

PSAT 8/9: Writing and Language Test

Part of the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing Test (ERW)

The Writing and Language Test asks students to be an editor and improve passages that were written especially for the test—and that include deliberate errors. When students take the Writing and Language Test, they will do three things that people do all the time when they write and edit: Read. Find mistakes and weaknesses. Fix them.

Quick Facts

- All questions are multiple choice and based on passages.
- Some passages are accompanied by informational graphics, such as tables, graphs, and charts—but no math is required.
- Prior topic knowledge is never tested.
- The Writing and Language Test is part of the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing section.

What the Writing and Language Test Is Like To answer some questions, students will need to look closely at a single sentence. Others require reading the entire piece and interpreting a graphic. For instance, students might be asked to choose a sentence that corrects a misinterpretation of a scientific chart.

What the Writing and Language Test Measures Questions on the Writing and Language Test measure a range of skills.

Command of Evidence Questions that test command of evidence ask students to improve the way passages develop information and ideas. For instance, students might choose an answer that sharpens an argumentative claim or adds a relevant supporting detail.

Words in Context Some questions ask students to improve word choice. They will need to choose the best words to use based on the text surrounding them. The goal will be to make a passage more precise or concise, or to improve syntax, style, or tone.

Analysis in History/Social Studies and in Science Students will be asked to read passages about topics in history, social studies, and science with a critical eye and make editorial decisions that improve them.

Expression of Ideas Some questions ask about a passage's organization and its impact. For instance, students will be asked which words or structural changes improve how well it makes its point and how well its sentences and paragraphs work together.

Standard English Conventions This is about the building blocks of writing: sentence structure, usage, and punctuation. Students will be asked to change words, clauses, sentences, and punctuation. Some topics covered include verb tense, parallel construction, subject-verb agreement, and comma use.