

FOR STUDENTS - HELP WITH WRITTEN REPOSES TO QUESTIONS ON THE OSSLT

The OSSLT addresses your ability to do the following:

- develop a main idea with sufficient supporting details;
- organize information and ideas in a coherent manner; and
- use conventions (spelling, grammar, punctuation) in a manner that does not distract from clear communication.

Short answer (5-6 line) responses:

Your response must address the prompt or question asked. Begin your response by clearly writing your **main idea**. In the accompanying sentences, support the main idea with **specific** and **relevant** information. Remember that if a question asks you to answer **using information from this selection and your own ideas**, then you **MUST** use both. Choose your words carefully so that your reader can see a **clear connection** between your supporting details and main idea.

Long-writing tasks (news report & supported opinion):

News Report-- Look at the photo and read the headline. Use the Rough Notes area to jot down key ideas (who, what, where, when, how, why). Start your news report with the most intriguing information that makes up the recall of events. Remember you are reporting an event, so **no opinions** should be given. **Integrate quotes** by participants, witnesses and those affected directly or indirectly by the event. Be sure to organize your information into short paragraphs.

Supported Opinion - Use the Rough Notes area to jot down a few key ideas or to draw a concept map. Read the question or prompt and use your first sentence to indicate your **position** on the matter. Rather than waiver or "fence sit" it is best to choose either *for* or *against*. Follow this up with a statement that provides at least three good reasons to support your position. Use each of the three reasons to develop a separate body paragraph. Use a final paragraph to conclude your work in which you **emphasize once again your position**.

The key to writing a good supported opinion is to **select meaningful and detailed reasons**. You are familiar with the word vague. Your reader must not be left to draw conclusions about how your reason supports your position. **Ask yourself, have I provided sufficient explanation?** Draw from your own life experiences or from things you may have read in print or seen on television. Papers that receive the higher scores generally have supporting details that are thoughtfully chosen. Ask yourself, what details can I include that will make my response stand out and above the others?

To show clear evidence of organization, remember to use paragraphing and **signal words or transitions** (most importantly, next, finally, etc) to show how ideas connect to one another. Your reader needs to feel a sense of

"flow" to your paper and there must be a clear sense of **beginning**, **middle**, and **ending**. Remember, your response must maintain a clear and consistent opinion throughout.

Writing Conventions: to help you in this area, it is recommended that you review when and how to use **punctuation** (periods, commas, semicolons, dashes, exclamation marks). If you are prone to write run-on sentences, then you **MUST** re-read your work to check end punctuation. Remember that sentences **MUST NOT** begin with **SO**, **AND**, or **WHICH**. Also, slang is inappropriate - do not use expressions like "gonna".

It is helpful to review a few simple grammar rules, such as when to use **apostrophes**:

- singular possessive - the singer's microphone; Sara's homework; someone's job
- plural possessive - the companies' earnings; the students' holiday
- contractions contain apostrophes - doesn't, can't, I've, you're

It also helps to review some frequently confused words:

accept, except	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ accept means to "take in" - I will accept it. ▪ Except means "other than" - Everyone came, except you.
then, than	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use then when referring to time - Then we ate. ▪ Use than to compare - She is taller than you.
there, their, they're	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There means "at that place" or is used to start a sentence - Place it over there. ▪ There is used for possession - Their dog ran away. ▪ There is short for they are - They're always late.
threw, through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Threw is past tense of throw - He threw the ball. ▪ Through indicates position - Look through the book.

Here are a few words that are **frequently misspelled**. You may wish to practice them.

alternative	definitely	obesity
beginning	different	participate
beneficial	embarrass	pursue
competition	enforce	receive
congratulate	extremely	separate
conscious	grateful	themselves
convenient	mandatory	thorough
decisions	necessary	unacceptable

Do not be afraid to use unfamiliar words on the OSSLT. Although, it may be easier to use a word that you clearly know how to spell, remember that marks are deducted only if errors in conventions distract from communication. In high scoring responses, some errors may exist, but the information is easily understood.

