

## Using the Nova Scotia Assessment: Analytic Writing Rubric

The rubric includes four criteria (Ideas, Organization, Language Use, and Conventions), and there are four levels of performance for each criterion. Level 3 and above is the expectation for writing assessments, so it's important to look at these levels first when reviewing the rubric. The following information is provided to teachers prior to scoring student writing at provincial scoring sessions. It may also be helpful for teachers who wish to use this rubric with students in their classrooms. Please keep in mind that the expectations for specific assessments are anchored in the writing samples in a scoring guide, as they are relative to specific grade levels (end of grades 2, 5, 8). The scoring guide provides two student writing samples that illustrate each performance level outlined in the rubric. A sample scoring guide is available in Appendix G of this document.

- 1) Read the rubric as a whole before looking at each criterion in more detail.
- 2) **Ideas:** Read the four levels of performance under Ideas. Ideas includes the presence and quality of a main idea, the extent to which the main idea is developed through details, and the quality of the details used to support the main idea.
- 3) Underline the elements that are same across all four levels in Ideas: *main idea, developed, details*
- 4) Circle key words that are unique to each level in Ideas:
  - a. Level 3: *clear, relevant*
  - b. Level 4: *distinct, vivid, relevant*
  - c. Level 2: *evident, somewhat, may be irrelevant* (Even if details are relevant, a piece of writing can be a Level 2 if it's only somewhat developed.)
  - d. Level 1: *not present, or, not developed*
- 5) **Organization:** Read the four levels of performance under Organization. Organization includes the way the writing is organized as a whole as well as how it is organized throughout (internal and external organization). There should be a beginning, middle, and end and a logical sequence between ideas. Transitions include transitional words or phrases, but also the way the writer transitions from one idea to the next.
- 6) Underline the elements that are same across all four levels in Organization: *writing, organized/organization, transitions*
- 7) Circle key words that are unique to each level in Organization:
  - a. Level 3: *effective, varied*
  - b. Level 4: *skillfully, skillful, varied*
  - c. Level 2: *somewhat, vague, and/or mechanical* (Even if transitions are not vague or mechanical, a piece of writing can be a Level 2 if it's only somewhat organized.)
  - d. Level 1: *lacking, little or no evidence*
- 8) **Language Use:** Read the four levels of performance under Language Use. Language Use includes voice, word choice, sentence style, syntax. Sentence structure is considered in terms of writing

style in this criterion, not the grammatical correctness of sentence structure since correctness is assessed under the Conventions criterion.

- 9) Underline the elements that are same across all four levels in Language Use: *Language use, writing*
- 10) Circle key words that are unique to each level in Language Use:
  - a. Level 3: *clear, fluid*
  - b. Level 4: *vivid, skillful*
  - c. Level 2: *vague, and/or mechanical*
  - d. Level 1: *confusing, or, little evidence of language use*
- 11) **Conventions:** Read the four levels of performance under Conventions. Conventions includes spelling of commonly used words (including homonyms), punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, verb tense agreement, noun/pronoun agreement – these are grounded in what’s appropriate for a given grade level
- 12) Underline the elements that are same across all four levels in Conventions: *conventions, communication*
- 13) Circle key words that are unique to each level in Conventions:
  - a. Level 3: *variety, generally correct, effective*
  - b. Level 4: *variety, consistently correct, enhanced*
  - c. Level 2: *errors, noticeable, coherent*
  - d. Level 1: *errors, confusing, or, little evidence of conventions*
- 14) **Not Enough Evidence:** This designation would only be used in rare cases when there is not enough evidence to assess a student’s writing (e.g., indecipherable, blank paper, not enough information to score such as a single word).

Once teachers have become familiar with the rubric, they may wish to use it in their classrooms to support student writing. Looking at the rubric with students may facilitate useful conversations about Ideas, Organization, Language Use, and Conventions and how these elements work together in a piece of writing. Through these discussions, writing samples (either students’ own samples or scoring guide samples) could be used to illustrate the various writing components outlined in the rubric. When students have an opportunity to engage in these conversations, they may begin to enhance their own writing processes.

