
California Basic Educational Skills Test™

CBEST® Practice Test



Writing

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction and Test Directions1

CBEST Writing Score Scale2

Writing Topics and Response Sheets3

Sample Responses9

INTRODUCTION

This document is a paper-based version of the CBEST® Computer-Administered Practice Test for the Writing section.

For this practice test, you may wish to write responses to the writing topics and ask a mentor, advisor, or teacher to evaluate them. Sample responses are included in this practice test for your use when evaluating your practice test responses.

TEST DIRECTIONS

The Writing section of the CBEST assesses basic skills and concepts that are important in performing the job of an educator in California. This section includes two topics that assess your ability to write effectively. One of the topics asks you to analyze a situation or statement; the other asks you to write about a personal experience. You will not be expected to demonstrate any specialized knowledge in your responses.

You should be sure to write only on the topics presented, respond to both topics, address all of the points presented in the topics, and support generalizations with specific examples. Before you begin writing, read each topic and organize your thoughts carefully.

Your written response must be your original work, written in your own words, and must not be copied or paraphrased from some other work.

When you take the actual CBEST, scorers will read and evaluate each of your responses using a standard set of criteria, which are outlined in the writing score scale below.

The following written performance characteristics, which are incorporated in the CBEST Writing Score Scale, are evaluated during scoring.

- I. *Rhetorical Force*: the clarity with which the central idea or point of view is stated and maintained; the coherence of the discussion and the quality of the writer's ideas
- II. *Organization*: the clarity of the writing and the logical sequence of the writer's ideas
- III. *Support and Development*: the relevance, depth, and specificity of supporting information
- IV. *Usage*: the extent to which the writing shows care and precision in word choice
- V. *Structure and Conventions*: the extent to which the writing is free of errors in syntax, paragraph structure, sentence structure, and mechanics (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization)
- VI. *Appropriateness*: the extent to which the writer addresses the topic and uses language and style appropriate to the given audience and purpose

CBEST WRITING SCORE SCALE

Score	CBEST Score Point Descriptions
4	<p>A "4" is a well-formed writing sample that effectively communicates a whole message to the specified audience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer clearly presents a central idea and/or point of view and maintains focus on that topic; the response is well reasoned. • Ideas or points of discussion are logically arranged, and their meaning is clearly communicated. • Generalizations and assertions are well supported with relevant, specific, and detailed development. • Choice of words is precise; usage is careful and accurate. • The writer composes sentences of syntactic complexity and variety and constructs coherent paragraphs, although the response may contain minor flaws in mechanical conventions. • The response completely addresses the topic and uses language and style appropriate for the given audience and purpose.
3	<p>A "3" is an adequately formed writing sample that communicates a message to the specified audience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer presents a central idea and/or point of view, and the focus is generally maintained; the response is adequately reasoned. • Organization of ideas is generally clear and effective, and the meaning is generally clear. • Generalizations and assertions are adequately supported, although perhaps unevenly. • Word choice and usage are adequate; some errors exist but do not impede meaning. • The writer's response may have errors in paragraphing, sentence structure, and/or mechanical conventions, but they are neither serious nor frequent enough to distract or confuse the reader. • The response may not fully address the topic (i.e., one of the tasks in the assignment may be neglected or may be vaguely or incompletely addressed), but language and style are appropriate for the given audience and purpose.
2	<p>A "2" is a partially formed writing sample that attempts to communicate a message to the specified audience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer may state a central idea and/or point of view but loses focus on that idea; the response is simplistically reasoned. • Organization of ideas may be evident, but is largely ineffective, and the response is generally unclear. • Generalizations and assertions are only partially supported; the response may contain irrelevant, insufficient, or imprecise details. • Word choice and usage are generally imprecise and distracting. • The writer's response may have distracting errors in paragraphing, sentence structure, mechanical conventions, and/or dependence upon short, choppy sentences with minimal modification. • The response incompletely addresses most tasks of the assignment and/or inadequately uses language and/or style appropriate for the given audience and purpose.
1	<p>A "1" is an inadequately formed writing sample that fails to communicate a message to the specified audience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writer fails to state and/or to remain focused on a central idea and/or point of view; the response lacks coherence and reason. • Organization of ideas is ineffective and seriously flawed; meaning is unclear throughout. • Generalizations and assertions are not supported or are severely underdeveloped; the presentation of details is confused. • Word choice and usage are largely imprecise, and there are severe distracting errors. • The writer commits serious and numerous errors in paragraphing, sentence structure, and/or mechanical conventions. • The response demonstrates little or no understanding of any of the assignment's tasks; language and style may be inappropriate for audience and purpose.
U	<p>The response is unscorable because it is off topic, illegible, primarily in a language other than English, or of insufficient length to score.</p>
B	<p>The essay response sheet is blank.</p>

