

## Getting results – help your teen prepare for provincial tests

*Help your teen prepare for the grade 10 literacy test*

For parents of middle and secondary school students

The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test helps schools determine whether or not students have acquired the reading and writing skills that they are expected to have learned by the end of grade 9. These skills are the basis for learning in all subject areas in both elementary and secondary school. This sheet will provide information about the grade 10 literacy test and tips on how you can help your teen prepare for it.

### Explain the reading section

On the grade 10 literacy test, there are five different reading selections including:

- information paragraph - e.g. explanations, instructions
- graphic - e.g. schedules, graphs, tables
- narrative - e.g. stories, descriptions, dialogue

Your teen will answer two types of reading questions on the test:

- multiple choice questions over five readings
- short answers or open response questions; two each on the first three readings

### Practice specific reading skills

By the end of grade 9, and in preparation for the test, your teen will need to:

- understand explicitly stated ideas and information (literal meaning)
- understand implicitly stated ideas and information (inferences)
- make connections between the passage and personal knowledge and experience (interpretation)

### Focus new learning on these areas

Help your teen prepare for the test by reading informational texts, such as a non-fiction book, biography or articles in newspapers or magazines.

Try some of these reading skills and strategies:

- Connect ideas and information to understand the meaning - i.e. make inferences.
- Use personal knowledge and experience to make connections and remember details - i.e. interpret.
- Understand graphics, such as photographs, maps, drawings, charts, graphs, etc.

### Develop reading skills together

Engage in activities together to help develop your teen's reading skills. Try the following:

- Read often.
- Read together.
- Read a variety of materials - e.g. books, newspapers, magazines, song lyrics, online materials.
- Read for fun *and* for information.
- Practice understanding direct details for *literal* meaning - e.g. stop to discuss a news article and ask, "What's the point here?".
- Establish a purpose for reading and then look for information on the Internet about a topic of interest.
- Make connections between different parts of the reading to draw *inferences* - e.g. read the title and subheadings of a selection and predict what it will be about.
- Encourage your teen to read the questions before the passage when doing homework.
- Ask evaluative questions like *why* and *how*, and not just *what*.
- Help your teen to think about his reading in the context of what he already knows to practise *interpretation*, e.g. "What does this make you think of?".
- Engage in friendly debate about a current affairs issue, and help your teen articulate opinions about matters that are important to her.
- Read flyers, maps and pamphlets together to plan family events.
- Give books as presents.

## Explain the writing section

On the grade 10 literacy test, there are three types of writing questions: short and long open-response, and multiple choice.

The two long open-response prompts are:

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

The two short open-responses to prompts are where students are asked to explain a point. They are:

- one paragraph in length
- one main idea supported by at least two details

There are eight multiple choice questions about the mechanics of writing such as grammar, punctuation, the structure of paragraphs and sentence combining.

## Practice specific writing skills

By the end of grade 9, and in preparation for the test, your teen will need to:

- focus on a main idea (the topic)
- provide supporting details (develop the topic)
- organize and link ideas (sort them and sequence into a logical order)
- use appropriate tone (think of your audience)
- use correct grammar, spelling and complete sentences

## Focus new learning on these areas

Ask your teen to read an article in the newspaper or a magazine, a short story or a chapter in a book. Then have him write a summary of what was read. Remind him that this is *not* the time to express an opinion.

Try some of these writing skills with your teen:

- Develop a main idea with supporting details.
- Use a variety of forms such as letters, lists, itineraries, summaries, etc.
- Use clear words and sentence structures.
- Avoid errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation.

For more information, check out the Education Quality & Accountability Office website at [www.eqao.com](http://www.eqao.com). Look for:

- support materials (including a sample test)
- frequently asked questions
- planning and preparation guide
- *Getting Ready* Guide

- Read.
- Discuss how details support main ideas in things we read or hear every day.
- Find opportunities for writing at home - e.g. a shopping list, to-do list.
- Discuss the purpose for writing.
- Ask your teen to help you edit for clarity when you write.
- Find chances for brainstorming - e.g. plan a vacation using a "mind map."
- Ask your teen to support opinions and ideas during conversations - but keep it friendly!
- Read a variety of forms of writing and talk about how they are different.
- Encourage your teen to choose words that will stretch her vocabulary and improve clarity of communication.
- Talk about how levels of language change depending on the audience and situation - expect appropriate language usage.

## Prepare for the test with these tips in mind

- Read and follow instructions carefully.
- Look at graphics. Check the titles and bold words before reading the passage.
- Understand these common testing words: *identify*, *copy*, *explain* and *describe*.
- Solve multiple choice challenges: try to answer before you look at the choices, then look at all the choices. If you are not sure, cross out any wrong answers first then make a good guess. Circle it and check your answer later.
- Be prepared for the short answer section: read the questions first and think while you are reading to find the answer. In the reading section, all written answers must be in complete sentences. Write enough to show that you understand and to fill the six lines of space provided. Use "because" when you are asked to give an explanation.

*Workshop presented by Pat Stellick & Carole Chapman, Coordinating Principals. This tip sheet was prepared by Sarah Patten, Secondary Instructional Resource Teacher.*

## Develop writing skills

You can help your teen improve writing skills by engaging in the following activities together: