

# *Getting To and Through Academic Writing*

## Using Writing Test Prompts to Develop Academic Writing

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# Agenda

- Why use test prompts to teach academic writing
- What students learn from practice tests
- Ways to use test prompts to teach academic writing



# Why use test prompts to teach academic writing

- Students need to become familiar with these tests—they need to take these tests
- They are already part of the curriculum and make the curriculum more relevant to student needs
- To score well, students need to write well academically
- If a teacher uses test prompts to teach, this will lessen test anxiety

# What students learn from practice tests

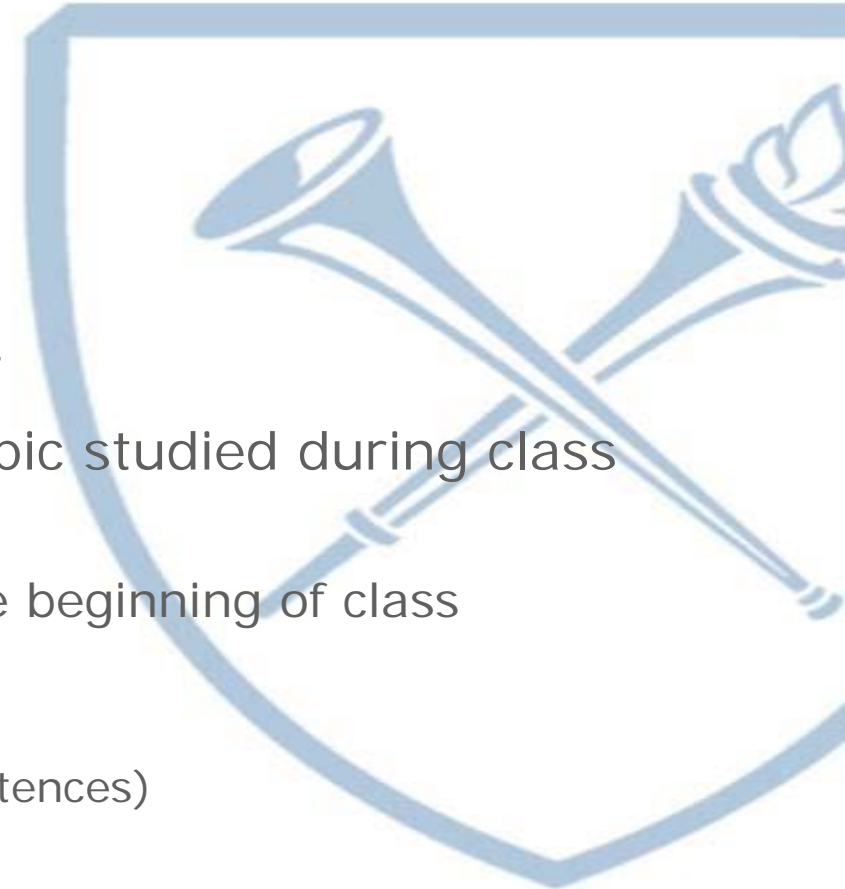
## Students learn

- to feel more at ease with the test
- the fundamentals of good academic writing
- how to write under time pressure
- how they perform under time pressure
- writing skills: organization and style
  - » introduction, body, conclusion
  - » placement of generalizations first
  - » placement of support following generalizations
  - » thesis statement
  - » Transitions
- revision and editing skills
  - » grammar
  - » sentence structure
  - » punctuation/mechanics



# Where to incorporate practice tests in classes

- Beginning of class when students are arriving
  - One of the multiple choice questions
  - One of the writing topics: brainstorm ideas
- End of class when there are a few minutes left
  - One of the multiple choice questions on the same topic studied during class
  - One of the writing topics
    - Next step in the process of writing from the step at the beginning of class
      - Brainstorm (beginning); outline (end of class)
      - Outline (beginning); draft a thesis (end of class)
      - Draft a thesis (beginning); draft an introduction (2-3 sentences)
- As practice during class when practice of a concept is needed



# Example 1: HiSet Language Arts → Writing

- Some with readings; some without readings
- Without readings:

Staying physically fit involves practicing habits such as exercising regularly, eating well and getting enough sleep. Research has shown that people who are physically fit perform better in work and school. Your employer is printing a special newsletter informing employees about important ways they can practice staying fit.

