

OSSLT

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test



Informative resource for reading questions

READING: TYPES OF QUESTIONS

Types of questions used in the OSSLT

Every OSSLT test has four types of questions:

- a) explicit
- b) implicit
- c) making connections
- d) open-ended questions

a) Explicit: The exact answer(s) can be found clearly expressed in the story. (These are the easiest questions.)

Let's try a couple:

1. Who played goalkeeper for the Terry Fox school team?
A Dwight
B Dwayne
C Dirk
D Drew
2. Who scored the winning goal?
F Dwight
G Dwayne
H Dirk
J Doug

In both questions, the answers (C-Dirk and J-Doug) are found in the text.

b) Implicit: When none of the given answers seems to be obviously the correct one, the answer may be implicit in the story. The word "implicit" means that the answer is not expressed but implied, and can be deduced from what is stated in the story. That doesn't mean that you have to guess which answer is correct; it means that you have to think a little deeper.

Now try these two questions:

3. What type of school did Dwight and Dwayne attend?
A grade school
B high school
C college
D university
4. What was the total combined number of goals scored by both teams?
F 1
G 2
H 3
J 4

The answers to questions 3 and 4 are implicit in the text: the correct answers (B-high school and H-3) can be found by using information that is given in the text, but these questions require a thinking process, rather than simple retrieval of information.



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TEST-WRITING STRATEGIES: READING

C. Dr. Don's Test-Writing Strategies for The Reading Component

1. Multiple-Choice Questions

Step by step strategy

Perhaps you have developed your own strategy for answering multiple choice test questions. Maybe your teacher has given you a strategy to follow. If either of those works for you, great! Just be sure you have a step-by-step strategy to follow every time.

If you haven't yet established a strategy for test-writing, here is Dr. Don's step-by-step strategy, which has been used effectively by thousands of students. Take a minute to see whether it works for you.

By the way, you will notice that several of these steps will suggest that you make marks on the test pages. That's a good thing to do. You will submit your answers on the Test Answer page, and no evaluator will see any marks you make on the test pages.

Step One:

Read the story (or information selection) slowly and carefully. Read it as a story; try to pretend it's not a test. Enjoy the story or poem.

Step Two:

Then read the selection again, slowly and carefully.

As you read it the second time, try to create a "video" of the story in your mind. If the story is about going to the zoo, imagine yourself at the zoo, watching the events that happen in the story.

If you need to read the story again, after you have done step two, do it! The OSSLT is not a race to see who finishes the fastest.

Step Three

Now that you have read the story, you are ready to answer the questions.

Of course, Step One and Step Two apply here also: read each question, slowly and carefully.

Then read it again. The second time you read the question, whisper the question to yourself. Move your lips and quietly say each word.

Step Four

Underline the key words in each question.

For example: "What is the capital city of Canada?" What do you think are the key words? Dr. Don says they are capital, city and Canada.

If this question was on a test, he would underline those words in the question:

"What is the capital city of Canada?"



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MAIN IDEA

D. FINDING THE MAIN IDEA

The reading section of the OSSLT will likely contain one or more questions requiring you to identify the main idea of a selection or a paragraph. The question might be as straightforward as, "What is the main idea of paragraph 3?" or it might take a different form, such as "What is the moral of the story or poem?" or "What would be a suitable title for this selection?" or "What is the theme of the story?"

In all cases, you are asked to determine the gist of what the author is trying to communicate to the reader.

The challenge is that the four possible choices given for each question all have some merit. The trick is to decide which is the most suitable answer.

To help you, it is important to understand the difference between "topic" and "main idea." The term "topic" refers to the subject under discussion; the term "main idea" refers to the point or thought being expressed.

Perhaps this will help you: You are in your bedroom, and you overhear your parents talking about you. You go downstairs and inquire, "What were you talking about?" They answer, "You." If you are like many teenagers, you would respond, "Of course you were talking about me, but what about me were you talking about?" Finally, one of your parents says, "Your birthday gift."

