



# Ready Writing

Texas puts great emphasis on writing skills at all levels of school and all levels of state-wide testing. Ready writing builds those skills and helps students refine their writing abilities. In particular, this contest helps them learn to write a clear and correct paper that is interesting and original.

## Section 1462:

### READY WRITING

#### (a) REPRESENTATION.

- (1) *Contestants.* Students in the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grades who are eligible under Sections 1400 and 1405 may enter this contest.
- (2) *Divisions.* This contest will consist of three divisions (third/fourth, fifth/sixth, seventh/ eighth) unless the district executive committee approves separate divisions for each grade.
- (3) *Individual Competition.* For each division, each participant school may enter as many as three contestants in the district meet.
- (4) *Team Competition.* There is no team competition in the Ready Writing contest.

#### (b) NATURE OF CONTEST.

- (1) *Summary.* Texas has put a great emphasis on writing skills at all levels of school and all levels of statewide testing. Ready Writing builds upon those skills and helps students refine their writing abilities. In particular, this contest helps them learn to write clearly and correctly a paper that is interesting and original.
- (2) *Contest Format.* Contestants are given a choice between two prompts, each of which defines the audience and provides the purpose for writing. Students should be encouraged to analyze the prompts for purpose, format, audience and point of view. The format may be, for example, a letter, an article for the newspaper or an essay for the principal. Various writing strategies may be stated or implied in the prompt. Some of these include:
  - (A) description to inform – describe the happening or person/object from imagination or memory;
  - (B) narration – write a story;
  - (C) persuasion – describe and argue just one side of an issue; describe both sides of an issue then argue only one side; write an editorial; write a letter to persuade, etc.

There is no minimum or maximum number of words the contestants may write.

- (3) *Tests.* One test will be provided for grades 3 and 4; another test will be provided for grades 5 and 6, and a third test will be provided for grades 7 and 8. The League will make available one set of prompts for invitational meets, one for fall/ winter district meets and one for spring district meets.

#### (c) CONTEST ADMINISTRATION.

##### (1) *Personnel.*

(A) *Contest Director.* The contest director will be in charge of running the contest and resolving any problems that arise. The director may appoint an assistant director. The contest director may be the coach of a participating student.

(B) *Judges (Graders).* A single or an odd number panel of judges should be familiar with the instructions for judging and the contest rules. They should be qualified and impartial. Judge(s) may not be coaches of participating students. The contest director may recruit as many judges as necessary.

- (2) *Time Allotted for Contest.* Two hours are allowed for writing the composition. The district executive committee may shorten the length of the contest period to conform to the needs of the grade level.

##### (3) *Materials.*

(A) *Provided by UIL.* The following materials will be provided to schools submitting the appropriate requisitions. See Section 1408 (c) for the dates when invitational materials

will be available. See Section 1408 (e) for the dates when district materials will be available.

- (i) Prompts and evaluation sheets.
- (ii) Judges' Ballots.
- (iii) Contest rosters.
- (B) *Provided by the Student or School.*
  - (i) Blank paper (ruled or plain white).
  - (ii) Pens, pencils and/or erasers.
- (C) *Other.* Contestants may use a standard thesaurus and dictionary during the contest.

(d) **CONDUCTING THE CONTEST.**

- (1) *Number Contestants.* As roll is called, instruct contestants to write the assigned contestant number in the upper right hand corner of each page and circle the number. Coaches may assist in this process prior to the contest.
  - (2) *Clear Room.* Contestants and coaches should be informed of the time and place of an optional viewing period, if one is scheduled. Spectators and coaches not assigned a specific duty in administering the contest should be dismissed from the contest room before the contest begins.
  - (3) *Distribute Topic Sheets.* Instruct contestants to select only one topic. Read each topic and accompanying statements aloud but allow no discussion.
  - (4) *Manuscript Instructions.* Instruct contestants to write the topic they have chosen about two inches below the top of the first sheet and begin the body of their compositions below the topic. Consistent margins of approximately one inch should be allowed on the left of the page. Instruct contestants to number the pages on the upper left-hand corners, without circles or parentheses to distinguish the page numbers from the contestant numbers.
  - (5) *Time Warning.* Warn contestants when only 15 minutes remain in the contest period.
- (e) **OPTIONS FOR WRITING.** Contestants may use ruled or plain white paper, standard notebook or typing paper to hand-write their essays. Students may bring and use their own computers. If contestants choose to use their own computers, they shall bring their own printers, associated hardware, software and paper. Laptop computers are permitted and recommended. Spell check and thesaurus functions may be used if available on computers. Students who opt to compose

their entries on computers accept the risk of computer malfunction. In case of computer malfunction, the contestant may use the remaining allotted time to complete the composition in handwriting. Contestants may use electronic or printed dictionaries and thesauruses. The entry should be written on one side in pencil or ink, or typed on a word processing computer using any standard size font and one-inch margins on regular sized computer paper. Instruct contestants to write the topic they have chosen about two inches below the top of the first page and begin the body of their compositions below the topic. Contestants shall not include their names or the names of their schools on the contest entry. Papers will be identified by numbers assigned by the contest director. Instruct contestants to write or type their numbers in the upper right-hand corner of each page.