# Nova Scotia Assessment: Analytic Writing Rubric

## Nova Scotia Assessments: Analytic Rubric for Scoring Writing (RWM6/RWM8)



Ideas
<p>4 A main idea is distinct and is developed through vivid and relevant details.</p> <p>3 A main idea is clear and is developed through relevant details.</p> <p>2 A main idea is evident and is somewhat developed through details, some of which may be irrelevant.</p> <p>1 A main idea is not present, or a main idea is not developed with details.</p>
Organization
<p>4 The writing is skillfully organized with skillful use of varied transitions.</p> <p>3 The writing is organized with effective use of varied transitions.</p> <p>2 The writing is somewhat organized with vague or mechanical transitions.</p> <p>1 The writing is lacking organization; there is little or no evidence of transitions.</p>
Language Use
<p>4 Language use contributes to vivid and skillful writing.</p> <p>3 Language use contributes to clear and fluid writing.</p> <p>2 Language use contributes to vague or mechanical writing.</p> <p>1 Language use contributes to confusing writing, or there is little evidence of language use.</p>
Conventions
<p>4 A variety of consistently correct conventions contribute to enhanced communication.</p> <p>3 A variety of generally correct conventions contribute to effective communication.</p> <p>2 Errors in conventions are noticeable, but communication is coherent.</p> <p>1 Errors in conventions contribute to confusing communication, or there is little evidence of conventions.</p>
Not Enough Evidence
<p>There is not enough evidence to assess the student's writing (e.g., indecipherable, blank paper, not enough information to score).</p>

## Using the Nova Scotia Assessment: Scoring Guide Sample

Student writing is scored using the analytic writing rubric and scoring guide. It is important to have a solid understanding of the analytic writing rubric before reviewing the scoring guide. The scoring guide includes the writing prompt and two samples at each performance level in the following order: Level 4, 3, 2, 1. Please note that permissions have been obtained for the student writing samples in the following scoring guide.

Although adherence to writing task is important during classroom instruction and assessment, it is important to note that this is not the focus of provincial writing assessments. Provincial assessment writing prompts are designed to allow for a broad interpretation of the prompt. This allows students from across the province with a variety of life experiences to connect to the prompt in some way so they can provide a response that can be assessed for writing quality based on the rubric (ideas, organization, language use, and conventions).

Each writing sample includes an annotation at the bottom of the page that provides the rationale for the scores using language from the rubric and the student's writing. Level 3 and above is the expectation for writing assessments, so it's important to look at these levels first when reviewing the scoring guide. Below are a few suggestions for reviewing the scoring guide:

- 1) Review the rubric criteria for Level 3 in Ideas, Organization, Language Use, and Conventions
- 2) Read the Level 3 Scoring Guide samples and annotations
- 3) Review the rubric criteria for Level 4 in Ideas, Organization, Language Use, and Conventions
- 4) Read the Level 4 Scoring Guide samples and annotations
- 5) Review the rubric criteria for Level 2 in Ideas, Organization, Language Use, and Conventions
- 6) Read the Level 2 Scoring Guide samples and annotations
- 7) Review the rubric criteria for Level 1 in Ideas, Organization, Language Use, and Conventions
- 8) Read the Level 1 Scoring Guide samples and annotations

Once teachers become familiar with the scoring guide, they may wish to use some of the writing samples with their students for talking about elements of writing.

Since writing is personal and involves risk-taking, students may be more comfortable critiquing anonymous writing samples from the scoring guide. After students have had an opportunity to understand the rubric, teachers could begin with showing them a sample of writing at Level 3, Level 4, then Level 2 and Level 1. (This would be spaced out over several mini-lessons at the teacher's discretion.) The samples could anchor some wonderful conversations about what students notice about how main ideas are developed through supportive details, as well as other elements of writing. The level 2 and 1 samples could be used as a springboard for students to discuss how the writing could be enhanced in each of the criterion of the rubric. Finally, once students have had an opportunity to engage in these discussions with teachers about writing, they should feel more comfortable to begin pulling out some of their own writing from their portfolios. They could work with an existing piece of writing from

their writing portfolio to focus on each criterion at a time to gradually enhance the same piece of writing each time. Students can engage in peer review and conversations to support their revisions. At the end of the process, they will be able to compare their original piece of writing with the revised piece of writing and reflect on their process and progress.

