors, as well as a few minor grammatical errors: “he doesn’t care of himself.” These errors do not interfere with reader comprehension, which is why this response isn’t rated a 2 for Linguistic Range and Control.

Communicative Effect: 3

The response shows an adequate sense of audience and purpose for writing. The writer is able to engage the reader audience by using a tone that is appropriate for a letter that’s about the topic of having a superpower: “So what’s the reason of my choice? Mmm . . . it’s little difficult to say . . .” The writer also discusses a childhood experience, which further helps the audience relate to the text. This tone of reminiscence elevates the score for Communicative Effect to a 3, but the simple language used means this response cannot be scored higher than a 3 for this criterion.

Dear Mayor,

I am writing to express my opinion for the new law which bans the use of cell phones on public transportation. I would like to explain why I do not support this policy.

First of all, cell phones are very important for our contact with other people. We might need some help any time so with our cell phone we call someone to help us. For example, when we have an emergency situation. Also, other people can contact with us. They do not have to know where we are.

Furthermore, when we are using the public transportation, we might have a call from our job colleagues to talk about important things for our job. I do not think they know where we are and if it is very important they call any time.

To conclude, I am against the new law against the use of cell phones on the public transportation and it might be better to find another solution for that problem.

Yours sincerely,

Scores and Commentary on Writing Sample 7

Content and Development	Organization and Connection of Ideas	Linguistic Range and Control	Communicative Effect
3	4	4	4

Content and Development: 3

The content of this letter is adequately developed, but just barely. The examinee supports ideas with some relevant details (such as cell phones being helpful in emergencies or allowing us to communicate with coworkers). However, because the introduction and conclusion state that the writer does not support the use of cell phones, the supporting ideas do not clearly follow. The writing is relevant to the topic, but the third paragraph repeats the general details introduced in the second paragraph (about having the ability to accept calls at any time, even in emergency situations).

Organization and Connection of Ideas: 4

Ideas are organized clearly into paragraphs, and connectors are generally used appropriately. “Furthermore” at the start of paragraph 3 is not really introducing a new idea. The writer does not use a variety of cohesive devices beyond typical transition markers (“First of all,” “Also,” “Furthermore”), but the reader has no difficulty following the sequence of ideas presented.

Linguistic Range and Control: 4

The response shows a good range of grammar and vocabulary. The writer has a fairly accurate control of grammatical and lexical structures but does not display a broad range of them. Some use of lexicogrammatical structures is inaccurate (“for our contact with other people” in the first sentence of paragraph 2), but such errors are only occasional. The reader does not have difficulty understanding the language.

Communicative Effect: 4

The examinee illustrates an appropriate sense of audience and purpose for writing. The register of the text is suitable for the context; the use of “we” is particularly effective to show that the test taker understands who the readership of the newspaper is. The writer clearly sets up the letter task in her/his introduction and conclusion.

Every day we can see on the street or public places people talking on the phone. And sometimes being near someone who is, using a cell phone is annoying, especially on buses or trains. That is why the policy decided to ban the use of this electronic toys on public transportation. The way I see it, it is not a serious problem, it is just an occasional annoyance because everyone has and need a cell phone and has the right to use it wherever they want.

Firstly, a cell phone is very useful. Especially for professional people. And sometimes there is a urgency and you need to use it. For example, a doctor who has a delicate patient on the hospital needs to know how the evolution of that person is going on. And maybe he is on the bus and reciebe a phone call of his secretary and if he answer the phone he will have to pay \$500 just for having answer the phone. I don't think that is a good idea.

Secondly, people have to respect each others and if other person is talking on the phone near you, you can't do anything because if that person where you, you wouldn't want that other person to tell you something.

In conclusion, we all know we all have cell phones and I personally believe we have to be allowed to use it when it is necessary wherever we want.

Scores and Commentary on Writing Sample 8

Content and Development	Organization and Connection of Ideas	Linguistic Range and Control	Communicative Effect
4	4	3	4

Content and Development: 4

The author clearly understands the prompt and chooses a side without wavering. The content and development are strongest in the second paragraph but then break down in later paragraphs. The second paragraph successfully develops the argument by providing a supporting example of why the ban could be harmful.

Organization and Connection of Ideas: 4

Appropriate connectors are present at the beginning of each paragraph and within paragraphs. All ideas are organized sufficiently into separate paragraphs.

Linguistic Range and Control: 3

At times the author relies on the prompt for vocabulary but also demonstrates adequate linguistic control by attempting to use words such as “delicate,” “evolution,” and “urgency.” The errors are somewhat distracting and generally do not impair meaning. Long sentences with limited syntactic control may require a second read but can be easily understood.

Communicative Effect: 4

The writer successfully communicates ideas through relevant content despite errors in grammar, vocabulary usage and punctuation. The writer’s strong stance contributes to the text’s persuasiveness. The style is more conversational than academic and would be better suited to the Task 1: Letter assignment.