Write an essay for your employer's newsletter to persuade workers to adopt at least one behavior that will improve their fitness. Think carefully about what reasons will convince other workers to change their behavior.

([http://resources.clee.utk.edu/ccrtdi/CCR%20Assessment%20Resources/HiSET%20Language\\_Writing%20%20Practice%20Test\\_V01.pdf](http://resources.clee.utk.edu/ccrtdi/CCR%20Assessment%20Resources/HiSET%20Language_Writing%20%20Practice%20Test_V01.pdf) )

# HiSET possible essay topics

- Produce an essay of around 200 words outlining the happiest time of your life and illustrate why that was so, including the present as well.
- Almost all persons believe that they have learned something through mistakes they made. Write a 200 word essay about the one thing you have found out from your earlier life. Suppose you could, what would you have done differently? Please add specifics.
- Consider something pleasant to do, like a hobby or a sport. Create an essay of around 200 words describing why you like this activity and how you profit from it. Provide illustrations and be precise.
- What is, according to you, the most significant challenge in the world, and why? Write a 200 word essay detailing your thoughts including reasons and specific examples.
- Pick out a crucial person who you respect and who has been helpful to you. Explain this person, why you respect him and in what way this person has helped you. Give examples and be specific.
- Suppose you got two million dollars to shell out, just how would you use it? You are unable to employ the money for your own, your family members or friends' benefit. Compose a 200 word essay to Explain your thoughts, and support your choices with arguments and examples.
- Lots of individuals feel you are unable to learn everything at school. Quite a few state that experience is the most effective educator. What is in your opinion more important, the things discovered at school or learned via real life experiences? Answer this question in an essay of around 200 words, and provide examples to sustain your perspective.
- You must have specific motives for going back to school this year. Write a 200 word essay where you explain your reasons for returning to school. How can you benefit from what you expect to learn?

# Practice for all levels

- Generalization + specific support (“show-n-tell”)
- Do/hand in various parts of the process (analysis of question/topic; brainstorming reasons and support; thesis; outline; one paragraph; whole essay)
- Build confidence
  - Strategies when you don’t understand a word or words in the prompt
  - Validation of all ideas that are supported
  - Practice all the pieces of the test and answers



# Skills to develop through in class practice: ALL LEVELS

- Speed: reading, thinking, writing
- Accuracy
- Flexibility (go with your first answer)
- Typing (if possible)
- Habits of mind for learners:
  - Persistence
  - Thinking flexibly
  - Striving for accuracy
  - Applying past knowledge to new situations
  - Communicating with clarity and precision
  - Creating, imagining, innovating ([http://www.chsvt.org/wdp/Habits\\_of\\_Mind.pdf](http://www.chsvt.org/wdp/Habits_of_Mind.pdf))



# Resources

- Mometrix HiSET Writing Test Prep: <https://www.mometrix.com/academy/hiset-language-arts-writing/> (short video explanations of grammar and academic essay criteria)
- Practice Writing Test Questions (grammar, style, mechanics): <https://www.test-guide.com/free-hiset-practice-tests.html>
- Practice Writing Test: [http://resources.clee.utk.edu/ccrtdi/CCR%20Assessment%20Resources/HiSET%20Language\\_Writing%20%20Practice%20Test\\_V01.pdf](http://resources.clee.utk.edu/ccrtdi/CCR%20Assessment%20Resources/HiSET%20Language_Writing%20%20Practice%20Test_V01.pdf)
- Sample answers with scores: [https://hiset.ets.org/s/pdf/2016\\_scored\\_sample\\_writing\\_responses.pdf](https://hiset.ets.org/s/pdf/2016_scored_sample_writing_responses.pdf)
- Habits of Mind: [http://www.chsvt.org/wdp/Habits\\_of\\_Mind.pdf](http://www.chsvt.org/wdp/Habits_of_Mind.pdf)