In your parents' conversation, "you" were the topic, and your birthday present was the main idea.

You are not likely to be asked as a test question to identify the topic of a story or paragraph. However, being able to do so will help you in two ways:

- a) In questions dealing with main idea, one of the multiple choice answers is almost certain to be the topic. Many students mistakenly choose this as the correct answer. Knowing the difference between topic and main idea will help you eliminate one of the options.
- b) Correctly identifying the topic will help you determine the main idea.

Let's practice

In the selection that follows, first determine the topic, and then ask yourself, "What general point or message does the author make about this topic?"

The Twin Peaks Secondary School hockey team recently held a fund-raising dinner to help defray the costs of sending the team to the OFSAA hockey championship tournament. They were able to get Sidney Crosby, the star of the 2010 Canadian Olympic hockey team, as a guest speaker. The event was a huge success, and the hockey team realized a \$5000 profit.

What is the main idea of this selection? Please circle your choice of answer.

- A The Twin Peaks hockey team
- B The OFSAA championship tournament
- C A fund raising event
- D Sidney Crosby





Informative resource for reading questions

AVOIDING CARELESS MISTAKES

F. AVOIDING CARELESS MISTAKES

For the multiple choice questions on the OSSLT, students are required to identify the correct answer on a separate Student Answer Sheet. A sample Answer Sheet is found on page 63 of this book. Each student's answers on such sheets will be scored by a machine.

Here are four potential sources of errors in recording multiple-choice answers:

1. Student develops answers in the test booklet, but forgets to fill in the circles on the answer sheet. It is important to remember that evaluators will not mark what is in the test booklet, except for the responses to the open-ended questions.
2. Student knows the right answer but fills in the wrong letter on the answer sheet, such as **B** instead of **C**.
3. Student records the answer on the wrong line, for example by filling in the answer for question 12 on the line for question 11.
4. Student fills in the circle incorrectly: an X or a circle around the letter will not be accepted by the scoring machine. The circle around the proper letter must be completely filled in.

Instructions from the actual test booklet:

- For your multiple-choice answers to be included in the calculation of your final results, they must be entered on this sheet.
- To indicate your answer, use a pencil or a blue or black pen to fill in the circle completely:

Like this: Not like this:

- If you fill in more than one circle for a question, the question will be scored incorrect.
- If you wish to change a multiple-choice answer, erase or cross out your answer and fill in the circle for your new answer.

Strategy to avoid careless errors:

Some students – perhaps yourself – are quite anxious when taking exams, and have a tendency occasionally to miss something important, because of either rushing or misunderstanding. A strategy such as Dr. Don's will help avoid these errors when reading the selections and answering the accompanying questions.

Dr. Don advises that you always read slowly (both selection and questions), and then read it all again.

For each section of the test, do **all** the questions, multiple choice and open-ended, *before* you begin recording your multiple choice answers for that section on the answer sheet. This will also include your guesses on the answers you don't know for sure. That way, you can keep your focus on answering the questions and not on making sure your recording is correct, until all the answers are complete. Once you are satisfied that you have made your best answers for all the questions on that particular story, then you should record all the multiple choice answers on the student answer sheet.

And finally The last task you should do before submitting your "official test" is to go back over the whole thing to double check that the Student Answer Sheet is totally filled in, and matches the answers you circled in the test booklet.



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GUIDED READING PRACTICE: MULTIPLE CHOICE

G. GUIDED READING PRACTICE

Instruction for student

Now it's time to practice answering questions from a reading selection, using multiple choice questions and answers, in the style of the official OSSLT.

It is suggested that you follow the strategy as outlined on page 8-9. If you need a refresher session, do it now.