# Nova Scotia Assessment: Scoring Guide Sample

**2013–2014 Nova Scotia Assessment:**  
Reading, Writing, and Mathematics in Grade 8

## **SCORING GUIDE** **Writing Task: Essay**

**July, 2014**

## Writing Task: Essay

Some people believe that youth would benefit from being actively engaged in their communities. As a result, some high schools in Canada and the United States require students to complete community involvement activities or volunteer work<sup>1</sup> in order to graduate from high school. For example, students in British Columbia must complete 30 hours of volunteer work before graduation and students in Ontario must complete 40 hours of volunteer work in order to graduate. Should volunteer work be a requirement for high school graduation?

**Instructions:** Write an essay supporting why you think volunteer work<sup>1</sup> **should OR should not** be a requirement for high school graduation.

**1. volunteer work:** providing a service without being paid for it (e.g., reading to children at a hospital, helping a community plant a garden, delivering groceries or doing yard work for senior citizens, cleaning cages at an animal shelter)

**Tips:**

- Be sure to respond to the instructions above.
- Be sure to explain and support your ideas.
- Be sure to present your ideas in an organized manner.
- Be sure to choose your words carefully.
- Be sure to use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- Use no more than the three pages provided.

Use this box to plan your essay.

Begin writing your essay on the next page. →



# 1/3 Essay

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The topic question being presented forth today is whether or not highschool students should be obligated to partake in a specified amount of time donated to volunteer work/community activities in order to graduate. The answer for many is clear: yes, it should be a requirement. It is beneficial to the youth and the community providing positive change on both ends.

Many folk have a tendency to think that schooling has a sole purpose of providing academic education, which is a highly invalid assumption.

Our schooling system is constructed to prepare our youth for the incredible yet unpredictable journey we call "life." A requirement for volunteer community activities or services would inspire our youth to get involved in the community in their later life or even present. It teaches them about life outside their cellular devices and how even themselves can make a positive change around them. It empowers them and builds their confidence and self-belief.

## Level 4 (page 39)

- Ideas (4): A main idea is distinct and is developed through vivid and relevant details: The main idea that volunteering should be a requirement for graduation because it "is beneficial to the youth and the community providing positive change" is developed through vivid and relevant details ("prepare our youth...would inspire our youth to get involved in the community...empowers them and builds their confidence and self-belief...an attractive feature for both parents and universities...").
- Organization (4): The writing is skillfully organized with skillful use of varied transitions: There is a solid introduction followed by skillfully organized paragraphs and a concluding paragraph. Internal organization is also skillful throughout with topic sentences being supported by relevant details. Transitions within and between paragraphs are skillfully used ("If none of the above tickles your fancy...").
- Language Use (4): Language use contributes to vivid and skillful writing: "Many folk have a tendency to think that schooling has a sole purpose of providing academic education, which is a highly invalid assumption...School preaches self-power and engagement in all aspects."
- Conventions (4): The writing consistently demonstrates correct use of a variety of conventions.

This requirement would provide an appealing, positive representation of the school(s) and school board resulting in an incline of student population. This is an attractive feature for both parents and universities. It looks impressive on a resumé as well. Universities would be more inclined to accept a student with this background. Successful students is a five star recipe for a positive school reputation.

If none of the above tickles your fancy, this will - It teaches you a lesson, as blunt as it may be. It enforces the fact that nothing worthwhile will come without hard work and elbow grease. It prepares students for life post-secondary education when things are no longer sugar-coated, where work ethic is a MUST.

This is a change in Canadian schooling that I feel must happen. Perhaps this has enlightened you with a new outlook, or perhaps not. Either way, please



\* 2 4 2 1 9 \*

do take into consideration the opportunity we have at our fingertips. School preaches self-power and engagement in all aspects. So, what are we waiting for? Be the power.



Please go back and check your work for Day 1.  
Be sure you have answered every question for Day 1.  
Then close your booklet.  
You are finished for today.



