

CASAS Essay Test Guidelines

These writing guidelines will help you prepare for the CASAS Essay Test. The test involves writing an answer to a question about a familiar topic. Your essay is scored using the rubric on the next page.

- 1. Carefully consider what your main idea will be. Stay focused on it throughout the essay.**
 - If you have many ideas, think about which one you can write about the best. You may want to “brainstorm” and write your ideas on scratch paper. You also may want to use scratch paper to write down details and organize your essay before you begin writing.
 - Make sure you can provide details and examples to support your main idea. Choose a main idea that you can logically support. If the prompt has two questions, be sure to answer both. Once you choose your main idea, keep it the focus of your writing.

- 2. After you clearly define your main idea, provide supporting details and/or examples that support the main idea.**
 - Think of the supporting details or examples as “evidence” to demonstrate exactly what you mean.
 - Make sure the examples clearly support your main idea. Do not write about unrelated things.

- 3. Organize the supporting details or examples so that the reader can follow a logical explanation of your main idea.**
 - Use an introduction and conclusion.
 - Arrange your ideas, details, and examples so that they logically and consistently support your main idea.
 - Use paragraphs that begin with a statement that tells the reader what the 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 connect one idea to the next. Some examples of transition words are *because*, *for example*, and *furthermore*.

- 4. Finish your essay by checking the following:**
 - Word choice – Choose words carefully. Be sure that words are used correctly. Choose a variety of words rather than repeating the same words.
 - Grammar and mechanics – Fix grammar errors. Use a variety of sentence types. Correct any words that are misspelled and errors in capitalization and/or punctuation. Start sentences with a capital letter and end with a punctuation mark.

The [CASAS eTests Sampler](#) includes a practice Essay Test prompt to help prepare for the test.

CASAS Essay Test Holistic Scoring Rubric

Score	Holistic Score Description
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
*	<p>Essays can receive a score of * for distinct reasons. These reasons are because the essay is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • too short • mostly copying the question • not developing ideas enough • repeating the same information • not about the topic in the prompt • written with too many unknown words • written with violent or inappropriate language • written with too many grammar and syntax problems