Things you should know

The selection from *Alice in Wonderland*, beginning on the next page, is a little longer than the ones you will get both on the practice test and the official test. By being successful on a longer passage, you will have confidence when doing the shorter readings on the test. As well, Dr. Don hopes you will enjoy reading a passage from a very famous book, which seems to be intended for children, but is actually inviting adult readers to consider ideas about government and the role of authority in society.

This is for **practice -- for reading a long passage**, and for finding answers to multiple choice questions of the type that are asked on the OSSLT. Again, if you need to refer back to the strategy pages, do so (even while you are trying to answer the questions. If you're not sure of the meaning of any word, look it up. You can't do that during the test, but you can now on this "trial run."

The **questions** (after the reading selection) have been divided into two sections. The first, usually the easiest, has the answers to the questions straightforwardly embedded in the selection. However, the answers could be anywhere in the passage, so you may find yourself scanning back and forth in the passage, after you read it for the first time. It is important that you know what you are searching for; thus the importance of underlining the key words in the questions. It's always important that you take your time and don't rush. There's no time limit on the OSSLT; you don't have to hurry to find an answer.

The second section of questions requires more thought on your part. You'll need to take the information in the passage, perhaps from more than one section, and the questions require you to interpret the information in order to develop your answer. Some of these questions will be tougher than others, just like you'll find on the official test. Please take the time to think through each question and the possible answers.

Even though the official test and our practice test will not divide the questions according to simpler and more complex, this guided reading practice will help you be successful as you will know that you can handle both types.

A sample partial answer sheet is found at the end of the questions on page 22; fill it in as instructed. Answers are provided at the end of the test. In particular, the thinking process required for the more complicated questions will be included with the correct answers.

Now it's time to start. Beginning on the next page is a reading selection, set in a format similar to the official OSSLT.

To begin, read the passage at least twice and try to create a video in your head.



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Informative resource for the writing tasks

WRITING STRATEGIES: SHORT ANSWERS

Now, you add the specific "because" to the other two answers we proposed:

2. because the weather gets hot and... _____

3. because school ends and... _____

Now that you have your rough ideas completed, it's time to create your finished composition.

You can go directly to the lines in the test booklet and fill in your answer, but you might find it more useful to write the sentences in rough first. This gives you an opportunity to make changes in wording, spelling etc. before you write your final answer.

Using the KISS principle, Dr. Don suggests that your first sentence is simply the answer to the question:

My favourite month of the year is June.
Or
June is my favourite month of the year.
Or
I like many months – December, March and April – but June is my favourite.

The next two or three sentences will be the expanded "because, because."

Such as:
My birthday is in June and it is the one time my family lets me choose what we are having for dinner.

Such as:... You do one: _____



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Informative resource for the writing tasks

WRITING: NEWS REPORT

2. Writing a News Report

a) When you are asked to write a newspaper report on OSSLT, you will be given a headline and a picture. Your news report must relate directly to the picture and the headline.

b) The lead paragraph should provide information about all five "W's":
• Who? • What? • When? • Where? • Why?
And also How?

The rest of the article can provide more details about some of the W's.
(You may have heard of the television news show "W-5." That's what the title of the show means.)

c) Tell the story... pass on the information in a flowing narrative.

d) Use plain language, not fancy prose.

e) In a real newspaper report, the writer puts the best information at the beginning of the article, and less important details towards the end, because editors may reduce the size of the article, and when they do, they just delete sentences from the end of the report.

f) Also, in a real newspaper, the headline is written after the article (and the headline is written by someone who didn't write the article). In OSSLT, though, they give you the headline and a picture, and ask you to compose an article to match the headline and the picture.

Here's a challenge to help you get ready for the OSSLT questions about newspaper reports:

Use your imagination to invent the facts, and write one sentence that includes answers to all five W's (Who? What? Where? When? Why? and if possible, How?) to create the lead paragraph in a newspaper article about:

1. A fire in a restaurant where all the customers escaped without injury.

2. The victory of a team you like in an important game.



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Informative resource for the writing tasks

GUIDED WRITING PRACTICE: LONG WRITING TASKS

3. Writing a series of paragraphs

Here is a sample question:

Task: Write a minimum of three paragraphs expressing an opinion on the topic below.
Develop your main idea with supporting details (proof, facts, examples, etc.)