WRITING TOPICS AND RESPONSE SHEETS

TOPIC 1

Ernest Hemingway once commented, "As you get older, it is harder to have heroes, but it is sort of necessary." In an essay to be read by an audience of educated adults, state whether you agree or disagree with Hemingway's observation. Support your position with logical arguments and specific examples.

WRITING TOPICS AND RESPONSE SHEETS

TOPIC 2

Most students have had some type of difficulty in one course or another. Difficulties stem from various sources, such as teacher-student conflicts or lack of interest in the subject field. In an essay to be read by an audience of educated adults, identify one class in which you faced a difficulty either as a student or as a teacher, describe the difficulty, and explain how you handled the situation.

WRITING TOPIC 2 RESPONSE SHEET

SAMPLE RESPONSES: WRITING TOPIC 1**Score Point 4**

I agree quite strongly with Hemingway that age brings increasing difficulty in finding heroes, but that one still needs them. As skepticism increases, the number of people one can admire or hope to emulate decreases. An older person, having more experience and having acquired, one hopes, a more objective and realistic assessment of other people, tends to see more flaws than a younger person might. On the other hand, the older person is likely to recognize and value certain qualities such as careful reasoning, empathy, and kindness that a younger person might overlook or consider irrelevant. (Yet another problem is that a person's heroes tend to be older than herself, and the number of possibilities dwindles, but that has to be accepted!)

Thus, I believe that men and women of all ages need heroes. As a woman, though, I find that heroes—heroines, actually—are especially important because the role of a woman is constantly being redefined. Women today are frequently expected not just to "have it all" but to do it all: maintain successful careers; develop and nurture the kind of relationships with others that they often value so highly; and, in many cases, contribute their financial and emotional resources to the raising of a family as well. Idolizing other women can be therapeutic, eye-opening and inspirational. One can see what remarkable women have done, how they've done it and what they have to say about it all.

For example, I have always admired Maya Angelou's ability to integrate her personal and her professional life. And Toni Morrison, in works such as The Bluest Eye and Beloved, creates intelligent, honest fictional characters and provides a vast outpouring of thought-provoking and challenging ideas. The fact that both of these women are both female and black makes them the more admirable to me.

The older I get, the more important these "'Hero' women" become for me. Such people help one to keep on trying, both by exhortation and example. I like to think I can at least try to follow their lead; they are, indeed, "sort of necessary."

Score Point 3

I agree with Ernest Hemingway that having heroes is necessary. For the young heroes can show direction and provide examples for how life can be and the opportunities that are available for those who try. For the older person heroes can provide different options.

As one gets older illusions in life are replaced with hard realities. For example how can one cope with illness, the loss of close friends, and the many other problems that occur. Heroes for these people can give hope and courage.

A hero does not have to be a famous personality like Sister Teresa, Michael Jordan or Madonna; a hero can be a coworker, a friend who has made the best of a sticky situation, or anyone who has survived an ordeal and can demonstrate the opportunities that can come out of crisis.

Besides support heroes can provide examples of options that are available. Often when there are trying times a person could think what would my hero do in this situation. How would they solve this problem. This can enable a person to make a tragedy into a victory by opening new options.

Heroes are very important whether you're young or old because they can give hope, inspiration and support in trying times and enable you to go on through life and turn your tragedies into triumphs.

Score Point 2

Heroes are for the young and not the old. As you get older there is no longer a need for heroes. I disagree with Ernest Hemingways comment "As you get older, it is harder to have heroes, but it is sort of necessary.

When you are young everyone is your heroe, but most little kids think of superstars as their heroes. Children often have superstars as heroes, but they are not the only heroes. Children look up to anybody who can do something really great, according to them.

As you grow older the need for a Heroe disappears. As you get older you realize that your heroe was somebody you want to be just like. Now that you are older you are not interested in fighting crime as bat Women or Man. Now you are older you see things how they really are not how they seem.

I think its important to stop chasing heroes and get on with your life.

