

Prose Constructed Response (PCR) Writing Guide

Please ensure that students understand the following points before they begin writing responses to the reading and writing standards:

There are three types of prompts: Research Simulation, Literary Analysis, and Narrative. Approximately 50% of the student's ELA total score is derived from the sum of the two writing prompts. It's important to understand the definitions of terms in the standards, such as narrative, compare/contrast, theme, main idea(s), structure, etc.

1. Students should read and reread prompts carefully to fully understand the instructions.
2. Students must address all parts of the prompt by showing an understanding of what is being asked and responding accordingly.
3. In the online testing environment, the answer box expands, so students should aim to write multiple-paragraph responses rather than just a few sentences.
4. Copying and pasting from stimulus material is allowed when quoting text evidence, but students should not rely solely on copying and should use their own words as well.
5. Students should use all the time allotted. Most students are not using all their allotted time. An analysis of student response data of Illinois students indicated that students were finishing the assessment early and not using their full allotment of time on the ELA test. Moreover, students who scored in performance levels 4 or 5 on the ELA test spent an average of 20-25 minutes responding to each of the PCR items, as compared to students who earned a performance level of 1-3, who spent an average of only 6-10 minutes responding to each of the PCR items.

Best Practices for Students

Plan Your Response: Make an outline or sketch. Be sure to have a blank piece of paper at the start of the test to use for making your outline. Identify and jot down the key points you want to include in your response. Make sure to address each part of the prompt. Then, list the details or reasons you will use to support your claim or topic.

Manage Your Time: Allocate specific planning, writing, and revising time. Try to follow this schedule to ensure you have enough time to answer each part of the prompt fully. A typical time plan would be to spend 20% of your time planning, and the remainder of your time writing and revising. For example, if you had 40 minutes to complete your response, spend approximately 8-10 minutes for planning, approximately 25 minutes for writing the response, and the remaining time for proofreading.

Write your response: Use complete sentences and multiple paragraphs to write the response you planned in the previous step. Ensure that you answer the prompt fully. Remember to structure your writing with clear and coherent paragraphs. Each paragraph should focus on a single idea and provide supporting examples, evidence, and reasoning from the passages or media. Ensure that there is a logical connection between each paragraph. Focus on writing clearly and precisely to effectively communicate your ideas. Use transitional phrases and words to guide the reader through your response.

Proofread your response. Finally, if time allows, review your response. Look for any grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, or inconsistencies. Check that your response presents clear and well-supported ideas.

Links: Rubrics and Evidence Statements

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/IAR-ELA-Writing-Rubrics.pdf#search=rubrics>

<https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Search-Results.aspx?k=evidence%20statements>