Topic: What is your favourite food, and explain why it is.

Here's how to use the space left for rough work (found on page 40):

1. Define your topic: (Here's Dr. Don's answer:) My favourite food is pasta.

2. Plan your introductory paragraph:

- In the introductory paragraph, you will state your answer/opinion, and tell what the next two paragraphs are going to say in a couple of sentences.
- (Dr. Don's introductory paragraph would begin like this:)
*There are many reasons why pasta is my favourite food.
My top three reasons are the following...*

The opening sentence of each paragraph should express the main idea of the paragraph (refer to page 11-12 on main idea). 2-4 sentences about that main idea will fill in the details. Follow the same procedure for each of the following paragraphs.

3. Body paragraph 1:

- Again, the opening sentence will state the main idea of the paragraph, and 2-4 more sentences will support the main idea with facts and opinions.
- Dr. Don's body paragraph 1:
Pasta is extremely easy to prepare. You need pasta (whichever kind you prefer), and you need sauce. You simply drop the required amount of pasta into boiling water, add a bit of salt, and wait for it to be finished. If you don't know how much pasta to use, the instructions on the package will give you an idea, depending on how many people you're cooking for. The package will also tell you how long to boil the pasta, because thicker types (like penne or linguini) take more time than thinner types (like spaghetti).
- Did you see the way Dr. Don stated his main idea in the first sentence, and then supported it with four more sentences of details/facts?
- Remember, you're still in the rough work section, so you can revise your work before you write out the final answer "in good."



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Evaluation

APPENDICES: : EVALUATION SCORING GUIDES

3. Scoring Guide for Long Writing Topic Development: News Report

Code	Description
Blank: 0	Nothing written or drawn in the space provided
Illegible:0	Response is illegible or irrelevant to the prompt.
Off-topic	Response is off-topic.
Code 10	The response is related to headline and/or photo, but is not presented as a news report. OR The response is a news report related to the headline and /or photo. It identifies an event, but provides no supporting details, or provides details that are unrelated to the event. There is no evidence of organization.
Code 20	The response is related to headline and/or photo, but only partly in the form of a news report. OR The response is a news report related to headline and/or photo, but the focus on an event is unclear or inconsistent. There are insufficient supporting details: too few, or repetitious. There is limited evidence of organization.
Code 30	The response is a news report related to headline and/or photo, with a clear focus on an event. There are insufficient and/or vague supporting details or the connection of the details to the event is not always clear. There is evidence of organization, but lapses distract for the overall communication.
Code 40	The response is a news report related to headline and/or photo, with a clear and consistent focus on an event. There are sufficient supporting details, but only some are specific. The organization is mechanical and any lapses do not distract from the overall communication.
Code 50	The response is a news report related to headline and/or photo, with a clear and consistent focus on an event. There are sufficient supporting details to develop the news report. The organization is logical.
Code 60	The response is a news report related to headline and/or photo, with a clear and consistent focus on an event. There are sufficient supporting details, which are thoughtfully chosen to develop the news report. The organization is coherent, demonstrating a thoughtful progression of ideas.



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Evaluation

EVALUATION: LONG WRITING TASK

Learning to Evaluate: Long Writing tasks

Now it's time to learn how your responses to Long Writing tasks are evaluated. You wrote a news report about a winter storm on pages 44-45. Tasks of that length are evaluated on a scale of 10-60, as found on the Scoring Guide about Long Writing (page 60).

On the next three pages you will see the responses of three other students to the same question. Evaluate them by using the rubric. Afterwards, you will see the evaluation and comments of OSSLT evaluators. Then you will have an opportunity to evaluate your own response.

