

THE WRITING TEST

What is the writing test?

The NAPLAN test is designed to assess children's writing ability in a controlled way.

They are asked to respond to a standardised prompt (or question) in their own words. Their responses are compared to what is expected of the average Year 3 and Year 5 student around Australia.

Persuasive writing

While earlier standardised tests used narrative writing, the NAPLAN has now used persuasive writing as its focus for several years.

In the samples given by Ziptales (see the attached links under the heading "WRITING"), the following prompt is used by way of simulation:

TOPIC: Children under 12 should not be allowed to have a mobile phone.

The same prompt is used for both Years 3 and 5, as in the NAPLAN test.

What is required?

The task is intended to test students' thinking and writing ability. Specifically, the child's response will yield evidence of the following sub-skills:

1. Ability to evaluate a complex contention or proposition (eg Can children manage mobile phones appropriately?).
2. Ability to work out a considered *personal* response to this idea (agreeing, disagreeing or looking at both sides) and make notes sufficient to sustain an argument.
3. Ability to structure a persuasive text (or mini essay on the topic) in the time provided, that is to break their argument down into a series of paragraphs, each with a topic sentence expressing a key concept, and a series of explanatory sentences detailing sub-arguments (with appropriate evidence and not merely making assertions) which support their viewpoint.
4. To introduce the topic clearly at the beginning of the text and to explicitly summarise their viewpoint by way of conclusion.
5. Ability to write in standard ("correct") English, paying attention to the conventions of spelling, punctuation and using both simple and complex sentences; use of appropriate vocabulary for the topic.
6. Ability to build a compelling "case", which may include use of persuasive devices such as anecdotes, similes or metaphors, emotive language, and the like.

Sample responses

In the samples given with Ziptales' SAM Writing Test notes, under *both* Year 3 and Year 5, a range of responses is offered by way of illustration.

Each time, a “below average” response is provided, with incorrect spellings highlighted and annotations drawing attention to problem issues, a “middle range” response, and an “above average” response.

I think that all kids shood have a mobbyll fone so thay can call there frends wen ever thay wont and send mesejes to them so thay can have more frends, there mum and dad will allways no wear thay ar becoz thay can call them up and say were are you. you wood never be lost if you had a mobbyll fone, you cood yuse it to play games like angrey berds wen you are bord. haveing a mobyl fone wood be awsum!

We recommend that you print out the three samples for class use, and work carefully through what the weaker response is showing, with appropriate discussion, and contrast that with what the middle and above average responses demonstrate.

It is important to emphasise that even the best response will involve some mistakes, and that this is perfectly “normal” (under test conditions), but that the idea is to minimise such mistakes and to structure the text as well as the student can.

What else to consider

Ziptales offers a whole suite of writing lessons under its “Write Time” functionality (right side of home page). Included in “Write Time” are most major genres.

One of these is “**How to write an argument**”. We urge you to consider showing it to the class and working through the key teaching concepts. It is absolutely appropriate to preparation for the NAPLAN Writing Test. A separate script version is available under “Classroom Worksheets” in the “Staffroom”.

This, and all other elements of Ziptales, can be accessed for free by taking a “TRIAL” of the website (centre button, home page), if your school is *not* a current subscriber.

We hope you find the attached samples, and possible use of “How to write an argument”, of benefit to your students.