



Be informed. Be ready.

Getting Ready Guide

This guide contains tips and information to help you prepare for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), which you will write on March 29, 2012.

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The following preparation materials are available on the EQAO Web site (www.eqao.com):

- The *Planning and Preparation Guide* shows sample questions from the OSSLT.
- Sample Test *Booklet 1*, *Booklet 2*, the Student Answer Sheet and the Multiple-Choice Answer Key give you an idea of the amount of work you will be asked to do in each session of an hour and 15 minutes and how you will record multiple-choice answers.
- The Released Items with Answer Keys and Scoring Guides show you the questions used to compute students' scores on previous years' tests, along with answer keys for the multiple-choice questions and scoring guides for open-response items (see, for example, <http://www.eqao.com/Students/Secondary/10/BookletsandGuides.aspx?Lang=E&gr=10&yr=11>).

Your teachers will use the Web materials to take you through samples of the types of questions you will find on the OSSLT.

You can find out more by visiting www.eqao.com or by calling 1-888-327-7377.

Test Instructions

There are two *Test Booklets* and one Student Answer Sheet. The following instructions will appear on the OSSLT. Make sure that you understand these instructions before you write the test.

Read carefully before writing the test:

- Check the identification numbers of your three documents to see that the final 12 digits all match. If they do not, report the problem to the teacher in charge.
- Check the pages of this *Test Booklet* to see that they are in order. If they are not, report the problem to the teacher in charge.
- Read all instructions before responding to the questions.
- Use only pencil or blue or black pen in the *Test Booklet* and on the Student Answer Sheet.
- Attempt all questions. If you leave a question blank, the question will be scored zero.

Multiple-Choice

- Choose the best or most correct answer for each question.
- You must record your multiple-choice answers on the Student Answer Sheet. Multiple-choice answers recorded in the *Test Booklet* will not be scored.

To indicate your answer, **fill in the circle completely**, as shown below.

Like this: ● Not like this: ⊗ ✓ ◐ ◑

- If you fill in more than one circle for a question, the question will be scored incorrect.
- If you wish to change a multiple-choice answer, erase or cross out your answer and fill in the circle for your new answer. Ensure that your final answer is clear.

Written Answers

- For all questions that ask for a written answer, **write legibly on the lined space provided** in the *Test Booklet*.
- For the writing sections, pay attention to clarity, organization, spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- The lined space provided for your written work indicates the approximate length of the writing expected.
- There is space in the *Test Booklet* for rough notes. Nothing you write in these spaces will be scored.

You are now ready to start *Test Booklet 1: Session 1*.
Remember to record all your multiple-choice answers on the Student Answer Sheet.

Reading Skills

The test has multiple-choice and open-response questions that focus on the reading skills required in school and daily life:

- understanding explicitly (directly) stated ideas and information;
- understanding implicitly (indirectly) stated ideas and information and
- making connections between information and ideas in a reading selection and personal knowledge and experience.

Reading Selections

The reading selections include the following: an information paragraph, a news report, a dialogue, a real-life narrative and a graphic text (e.g., a schedule). They vary in length from a single paragraph to two pages.

Tips for Reading

General Strategies

- Manage your time so that you complete all sections of the test.
- Read the questions first. This will help you predict what the reading selection is going to be about.
- Skim the selection and then read it closely.
- Underline or highlight important information and ideas as you read.
- As you read, think about what you are reading and ask yourself questions about it.
- Try to “see” what you are reading; some readers say this is like running a video or movie in their heads.
- Look for links between what you are reading and experiences you have had.
- If you read a word you don’t understand, look for a root word that you know inside the larger word; look for prefixes and suffixes.
- If you still don’t understand the word, read to the end of the sentence and look for clues to its meaning. Try reading the sentences before and after the sentence to see if you can find the meaning from the context.
- If a long sentence has you confused, reread it and try to put it into your own words.
- If you are having trouble understanding an idea, either read on until the meaning becomes clearer, or stop and reread.

Strategies for Multiple-Choice Reading Questions

- Read and reread the question carefully.
- Read the four answers and rule out any answers that are incorrect.
- If necessary, reread the relevant parts of the selection to choose the best or most correct answer.
- Record the answer on the Student Answer Sheet as described in the test instructions.

Strategies for Open-Response Reading Questions

- Read and reread the question carefully.
- Keep your answer within the six lines provided.
- Answer the question using specific and relevant details and information from the reading selection.
- Make connections between the ideas and information in the reading selection and your own experience.
- Reread your response and correct any errors you notice.