1 Storm Shuts Down Region

Last December, London Ontario suffered at the hands of Mother Nature. There was a huge snowstorm that left the citizens buried under four feet of snow.

> Schools and workplaces had to be shut down so the city could decide what to do and how to fix the mess.

> It took me over three hours to clear my driveway, and another half hour to clear my car," says one citizen, Jason Smith.

> Another local citizen, Marg Jones, gave us her thoughts. "I woke up this morning and looked out the window. My first thought was 'the kids are going to have a snow day'. Then I got a call from my boss telling me not to come in today. My husband got the day off too. We spent the rest of the day trying to clear our driveway."

> A man who helped plough the roads gave us his opinion as well "The snow on the roads was four feet deep and heavy. It took over three days and a million dollars to get it all cleared up."

> The people of London really suffered the wrath of Mother Nature. Fortunately no one was hurt and no basements flooded.

My rating for this answer (circle one) 10 20 30 40 50 60





Our practice test mirrors the official test

Section F: Reading

Read the selection below and answer the questions that follow it.

The Zipper

The zipper, the mechanical wonder that has kept so much of our lives ‘together,’ was far from an overnight success. It took several inventors, numerous prototypes and over eighty years before a marketable product eventually became successful.

The first patent for a device using an “automatic continuous clothing closure” was submitted in 1851 by Elias Howe, the creator of the sewing machine. The sewing machine was such a success that Howe did not follow up on his clothing closure patent.

In 1893, American inventor Withcomb L. Judson received a patent for his “clasp locker.” These versions were clumsy hook and eye fasteners and met with little success when debuted at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893.

In 1904, Judson presented another variation of his invention, the “c-curity fastener,” but it too was unsuccessful.



- 1 A Swedish-born Canadian, Gideon Sundbeck, 4 was the first to design a workable device. Sundbeck patented his model in 1913 as a “hookless fastener” and then received another patent for a “separable fastener.” He also created a manufacturing machine to produce his new fastener. The patent for selling the “hookless fastener” was granted in 1923 to Swiss inventor Marin Othmar Winterhalter whose device, the “R.R.” met with great success in Europe.
- 2
- 3 The popular “zipper” name came from the 5 B.F. Goodrich company, when they decided to use Sundbeck’s fastener on a new type of rubber boot or galoshes, and renamed the device “the zipper.”



turn the page to complete this section

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Prep Practice Literacy Test

STUDENT ANSWER SHEET

For your multiple-choice answers to be included in the calculation of your final results, they must be entered on this sheet.

• To indicate your answer, use a pencil or a blue or black pen to fill in the circle completely:

Like this: Not like this:

• If you fill in more than one circle for a question, the question will be scored incorrect.

• If you wish to change a multiple-choice answer, erase or cross out your answer and fill in the circle for your new answer.

Booklet 1 Section A

- A B C D
- F G H J
- A B C D
- F G H J
- A B C D
- F G H J
- Respond in booklet.

Section B

- A B C D
- F G H J
- A B C D
- F G H J
- A B C D

Section C

- A B C D
- F G H J
- A B C D

- F G H J
- A B C D
- F G H J
- Respond in booklet.

Section D

- Respond in booklet.

Section E

- Respond in booklet.

Section F

- A B C D
- F G H J
- A B C D
- F G H J
- A B C D
- F G H J
- Respond in booklet.

Booklet 2 Section G

- Respond in booklet.

Section H

- A B C D
- F G H J
- A B C D
- F G H J

Section I

- A B C D
- F G H J
- A B C D
- F G H J
- A B C D
- F G H J
- A B C D
- F G H J
- A B C D
- F G H J

Section J

- A B C D
- F G H J
- A B C D
- F G H J
- A B C D
- F G H J
- Respond in booklet.

Section K

- Respond in booklet.

