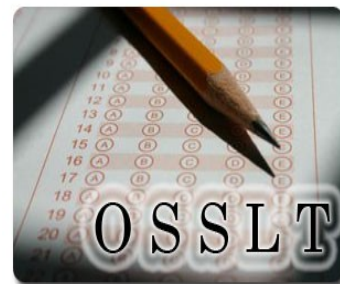




# Literacy Matters

## Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)



### OSSLT

**Date:**  
March 27, 2008

**Who?:** Grade 10 students and those eligible to rewrite

**Length:** 2.5 hours including instructions and a break

**Results:** Students will receive an Individual Student Report in June 2008. The ISR will show a pass/fail result with feedback to unsuccessful students indicating areas for improvement. Students who are unsuccessful may rewrite the test in 2009.



It's that time of year again! The time when students are entering a second semester with new courses, new teachers and, for grade 10 students,—Yikes!—the OSSLT. Have no fear, however. In preparing students, each secondary school is involved in a full-scale blitz of literacy test preparations which entail literacy-embedded instruction, audio-visual announcements and preparatory materials. While we ensure that our students are well aware of and prepared for the test's requirements, it is important that parents be kept up to date about the OSSLT. So, what exactly is the test about? There are two components to the OSSLT - reading and writing.

For the reading component, students are asked to read a variety of selections and answer questions about each selection. Students must demonstrate skills in three key areas:

- Understanding of information and ideas that are stated **directly** in the reading selection
- Understanding of information and ideas that are stated **indirectly** and that require the student to make inferences
- **Making connections** between personal knowledge and experience and the ideas and information in the reading selections (e.g., interpretation of meaning).

The reading selections reflect the types of reading materials students should encounter every day, including the following :

- **informational** materials, such as explanations and instructions, news reports
- **graphic** materials, such as schedules, graphs, tables and charts
- **literary** materials, such as stories, descriptions, narratives, and dialogues.

The questions on the selections include short-answer questions, multiple choice questions, and questions that require a brief explanation.

For the writing component, students are asked to produce two long writing tasks. The writing tasks are designed to measure student achievement in these areas:

- **development of a main idea**
- provision of **supporting details**
- **organization** and linking of ideas and information
- use of an **appropriate tone** for the purpose and the intended reader
- use of correct **grammar, punctuation, and spelling**.

The kinds of writing include the following:

- **a series of paragraphs expressing an opinion**
- **a news report**

## Important Reminders

Students are encouraged to:

- Arrive on time—at least 10 minutes prior to the start of the test.
- Bring a snack to eat during the break.
- Follow all instructions carefully.

- Bring an HB pencil, black or blue pens and a highlighter.
- Cross out any errors. **Do not use white out.** It is time-consuming and often results in spaces left blank.

**\*\*DO NOT BRING CELL PHONES, PAGERS, DIGITAL MUSIC PLAYERS, ETC. INTO THE TEST AREA.**

## Test Tips

- Read and **follow instructions** carefully.
- Look at **graphics**. Check the **titles, pictures, graphs & bold words** before reading the passage.
- Understand how to respond to these common testing words: **identify, determine, explain, summarize, predict**.
- Strategies for multiple choice questions: read the questions before reading the passage; try to answer the question before you look at the choices, then look at the choices; if you are not sure of an answer, cross out any wrong answers first and then make a good guess. Circle it and then check your answer later.
- Prepare for short answer questions: read the questions first and think about them while you are reading the passage to find the answer; use **“because”** when you are asked to give an explanation; try to make a connection to the topic (personal experience, knowledge) so that you can provide an example.
- **Answer every question**; if you leave a question blank, the question will be scored zero.

For more information about preparing for the OSSLT, go to [www.eqao.ca](http://www.eqao.ca)



## How should a student prepare?

- For the actual test day, get a good night's sleep and eat a healthy breakfast.
- As a student, you are already preparing for the test by attending classes and completing assignments. The test evaluates skills that are part of the regular curriculum.
- Visit [www.eqao.ca](http://www.eqao.ca) and download last year's test, Student Answer Sheet, Multiple Choice Answer Key, Student Responses and Rubrics, and Getting Ready Guide.
- Get into the reading habit now. Read whenever you can, at least 15 minutes a day. Read all sorts of material such as the back of cereal boxes when you're eating breakfast, the sports section of the newspaper, advertisements on billboards, or even the instructions for setting up your Nintendo Wii. Research proves that reading enhances literacy skills.
- Complete the preparatory materials that are provided by your school to familiarize yourself with the format and types of questions that you will encounter on the test.
- Attend and participate in after-school remedial and tutoring programmes that are offered at your school.
- Familiarize yourself with the key terms that will be used on the OSSLT. Visit [www.eqao.ca](http://www.eqao.ca) for a complete list of the key words that you will find on the test.

## STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE WRITING

The ability to write well is an essential skill that your child needs for his future. The following is a list of suggestions for you to think about as you help your child develop and improve his writing skills.

Let your child see that you enjoy writing, and that it is an important skill for everyday life.

Show your child that you write all the time: grocery lists, to-do lists, postcards, reports, letters, emails.

Encourage your child to write letters. Have your child plan his writing. Ask: How should we begin the letter? What information should we include? How do we end it? Did we say enough? What's a better word for...?

Let your child see that writing is really thinking—it's thinking out loud on paper.

Have your child write thank-you notes for gifts.

Encourage your child to keep a journal. This provides good writing practice as well as an opportunity to record daily events.

Give your child, and encourage others to give, gifts associated with writing (special pencils and pens, pads of paper, stationery, envelopes, diary/journal books, dictionary, thesaurus).

Encourage your child to read, read, read. Better readers make better writers.



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