Heroes are somebody who is greater than you and older than you. If we always have heroes then we can never be the hero.

Therefore, I disagree with having heroes as you get older. When you are older I think you should be the hero not someone else.

Score Point 1

I believe everyone has heroes. But as you grow older your heroes become fewer in that they are more important. As a youngster a hero may be ninga, cat woman or Dick Tracy. As an adolesent heroes tend to be toward t.v. stars or musicians. As an adult, politicians or soldiers or maybe even a tremendous sports star, can be a hero. These are just as necessary as the others. Heroes play the "perfect" role model. We use them throughout our lives as goals we set to strive for.

SAMPLE RESPONSES: WRITING TOPIC 2**Score Point 4**

If my seventh grade history teacher had known what was in store for him that year, I am sure he would not have chosen the teaching profession. I took an immediate dislike for this tall and gangly character. Why? There was really no reason except that he did not fit my image of a history teacher. He was young, knowledgeable, and eager to please—perhaps a bit too eager and that is where our clash began.

Each day Mr. Simms would strut across the room making ridiculous analogies, crowing out quotes from Abraham Lincoln and making what I thought was a complete fool of himself. It must have been this kind of annoying behavior that made me suddenly decide to start antagonizing this bewildered fellow. I interrogated him; I found faults with his reasoning; I publically announced contradictory details. I wanted answers and he couldn't give them.

Because Mr. Simms was an inexperienced teacher and did not reprimand my rudeness, I continued my torture tactics. I began antagonizing this poor man in subtle ways. While all the other students were obediently paying attention and taking notes, I would sit and stare at a point in the air just above Mr. Simms' left temple. Some days I would sit bolt upright and pretend to be falling asleep, but when called on I would ask a question or make a point that was undeniably relevant to the discussion or lecture that was underway. Then too, I would come to class just late enough to create a slight distraction, then I would noisily turn the pages in my book and notebook, as if desperately searching for my place.

My very best trick, however, was the Friday I handed in the midterm paper. We were studying the Spanish-American War, and he was always trying to spice up his lectures by breaking into foreign languages, so I decided to write my paper in Spanish. "Let's see what he does with this one," I said to myself. It must have fazed him, but he didn't let on. Mr. Simms commented on my paper in Spanish too difficult for me to understand, then at the bottom wrote "THRILLED TO SEE YOU ENGAGED BY THE ASSIGNMENT. A-." Had I had chalked up another victory? I wasn't so sure.

Maybe I realized antagonizing Mr. Simms wasn't fun anymore. Maybe I realized I was the loser in the end. The day after I got the paper back, I suddenly became "engaged" by history class. I stopped fooling around, started paying attention in class, and called a halt to the needling of Mr. Simms, a man who, I decided, was not so bad after all.

Score Point 3

During seventh grade students were being streamed into different classroom. We were divided up into different groups for english classes at different levels. Maybe because I was always quiet and well-behaved, I was put in an advanced class.

This was very scary for me for a number of reasons. First, the teachers did not tell me why I was being placed in this higher Class. Second, I had always had trouble with keeping up in reading but never said anything. Suddenly I found myself being placed in a class with the best students in the school.

The way I handled this situation was by bluffing. I would have one of my friends check over my papers to reduce the worst errors so the teacher never knew how much help I needed. If we were going to be tested on anything, I would talk to someone who had read it in order to get the information.

Because I was able to get by talking to my freinds, the teacher never caught on to the fact that I needed help. I know now that it would have been smarter to have been caught that to continue to fool everyone.

Score Point 2

The class situation which presented me with the greatist problem was a seminar on the History of Technology. The problem was that I was not prepared to participate actively in class because of a very heavy course load. This situation arose because none of the required classes for my major were available before this. This problem was resolved through attending class.

The class was held twice a week for two hours. I never missed a class. Before each class I did the required reading and completed all writen assignments. The effort to complete the course was considered enough to pass.

Score Point 1

Learning takes a long time. It requires good motivation the part of the teacher and concentration and good attitude on the part of students. In such a course like Calculus, the students find it very difficult sometimes because the course is abstract coupled with calculations. Students find it very strange and later find the course tiring. Teacher-student conflicts can be started over students boredom or lack interest in subject field.

A teacher should have good training.

Developed and Produced by



**National Evaluation Systems, Inc.
P.O. Box 340813
Sacramento, CA 95834-0813**