\* 2 4 2 2 0 \*

## Essay

76

↳ = new paragraph 1/2

In many provinces and States, High School students are required to complete a certain number of volunteer hours in order to graduate. There are pros and cons to this idea, but in my opinion, the positive outcomes heavily outweigh the negative.

~~An abundance~~ of the teens who must do volunteer work surely don't actually enjoy it. When you are forced into volunteer work, it simply isn't volunteer work. Sure, it's still an unpaid job, but an unpaid job you are required to do, taking the whole 'volunteer' out of volunteer work.

*Italics* In that case, it will probably feel like a chore, or more homework (added onto the hours of homework High School students already have to complete), which can easily make teens hesitant to pursue more actually voluntary volunteer work.

↳ Despite all of the previously listed negative outcomes of the volunteer work, I still think it is a capital idea.

Sure, scores of teens might dislike the required hours, but some of them must ~~also~~ enjoy (sort of) selfless acts. Some

people are born to help whenever and wherever they can, so the volunteer work might not even feel like work for ~~these kinds of~~ people.

↳ When <sup>teens</sup> you have to do around 30 hours of volunteer work, it will get them out and submerge them into their community



## Level 4 (page 76)

- Ideas (4): A main idea is distinct and is developed through vivid and relevant details: The writer acknowledges positive and negative aspects of requiring volunteer work for high school graduation, but then argues that the "the positive outcomes heavily outweigh the negative." This main idea is developed through vivid and relevant details ("it is a capital idea...it can assist with job hunts or more education...can also inspire young teens to pursue a career...").
- Organization (4): The writing is skillfully organized with skillful use of varied transitions: There is a solid introduction followed by skillfully organized paragraphs and a concluding paragraph. Internal organization is also skillful throughout with topic sentences being supported by relevant details. Transitions within and between paragraphs are skillfully used ("Despite all of the previously listed negative outcomes of the volunteer work, I still think it is a capital idea.").
- Language Use (4): Language use contributes to vivid and skillful writing: "A lot of High School students don't know what they will do when they graduate, and by doing mandatory jobs in order to graduate, they could find their niche, and discover what they're really good at and actually enjoy."
- Conventions (4): The writing consistently demonstrates correct use of a variety of conventions.

and society. There will <sup>also</sup> be numerous names of businesses and events to add on to <sup>their</sup> Resumes and college applications. ~~Even if~~ Even if ~~the~~ the unpaid work doesn't ~~feel~~ feel like anything more than a compulsory task, in the future it can come back and assist with job hunts or more education.

↳ Certain volunteer work can also inspire young teens to pursue a career in that type of job, although maybe a little less unpaid. A lot of High School students don't know what they will do when they graduate, and by doing mandatory jobs in order to graduate, they could find their niche, and ~~really~~ discover what they're really good at and actually enjoy.

↳ So, yes, I definitely think required volunteer work is a magnificent idea. In a few years when I have to complete hours of work, I probably will think it's a horrid idea created by sadists who like to watch pathetic teens suffer, ~~but~~ <sup>however</sup> if I think further into the future, and the <sup>assistance</sup> ~~help~~ those volunteer hours will be giving me, I hope I'll be intelligent enough to realize those alleged sadists will actually doing me a kindness and a service.





Why should schools make doing community volunteering a necessary thing in order for students to graduate high school? Well for one thing it shows them that anyone can fall on hard times, anyone. It can motivate the kids to become part of their community more and try to make a change. Also, it could make the students more understanding adults.

First, some teens might already have a respect for volunteers and participate in volunteer work. But some don't, they either a) Don't really care for the volunteer side of the community or were raised to believe it is "beneath them", Or b) they didn't know the community had such a thing. Either way they are getting pulled out of their world and are getting dropped into reality, which sounds mean but they need it because volunteering is everywhere.