(f) **JUDGING.**

- (1) *Briefing Judges.* Prior to the contest, the director should discuss thoroughly with judges the criteria for evaluating the compositions.
- (2) *Criteria for Judging.* The composition is judged on interest (50%), organization (35%) and correctness of style (15%).
  - (A) Interest depends primarily upon substance, i.e., having something to say that is worth saying because of its acuteness of analysis and its originality of thought. It depends next upon clarity and upon including specific details and examples which individualize the writing as an outgrowth of the writer's character and experience.
  - (B) The plan of the whole composition should be such that each part contributes to an understanding of the writer's main idea or thesis. No part should be misleading or unrelated to that thesis. The organization of each paragraph should be directed to the logical and full development of one idea.
  - (C) Correctness of style includes avoiding errors in sentence structure, punctuation, grammar, spelling and word use that hinder clear communication.
- (3) *Ranking Compositions.* Judges should read the compositions and without marking on the papers, rank them in the order of their excellence: 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. The judges should discuss the compositions contending for rank, and may alter their decisions as a result of discussion. Judges are to reach a consensus on the rankings.





Ready  
Writing

These sample  
topics were  
taken from  
2010-11 tests.

# Ready Writing Sample Topics

## INSTRUCTIONS

Choose **one** of the following topics. Write the topic you have chosen at the top of your paper. Remember you should not use your real name or that of your school in the composition.

## THIRD AND FOURTH GRADES

Topic: *My own zoo...* Imagine that you could build your own zoo for any kind of animal you wanted. What animals would you want to have in your zoo, and why? Could anyone visit your zoo? How would visitors find their way around and see the animals? Write a paper about how you would build your zoo and what it would be like to visit.

Topic: *Nicknames* Do you have a nickname? Sometimes family or friends will give someone a nickname that says something about that person. It might come from something they are good at, or something funny they have done or said. If you have a nickname, write a paper about it — who calls you by that nickname and why. If you don't have one, write a paper about a nickname you think would be a good fit for you and why.

## FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADES

Topic: *Practice, practice* Some skills and abilities may come naturally for you, while others take time and effort to develop. Write a paper about an activity you enjoy that requires practice, both to learn how to do it and to continue to improve. Describe what originally interested you about this activity and what kind of practice it takes to learn and improve. What about this activity makes it worth the effort you give in practice?

Topic: *Finding the silver lining* This saying means to look for an element of something good in an otherwise unpleasant situation. For example, being grounded as a punishment might also mean that you spend more time on your homework, which results in a better grade. Write a paper about a time when you "found the silver lining."

## SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADES

Topic: *Procrastination* To procrastinate means to put off doing something that you don't want to do, even though you know you have to do it. Do you tend to procrastinate on finishing your homework or doing chores around the house? Write a paper discussing whether procrastination is something you struggle with. If it is, how do you overcome it to get things done? If it's not a problem for you, what do you do to keep from procrastinating?

Topic: *Taking risks* Some people take great pleasure in participating in activities that carry a significant risk, such as skydiving or rock climbing. Others prefer to be more cautious and enjoy less risky activities. Write a paper discussing which of these descriptions applies to you.

- (4) *Ties.* There can be no ties in this contest.
- (5) *Preparing Critiques.* Judges should prepare comments for each entry on the Ready Writing Individual Evaluation Sheets.
- (6) *Points.* Points are awarded through sixth place. See Section 1408 (i).
- (f) **VIEWING PERIOD.** An optional period of time not to exceed 15 minutes may be arranged for coaches and contestants to review their own evaluations and compositions.
- (g) **OFFICIAL RESULTS.** After the optional viewing

- period has ended and all compositions have been collected, the contest director shall announce the official winners. Official results, once announced, are final.
- (h) **RETURNING MATERIALS.** No materials from the fall/winter district contest may be returned to contestants before January 31. No materials from the spring district contest may be returned to contestants before the Saturday prior to Memorial Day.



# Ready Writing

## ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE SCHOOL, AND JUNIOR HIGH EVALUATION SHEET

### INSTRUCTIONS

Please read from the *Constitution and Contest Rules* or the *A+ Handbook* the instructions for evaluating the ready writing essays. Judges should read the paragraph prompts that are given to the contestants. The compositions are to be evaluated as to relative excellence in interest (50%), organization (35%) and correctness of style (15%). While judges are to consider all three elements in selecting the most effective compositions, they should weigh interest more than organization and organization more than correctness of style.

**CONTESTANT NUMBER** \_\_\_\_\_ **TITLE OF COMPOSITION** \_\_\_\_\_

CONSTRUCTIVE COMMENTS FOR THE CONTESTANT:

AREAS NEEDING IMPROVEMENT:

Judge's signature \_\_\_\_\_