



## National External Diploma Program® (NEDP) Writing Diagnostic Guidelines

Introduction: These writing guidelines are designed to give you tips to help you prepare for the NEDP diagnostic writing task. The task involves writing an answer to a question about a familiar topic. Your written answer is evaluated using the scoring rubric on the next page. Your written response will need to earn a score of 3, 4 or 5 –according to this rubric– to demonstrate your readiness for NEDP.

1. **Carefully consider what your main idea will be. Narrow it down and stay focused on it throughout the essay.**
  - If many ideas come to you all at once, think about which one you can write about with the most confidence. You may want to “brainstorm” and write the ideas on scratch paper as you consider each one. You may also want to use scratch paper to map out details and organize the structure of your essay before you begin writing.
  - As you consider what your main idea will be, ask yourself whether you can provide details and examples to support it. If you cannot do this, choose an idea in which you can. As you are addressing a prompt or question, answer with an idea you can “back up” through sound logic and/or life experience. If the prompt is a two-part question, be sure to address the prompt completely. Once you “pin down” your main idea and know you have sufficiently persuasive information to support it, keep it front and center in your writing.
2. **After you clearly define your main idea, provide supporting details and/or examples that elaborate on the main idea.**
  - Think of the supporting details or examples as “evidence” to demonstrate exactly what you mean. Expand upon your main idea as best you can.
  - Check to make sure the examples clearly illustrate your main idea and do not wander off topic.
3. **Organize the supporting details or examples so that the reader can follow a logical, sequential explanation of your main idea.**
  - Use an introduction and conclusion.
  - Arrange your ideas, details and examples in order of relevance so that they logically and consistently support your main idea and help it to unfold in the best possible way.
  - Use paragraphs that begin with a statement that tells the reader what the focal point of that paragraph will be. This will ensure that your ideas will be easy to follow.
  - Use transitions that help to connect your ideas. Transitions are words or phrases that help the reader to progress smoothly from one idea to the next. Some examples of different types of transitions are:
    - *because which may be casual*
    - *the fact that which indicates reference*
    - *furthermore which indicates something additional*
    - *more importantly which indicates emphasis*
4. **“Fine-tune” and “polish” your writing at the end by checking the following elements :**
  - Word choice - Choose words carefully. Be sure that words are used correctly. Choose a variety of words rather than repeating the same words. Consider the most expressive words to communicate your thoughts.
  - Grammar and mechanics - Correct grammar errors. Use a variety of sentence types. Correct any words that are misspelled or are typos as well as errors in capitalization and/or punctuation. Start sentences with a capital letter and end with a punctuation mark.

*These suggestions will serve you well in preparing for the NEDP writing diagnostic task.*

# CASAS Written Prompt Holistic Scoring Rubric

---

## HIGHLY EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO TASK

- 5** Superior essay with highly developed ideas and support skillfully presented with a strong introduction and conclusion; may contain a distinctive style.
- Exceptional range and richness of word choice.
- Varied and complex sentence structure.
- Almost no errors in grammar and mechanics.
- 

## EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO TASK

- 4** Thesis or main idea is clearly stated and developed with relevant details and examples.
- Ideas are well-organized and well-developed with effective transitions.
- Word choice demonstrates variety and richness of expression.
- May have few minor errors in grammar and mechanics, with variety and some complexity of sentence structure.
- 

## ADEQUATE RESPONSE TO TASK

- 3** Thesis or main idea shows some support and relevant detail, although some ideas may not be well-stated and may require minimal inference.
- Generally cohesive with some effective transitions.
- Few word choice errors and some variety and richness of expression.
- Some minor errors in grammar and mechanics generally do not interfere with the reader's understanding. Some variety in sentence structure.
- 

## WEAK RESPONSE TO TASK

- 2** Contains a thesis or main idea with little support, and may be unfocused or unclear.
- Many ideas may not be well-stated. Requires inference in most cases.
- A basic organizational structure is evident with some sequencing of ideas.
- There may be some errors in word choice with some variety of expression.
- May contain distracting errors in grammar and mechanics that may interfere with the reader's understanding. Sentence structure may be simple.
- 

## MINIMAL OR POOR RESPONSE TO TASK

- 1** Minimal response to task - or writing lacks a thesis or main idea and may require a substantial degree of inference.
- Cohesion is limited, but contains some related sentences.
- Word choice errors may require the reader to infer meaning.
- Serious errors in grammar or mechanics that may interfere with the reader's understanding.