Now they've begun volunteering! They now see the many different things that go into building a strong community from the inside out. They'll see the many different facets of life and will learn that

**Level 3 (page 36)**

- Ideas (3): A main idea is clear and is developed through relevant details: The main idea that schools should require students to volunteer is developed through relevant details ("shows them that anyone can fall on hard times....can motivate the kids....could make the students more understanding adults").
- Organization (3): The writing is organized with effective use of varied transitions: The first paragraph introduces ideas that are developed throughout the essay and the concluding paragraph leaves readers with a final thought about the power of volunteering to influence communities and generations. Effective transitions are used throughout ("First,....Now they've begun volunteering!").
- Language Use (3): Language use contributes to clear and fluid writing: The writing is clear and fluid throughout ("It can motivate the kids to become part of their community more and try to make a change....Now that's a lot of variables that can influence the life and attitude of the teen...").
- Conventions (3): The writing generally demonstrates correct use of a variety of conventions.

even if there family is considered "Well to do" in the community they can fall down in life and become poor just like any other persons.

When the students graduate high school and move into the "real world" for the first time they will fall back on what they learned, and if they learned, and if they learned that volunteering is important to the community then they could (And it is very likely, especially if they where raised right) volunteer in there community.

Now that's a lot of variables that can influence the life and attitude of the teen towards volunteering, and if the schools put a importance on it at a young age then that could shape the children into being active in there community as adults and then they influence a whole new generation that is more likely to volunteer then the last! It's all about influencing the right people, because when they are influenced a whole lot more are influence.



# Essay

87

I believe that volunteer work should be a requirement to graduate high school. It doesn't matter how much time should be mandatory, but, at least some time should be.

Students could really benefit from volunteer work. Not just the students would benefit, also, the community would. The students could learn or improve all kinds of new skills. For example they might learn people skills by helping in a nursing home or reading to young children. It would bring a lot of joy to the people they helped too.

It might also help them become more independent, depending on the volunteering they chose to do. If they chose to help clean an elder's house then they would learn to become more independent and learn life skills. It will help them for when they graduate if they move out because they'll have the skills needed to keep their house clean.

If they are unsure of what they want to do once they graduate the volunteering



## Level 3 (page 87)

- Ideas (3): A main idea is clear and is developed through relevant details: The main idea that "at least some time should be" required for graduation is developed through relevant details ("Not just the students would benefit, also, the community would....might learn people skills....become more independent and learn life skills").
- Organization (3): The writing is organized with effective use of varied transitions: The writing is organized effectively with an introductory paragraph, body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph. There is also internal organization within paragraphs, and a variety of transitions are used throughout ("For example....It might also help...").
- Language Use (3): Language use contributes to clear and fluid writing: "It might also help them become more independent, depending on the volunteering they chose to do."
- Conventions (3): The writing generally demonstrates correct use of a variety of conventions.

might help them with that decision. If they volunteered for a certain thing and really enjoyed it then they may want to choose a career in that field. They may have done volunteering for something they thought they would enjoy, but, they ended up not enjoying it. That could save them a lot of money and time in the long run.

It might help them get a job. If they're applying for a job and their resume has lots of volunteer work they are probably more likely to get the job.

I strongly believe that volunteer work should be mandatory to graduate from high school. I also stated many ways of how the student and community could benefit. Volunteer work is a positive thing in many ways.



# Essay

34

I think all teens should have a volunteer job when in high school, or at least try to get one so you know you made a effort.

Some teens say getting a job when your still in high school is to much for them.

I think it's a good opportunity and experiance for teens to get a job while your still young. It's a experiance because you will get to see what the worlds like and what having a jobs like, so when your an adult you will already have/know the experiance of working and being social with the world.

Of course when you want a job you need a resume, but for volunteer you don't!

I think that it would be a huge change for some teens to get a job.

Theres plenty of jobs in the world

## Level 2 (page 34)

- Ideas (2): A main idea is evident and is somewhat developed through details, some of which may be irrelevant: The main idea that "teens should have a volunteer job when in high school" is only somewhat developed ("it's a good opportunity and experiance for teens to get a job while your still young"). The detail, "Theres plenty of jobs in the world that I'm sure would be happy getting a new partner at their job" is irrelevant and is not developed to support the main idea.
- Organization (2): The writing is somewhat organized with vague or mechanical transitions: Although there are some elements of organization, the repetition of "I think" and "I know" are mechanical transitions.
- Language Use (2): Language use contributes to vague or mechanical writing: "I think that it would be a huge change for some teens to get a job....that I'm sure would be happy getting a new partner at their job" illustrates vague language use.
- Conventions (2): Errors in conventions are noticeable, but communication is coherent: There are a few very basic convention errors throughout ("a effort....your....experiance....theres....when I'm old enough to").

that I'm sure would be happy  
getting a new partner at their job.

