

## Advisory Notes for Teachers and Proctors

1. *Quick! I need documentation... where can I find it?*
  - a. <https://www.casas.org/product-overviews/research-and-evaluation/field-testing-opportunities> ... scroll down to the bottom. Contains FAQ and proctor instructions.
2. *Essay: Should students write in the formal third person or include first-person experience? Does one approach score more points than the other?*
  - a. First person responses are not penalized. If a prompt asks for a question with “you,” an essay containing “I/me” occasionally is appropriate.
3. *Essay: What are examples of punctuation mistakes that reduce a student’s score?*
  - a. Students should always add a space after punctuation marks such as periods or commas when taking the Essay Test. Adding spaces parallels best practices that all keyboarding apps require and should be part of the instructional prep material for any students taking online essay tests including HiSET and GED.
4. *Essay: My students don’t have a mouse. How can they access the spell check options?*
  - a. Shift+F10 will mimic a right-click.
5. *Essay: How well can the Autoscorer evaluate semantically similar sentences?*
  - a. The Autoscorer has been trained in Natural Language Processing and applies artificial intelligence algorithms to the student’s essay. For example, it can semantically identify that “the computer technician is repairing your computer” is related to “the repair person is fixing the CPU.” By learning and applying writing techniques of restating thoughts and varying sentence content, your students can score in the highest levels of the Essay Test.
6. *TOPSpro Enterprise: Why do scores between 1 and 4 on the Essay Test not display “Accurate=Yes”?*

The “Accuracy” database field was made to indicate whether a score is inside or outside the accurate score range based on the standard error of measurement (SEM) for certain tests with scale scores. For the Essay Test, the Accuracy field simply does not apply.

7. Essay: What are the “prescriptions” (suggestions for improvement) at the bottom of the Personal Score Report?

Score of 1:

Summary of suggestions for improvement for becoming a better writer. Includes how to strengthen the main idea, improve organization, word choice, and grammar and mechanics.

**Becoming a Better Writer**

Suggestions for Improvement:

<b>Main Idea</b>	When you write, make sure that your main idea is easy to understand. Throughout your essay, only write about your main idea. Also, make sure that your ideas are clear, and everything is explained well. You should also write details and examples in your essay. The details and examples help support your main idea. They also help the reader understand what you are writing about.
<b>Organization</b>	Be sure to use connecting words between sentences. Organize your sentences and ideas so it is easy for the reader to follow what you wrote.
<b>Word Choice</b>	Make sure that you are choosing words that express your ideas clearly.
<b>Grammar &amp; Mechanics</b>	Remember to use correct spelling, capitalization and punctuation. Keep working on writing sentences and fixing any grammar errors.

Score of 2:

**Becoming a Better Writer**

Suggestions for Improvement:

<b>Main Idea</b>	When you write, make sure your main idea is clearly stated in the beginning. Focus on your main idea throughout the entire essay. Make sure that you include enough details and examples to support your main idea. Also, explain everything in your essay clearly so that the reader is not confused about what you mean. Extra information will help the reader understand what you are writing about.
<b>Organization</b>	Keep working on putting your sentences together in an organized way, so that your ideas are easy to follow. Using transition words will help to smoothly connect your ideas to each other.
<b>Word Choice</b>	Try to reduce the number of word-choice errors in your writing. Make sure that you are using words correctly, so the meaning is always clear. Also, use a variety of words and sentence structures in your writing. Avoid repetition where possible.
<b>Grammar &amp; Mechanics</b>	Try to use more complex sentence structure throughout your essay. Also, continue to check your sentences carefully and fix any errors in grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. Fixing these errors will help the reader understand what you are saying.

Score of 3:

### **Becoming a Better Writer**

Suggestions for Improvement:

<b>Main Idea</b>	Continue to work on making your main idea very clear throughout your entire essay. Someone reading your essay should be able to understand the main idea of your essay early on and see that you only write about information related to your main idea. Check that you present a range of strong details and examples that support your main idea. All of the additional information in your essay should be relevant and help to clearly illustrate exactly what you mean.
<b>Organization</b>	Arrange the sentences that support your main idea, so they are easy for the reader to follow. Transition words should be effective and easily guide the reader from one piece of information to the next. Use paragraphs as well as an introduction and conclusion to help express your ideas.
<b>Word Choice</b>	Keep expanding your word choice and using a variety of different expressions in your writing. Avoid repeating the same words and expressions throughout your essay.
<b>Grammar &amp; Mechanics</b>	Check your grammar and fix any errors in your writing. Use complex sentences as well as a variety of sentence types where possible. Remember to use correct spelling, capitalization and punctuation.

Score of 4:

You got the highest score. Great job!

- Your essay was coherent and had a clear main idea throughout the entire essay.
- You supported your ideas with specific details and examples that were relevant to the main idea.
- You organized your essay with effective transitions, which helped make your essay easy to understand.
- You used a variety of different expressions and vocabulary suitable to the topic.
- You demonstrated proper use of grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Keep up the good work!

8. There are several reasons an essay could be scored as a “ \* ”. The **Personal Score Report** will show the precise reason returned by the Autoscorer with the following sentence:

*Your essay could not be scored accurately because \_\_\_\_\_.*

Description	PSR Language
Essay is too short to grade.	Your essay could not be scored accurately because the essay is too short to score.
Essay is off topic.	Your essay could not be scored accurately because the essay is not on topic.
Essay is repetitious.	Your essay could not be scored accurately because the essay repeats too much of the same information.
Essay has inadequate development.	Your essay could not be scored accurately because the essay does not develop ideas.
Essay contains too many unknown words.	Your essay could not be scored accurately because the essay has too many unknown words.
Essay contains major syntax problems.	Your essay could not be scored accurately because the essay has major syntax problems.
Essay contains unnecessary violent language.	Your essay could not be scored accurately because the essay has too much violent language.
Essay substantially copied the question.	Your essay could not be scored accurately because the essay mostly copied the question.

9. *What four English language skills does the **Language Test** evaluate?*
- Nouns, pronouns
  - Verbs, adverbs, adjectives
  - Phrases, clauses, sentences
  - Punctuation
10. *What composition skills does the **Essay Test** evaluate?*
- Organization
  - Word choice
  - Development of ideas
  - Response to the writing prompt
  - Standard English grammar (a spell checker is included for the student).
  - Example: *“Healthy eating habits are important but often not followed. Why is this? What can be done about it?”*
11. *What are the new reports?*
- Personal Score Report for Language**
    - Includes raw score, CCR Language Level, and statistics for each of the four evaluation criteria (see #9 above)
    - CASAS will use student scores to build a new CASAS “Language Scale” (future)
  - Personal Score Report for Essay**
    - Scored on a scale of 1 to 4
    - Includes specific suggestions for a student’s improvement
12. *Testing requirements?*
- Your agency must be currently running CASAS eTests (not available on paper)
13. *Are these assessments NRS-approved?*
- Not currently.