Writing Skills

The test has short- and long-writing tasks, and multiple-choice questions that focus on three writing skills required in school and daily life:

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

Tips for Writing

It is important that you follow the instructions and write in the required form. Read the assigned topic for each task carefully before you begin to write. Make sure your work is on topic and is in the required form. For the long- and short-writing tasks, use full and correctly written sentences.

A. Long-Writing Tasks

- One of the tasks is writing a **news report** based on a picture and headline provided. Make up facts and information to answer the questions Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How? and write a one-page report on the event. Your audience is an adult reader of a newspaper.

Strategies for the News Report

- Look closely at the headline and picture. Think of an event that relates to them.
 - Make up the information and facts as you answer some or all of the following questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
 - Pretend you are writing for a newspaper, not for a radio or television station.
 - Do not write an advertisement, for example, as that is not the form of writing required.
 - Write your report using the third person.
- The other long-writing task is a **series of paragraphs** expressing an opinion on a given topic. Develop your main idea with supporting details (proof, facts, examples, etc.) and write a minimum of three paragraphs on the two pages provided for your response. Your audience is an adult who is interested in your opinion.

Strategies for the Series of Paragraphs

- Read the topic question and decide what position you will take in your response.
- Clearly state your opinion at the beginning or end of your response.
- Write at least three paragraphs. Include an introduction, development and a conclusion.

- Support your opinion with reasons and relevant examples or facts.
- Make sure the divisions between paragraphs are clear.

B. Short-Writing Tasks

These tasks give you the opportunity to use your knowledge and personal experience while demonstrating your writing skills.

Strategies for the Short-Writing Task

- Read and reread the question carefully.
- Think of links between the topic and your knowledge and personal experiences.
- Answer the question using specific details and relevant information.
- Reread your response and correct any errors you notice.

C. Multiple-Choice Questions

These multiple-choice questions give you the opportunity to demonstrate the three writing skills.

Strategies for Multiple-Choice Writing Questions

- Read and reread the question carefully.
- Read the four answers and rule out any that are incorrect.
- If necessary, reread the question to choose the best or most correct answer.
- Record the answer on the Student Answer Sheet as described in the test instructions.

Questions and Answers

Do I have to write the OSSLT?

If you entered Grade 9 in September 2000 or later and are working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), you must write the OSSLT. This applies to all students in publicly funded schools and inspected private schools.

Mature students may enrol directly in the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) without first attempting the OSSLT. A mature student is a student who

- is at least 18 years of age on or before December 31 of the school year in which he or she registers in an Ontario secondary school program;
- was not enrolled as a regular day-school student for a period of at least one school year immediately preceding his or her registration in a secondary program and
- is enrolled in a secondary program for the purpose of obtaining an OSSD.

Why do I need to write the OSSLT?

You need to be sure that you have the reading and writing skills you should have acquired by the end of Grade 9, as outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum*. These skills are the basis for learning in all subject areas throughout both elementary and secondary school.

Successful completion of the OSSLT meets one of the 32 requirements for the OSSD.

Why am I writing the OSSLT in Grade 10 instead of closer to graduation?

Writing now gives you time to get help if you need to improve your reading and writing skills. If you do not pass the OSSLT this year, you will have opportunities to retake it in future years.

Will the OSSLT count toward my course marks?

No. Successful completion of the OSSLT is one of the 32 requirements for the OSSD. The test will not count toward your course marks.

Will universities and colleges see my OSSLT results?

Your secondary school transcript will indicate that you have completed the OSSLT as one of the 32 requirements for the OSSD.

Is the test difficult?

The OSSLT is designed to reflect the requirements of *The Ontario Curriculum*. The test assesses literacy (reading and writing) skills students are expected to have acquired by the end of Grade 9.

What happens if I do not pass the OSSLT?

You can take the test again the following year.

You can also talk to your parents or guardians and your school principal and/or teacher about taking the OSSLC instead of retaking the test.

Can I get an accommodation?

If you have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for classroom tests and assessments, you may be able to get an accommodation. For more information, visit EQAO's Web site, www.eqao.com, and talk to your parents or guardians and your school principal and/or teacher.

Can I get an exemption?

To be eligible for an exemption, you must have an IEP that clearly indicates that you are not working toward an OSSD. For more information, talk to your parents or guardians and your school principal and/or teacher, or visit EQAO's Web site, www.eqao.com.

I am new to Ontario, and English is not my first language. Can I get a special provision or deferral?

You may be able to get a special provision or deferral. For more information, talk to your parents or guardians and your school principal and/or teacher, or visit EQAO's Web site, www.eqao.com.

What happens if I leave questions blank?

You'll get a score of zero for these questions.

**Education Quality and
Accountability Office**



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