Section L

- A B C D
- F G H J
- A B C D
- F G H J
- A B C D
- F G H J

Student Name _____

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Our practice test mirrors the official test

Section I: Reading

Multiple-Choice (Record the best or most correct answer on the Student Answer Sheet.)

1 Why are the words *Edmund Fitzgerald* in italics in this narrative?

- A It indicates the title of a book.
- B It indicates the name of a ship.
- C It highlights what was spoken.
- D It points out what is important.

2 What happened first?

- F The *Fitzgerald* made radar contact with the *Avafor*.
- G The *Fitzgerald* began to list.
- H The Captain declared, "We are holding our own."
- J *Anderson's* radar located the position of the *Fitzgerald*.

3 Why was the *Fitzgerald* labelled "the pride of the American flag"?

- A She was the largest ore carrier on the Great Lakes.
- B She was built in the United States.
- C She carried important cargo.
- D She was able to sail in stormy weather.

4

- F Some survived in lifeboats.
- G They were rescued by the *Anderson*.
- H They were rescued by the *Avafor*.
- J None survived.

Which port was the destination of the *Anderson*?

5

- A Gary IN
- B Detroit MI
- C Superior WI
- D The Soo locks

What happened to the crew?

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Our practice test mirrors the official test

Section B: Writing

Multiple-Choice (Record the best or most correct answer on the Student Answer Sheet.)

- 1** Choose the sentence that uses capitalization correctly.
- A** Uncle andrew, who lives in downtown hamilton, works for U.S. steel Canada.
 - B** Uncle Andrew, who lives in downtown Hamilton, works for U.S. Steel Canada.
 - C** Uncle Andrew, Who Lives In Downtown Hamilton, Works For U.S. Steel Canada.
 - D** Uncle Andrew, who lives in Downtown hamilton, works for U.S. steel Canada.
- 2** Choose the sentence that has correct punctuation.
- F** My friend Suchin inquired, do you like Pad Thai?
 - G** My friend Suchin inquired, "Do you like Pad Thai"?"
 - H** My friend Suchin inquired, "do you like Pad Thai."
 - J** My friend Suchin inquired, "Do you like Pad Thai?"
- 3** Choose the correct option to fill in the blank.
Like her father, Severn Suzuki _____
- A** was born 32 years ago.
 - B** who works as an environmental activist.
 - C** is a well-known environmental activist.
 - D** her environmental work is well known.
- 4** Which is the best way to combine all the information in the following sentences?
Dwayne is a striker.
He was traded to another soccer team.
He played for TFC.
- F** Since Dwayne was traded to another soccer team, he is a happy striker.
 - G** Dwayne, a striker for TFC, was traded to another soccer team.
 - H** Dwayne played for TFC before he was traded to another soccer team.
 - J** When TFC striker Dwayne was traded to another soccer team.
- 5** Choose the sentence that does not belong in the following paragraph.
- (1) Photographs are everywhere — in magazines, family albums, advertisements, newspapers, art galleries, etc. (2) Hence, photography is a major force in our lives. (3) Video games like Mortal Kombat take too much time out of students' lives. (4) Much of what we know about ourselves, our immediate communities, and our world is based on what a camera has captured. (5) Photography is a wonderful means of communication about the world around us as the eye of the camera never fails to capture 'the feeling' of what is happening.
- A** Sentence 2
 - B** Sentence 3
 - C** Sentence 4
 - D** Sentence 5





Our practice test mirrors the official test

Section G: Writing

Writing a Series of paragraphs

1 **Task:** Write a minimum of three paragraphs expressing an opinion on the topic below.
Develop your main idea with supporting details (proof, facts, examples, etc.).

Purpose and

Audience: An adult who is interested in your opinion.

Length: The lined space provided for your written work indicates the approximate length of the writing expected.

Topic: Teenagers should be allowed to vote once they turn 16.

Write your series of paragraphs on the lines provided on the following two pages.

Rough Notes

Use the space below for rough notes. Nothing you write in this space will be scored.