I know that I would love to get a  
volunteer job or even a part time job when  
I'm old enough to. It's a great experience.



# Essay

28

I think volunteer work should be a requirement before graduation, because helping a sinor citizen with anything the need help with like shopping bags, yard work, house work, driving ect. It can provent these sinor citizens from hurting them selves and going to the hospital. It may also look good on a resama if your in need of a job and or look good in a essay for collage. Also on the day of your graduation when or if you give your little speech for those people listening



## Level 2 (page 28)

- Ideas (2): A main idea is evident and is somewhat developed through details, some of which may be irrelevant: The main idea that "volunteer work should be a requirement before graduation" is somewhat developed through details ("helping a sinor citizen....may also look good on a resama....it would be good for those whom may be listening").
- Organization (2): The writing is somewhat organized with vague or mechanical transitions: The piece is somewhat organized, but it is missing the majority of the body as well as a conclusion. The transitions are mechanical ("It can...It may...It would...").
- Language Use (2): Language use contributes to vague or mechanical writing: The writing is vague ("It would be good for those whom may listening, that you did something economically for your home town or city").
- Conventions (2): Errors in conventions are noticeable, but communication is coherent: "sinor, provent, resama, collage" are examples of spelling errors, and sentence structure issues are also evident (run-on sentence, missing word endings and punctuation).

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Day 1 | Page 17

It would be good for those whom  
r  
may be listening, that you did something  
economically to your home town or city.



★ 7 4 1 1 0 ★

## Essay

Volunteer working should be allowed because it will  
teens understand why it is good to help others will  
there chours, cleaning up, and helping out old  
people.

It will help us understand that volunteering  
is a good thing and it will also help us with  
new was to help keep our world a better  
place.

There are a lot of good things we will do  
to help keep the world clean and help  
others out with things.



### Level 1 (page 11)

- Ideas (1): A main idea is not present, or a main idea is not developed with details: "Volunteer working should be allowed" is the main idea. Although there are some details present, they are not developed.
- Organization (1): The writing is lacking organization; there is little or no evidence of transitions: There is little evidence of transition between sentences.
- Language Use (1): Language use contributes to confusing writing: Word choice contributes to confusion ("Volunteer working should be allowed....why it is good to help others...").
- Conventions (1): Errors in conventions contribute to confusing writing: Spelling errors such as "chours, cleaning....was....butter place" as well as missing words contribute to confusing writing.

When thinking about "confusing writing," it is important to note that there is a difference between simply being able to decode the writer's words and being able to understand the writer's meaning.

## Essay

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When thinking about "confusing writing," it is important to note that there is a difference between simply being able to decode the writer's words and being able to understand the writer's meaning.



1/2

## Essay

44

I think that high school graduation should be aloud to do volunteer work.

Because it would look really good on a resumé. It's also very good to volunteer work around your community.

I just wanted to say that they should be aloud to do volunteer work if they wanted



## Level 1 (page 44)

- Ideas (1): A main idea is not present, or a main idea is not developed with details: Even if "high school graduation should be aloud to do volunteer work" is considered the main idea, the details are not developed ("I just wanted to say that they should be aloud to do volunteer work if they wanted").
- Organization (1): The writing is lacking organization; there is little or no evidence of transitions: There is little evidence of transitions ("because...also").
- Language Use (1): Language use contributes to confusing writing: "I think that high school graduation should be aloud to do volunteer work."
- Conventions (1): Errors in conventions contribute to confusing writing: Errors with homophones (aloud), capitals, spelling, and sentence structure contribute to confusing writing.

When thinking about "confusing writing," it is important to note that there is a difference between simply being able to decode the writer's words and being able to understand the writer's meaning.

to do it. And that's  
just what I thank about  
them not being aloud to  
do volunteer work if they  
wanted to do. Then they  
should be aloud to.



1



**Not Enough Evidence:** There is not enough evidence to assess the student's writing performance.