Dear Mayor,

Having read at the local newspaper, your decision to ban Cell Phones, I decided to write you this letter in order to express my opinion about this topic.

Firstly, I believe that since Cell Phones became cheap, everyone has bought one, so Cell Phones are now everywhere; inside cafeterias, cinemas, shopping stores, e.t.c. That makes Cell Phones irritating; everyone use them everywhere, showing to us a lack of respect. In my opinion Cell Phones are very irritating, especially in places where many people are together, such as buses, cinemas, e.t.c.

I strongly believe that your decision to ban Cell Phones on public transportation is right. I support your decision but I also suggest you should also ban Cell Phones at indoor public places, such as cinemas, theatres, concerts, e.t.c.

Furthermore, you can also cooperate with other cities, in order to ban these cities Cell Phones, too, in public places.

To sum up, Cell Phones, are irritating in crowded places. I support your opinion (as I pinpointed before), but I would also want to add that many citizens don't agree with your decision to ban Cell Phones on public transportation, so you can write and publish an article about why you have decided to ban Cell Phones on public transportation.

I would be glad if you could send me your opinion and your conclusions about the topic.

I am looking forward receiving your reply,

Yours sincerely

Scores and Commentary on Writing Sample 9

Content and Development	Organization and Connection of Ideas	Linguistic Range and Control	Communicative Effect
4	5	4	4

Content and Development: 4

The author provides many suggestions about extending the ban, encouraging other cities to adopt the policy and how to implement this change while being sensitive to community disapproval. This demonstrates a fully developed response to the task, although parts are slightly repetitive. All points of the letter are relevant to the prompt.

Organization and Connection of Ideas: 5

Beginning with a clear opening then leading into a reason for the prevalence of cell phone usage contributes to the organization of the letter. The writer explains how the problem originated, agrees with the ban and provides supporting details in appropriate paragraphs. Connectors such as “Firstly,” “furthermore,” and “to sum up” are used effectively and arrange the ideas in a smooth, cohesive manner.

Linguistic Range and Control: 4

Generally, the letter has a successful control of tense and minimal confusion with syntax. These errors do not impair meaning or distract the reader. At this level, simple negation should not be challenging, yet the writer produced the phrase “many citizens don’t agree” in the concluding paragraph. Good vocabulary range, apparent in nearly each paragraph, strengthens the text (e.g., “irritating,” “cooperate,” “pinpointed,” “publish”).

Communicative Effect: 4

Clear understanding of the register and audience enhance the effectiveness of the letter. The writer appropriately requests to be updated about further efforts to ban cell phone usage in indoor areas and other cities, showing an understanding of the genre/purpose.

Dear Ms. Goodwin,

I am writing with regard to your article entitled “Reader Survey of the week”. I think that it is a very amazing article. When I read it, I feel very happy. Because it remind me to my childhood. When I was a little girl, I loved to read Superheroes Comic. Besides, I still love them. I recognize that I am a big fan of superheroes such as Spiderman, Superman, Batman.

So, If I could have any one superpower, I would like to have the power of elasticity. Maybe people might call me “elastic girl”. I think this is a very useful power.

First I may do all the thing in the house at the same time. For example, I could be washing the dishes with my hands and I could turn off the Television with my feet. I think I could be the perfect mom and wife. But, on the other hand I think that be the elastic girl has a lot of disadvantages. For example, I could be tired all the time because of doing everything at the same time.

Furthermore I think that I could be a great help to my city. Because I may help old people cross the street only with strength my arm! Also, I could prevent some accidents.

In conclusion, I feel that it is a good idea to have a superpower. It would be everything easier I But, despite it, I recognize that there are advantages and disadvantages. And another thing that is true is that all extremes are bad. So, we have to find a balance in our lives. I hope this Superheroes Comic Book will be held in our city soon.

Yours Sinceraly

Scores and Commentary on Writing Sample 10

Content and Development	Organization and Connection of Ideas	Linguistic Range and Control	Communicative Effect
5	4	5	5

Content and Development: 5

The writer fully and richly develops her argument. She tells the reader the superpower she would like to have and gives supporting details, not only about how it would benefit society but also how it might be of value to her personally.

Organization and Connection of Ideas: 4

The writer describes some benefits that her superpower would have, then briefly discusses a downside, and then jumps back to advantages. Overall, though, the letter is appropriately organized and the connection of ideas is clear.

Linguistic Range and Control: 5

There is a broad range and strong control of grammar and vocabulary. Some errors are present “only with strength my arm,” but they are minor. Words such as elasticity show a sophisticated use of lexis, and the test taker writes some long and complex sentences that are generally well controlled.

Communicative Effect: 5

The writer uses appropriate register and a full awareness of audience to enhance the communicative effect on the reader. She uses relatable examples to clearly present her viewpoint, supporting her opinion by describing not only her superpower’s advantages for society but also advantages for herself.