



Planning and Preparation Guide

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test

This guide contains information to help you prepare your students for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT).

Please visit our Web site, www.eqao.com, to access other valuable support documents, including the following:

- a sample test, with examples of the Question and Answer booklets;
- previously administered tests, with Student Answer Keys and scoring rubrics and
- the OSSLT Framework.

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Introduction

What is the OSSLT?

The OSSLT is a provincial test of literacy (reading and writing) skills students have acquired by Grade 10. It is based on the literacy skills expected in *The Ontario Curriculum* across all subject areas up to the end of Grade 9.

Administration Date	March 26, 2015
Test Materials	four test booklets: two Question Booklets and two corresponding Answer Booklets
Duration	2.5 hours of testing time in total
Results	an Individual Student Report indicating whether the student was successful or unsuccessful

Reading		Writing
Reading selections:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• information paragraph (225 to 250 words)• news report (225 to 250 words)• dialogue (225 to 250 words)• real-life narrative (550 to 600 words)• graphic text (fewer than 150 words)	Types of writing tasks and questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• long-writing tasks<ul style="list-style-type: none">– news report (one page)– series of paragraphs expressing an opinion (two pages)• two short-writing tasks (six lines each)• multiple-choice questions<ul style="list-style-type: none">– developing a main idea with supporting details– organization of ideas– language conventions
Types of questions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• multiple-choice• open-response (six lines each)	

Reading

For the OSSLT, reading is defined as the process through which the reader makes meaning of a variety of written texts as reflected in the expectations in *The Ontario Curriculum* across all subjects up to the end of Grade 9. The OSSLT's informational, narrative and graphic reading selections focus on three reading skills:

- understanding explicitly (directly) stated ideas and information;
- understanding implicitly (indirectly) stated ideas and information and
- making connections between information and ideas in a reading selection and personal knowledge and experience.

Reading selections

- **information paragraph:** presents ideas and information on a topic (Example 1)
- **news report:** presents information in the form of a news story (Example 2)
- **dialogue:** presents a conversation between two or more people (Example 3)
- **real-life narrative:** presents an account of a significant time in an individual's life (Example 4)
- **graphic text:** presents ideas and information with the help of graphic features, such as diagrams, photographs, drawings, sketches, patterns, timetables, maps, charts or tables (Example 5)

Types of questions

- **multiple-choice**

Each reading text is followed by a number of multiple-choice questions. Students select the best or most correct answer from a list of four options.

Note: In this guide, correct answers to multiple-choice questions are indicated by an asterisk.

- **written answers**

The information paragraph, news report and dialogue are followed by one or two open-response questions. Students construct a response based on the reading selection. The length of student responses should be approximately six lines.

Note: In this guide, rubrics are not available. However, Item-Specific Rubrics and Sample Student Responses with Annotations from previously administered tests are available on the EQAO Web site under "Educator Resources."

Examples of Selections and Questions

Example I

Information Paragraph

Read the selection below and answer the questions in the *Answer Booklet*.

When the Ontario government lifted a ban on outdoor clotheslines in April 2008, people wondered why such a ban had ever existed. The controversy over clotheslines reflects conflicting priorities. Drying laundry in the sun and the breeze was common in North America until the boom in owning household appliances and the construction of suburban housing developments in the 1950s and 1960s. At the time, many builders and municipal councils established rules to ensure that new neighbourhoods maintained a uniform and attractive look. The restrictions could relate to paint colour, fences and clotheslines. Older neighbourhoods, built at a time when hanging clothes outside was a necessity, generally escaped similar restrictions. Although clotheslines were often considered old-fashioned and unsightly, more recently, they have become associated with eco-awareness and energy conservation. Electric-dryer use consumes 6% of Ontario's power per year and emits 700 000 tonnes of greenhouse gases. Five electric dryers produce about the same amount of emissions in one year as an average-sized car. Environmentalists are applauding the government's action. Ontario's chief conservation officer said: "We're asking people to adopt a culture of conservation in everything they do. This is small but important." I'm not requiring everyone to use [clotheslines]. But at least let people have that right." Clotheslines are symbolic of a shift in society's concerns. As one clothesline activist said, "If we can't solve a simple thing like hanging two hooks in the backyard, what chance do we have of solving our bigger energy crisis?"



Written for EQAO.

Provide your answers in the **Answer Booklet**.

Multiple-Choice Questions

- 1** Why did there used to be a ban on clotheslines?
- A to increase energy conservation
B to sell more household appliances
C to promote the construction of suburban housing
D to help neighbourhoods look consistently appealing *
- 2** What is the purpose of the comma in line 7?
- F to separate items in a list *
G to introduce a comparison
H to introduce a clarification
J to separate two main ideas
- 3** What does the use of the word “escaped” (line 9) suggest about the writer’s opinion regarding clothesline restrictions?
- A They were illegal.
B They were traditional.
C They were appropriate.
D They were unreasonable. *
- 4** How are lines 9–11 organized?
- F as cause and effect
G through a comparison *
H from general to specific
J as a problem and solution
- 5** What is one hoped-for effect of the current “shift in society’s concerns” (line 17)?
- A a decrease in clotheslines
B a decrease in energy consumption *
C an increase in neighbourhood uniformity
D an increase in household-appliance ownership
- 6** Why is the question in lines 18–19 an effective conclusion to this selection?
- F It shows that clotheslines cannot help solve an energy crisis.
G It is asking the reader to conserve energy by using a clothesline.
H It suggests that the bigger energy crisis needs to be resolved first.
J It connects small-scale and large-scale actions to conserve energy. *

Open-Response Question

- 7** State a main idea of this selection and provide one specific detail from the selection that supports it.

Example 2

News Report

Read the selection below and answer the questions in the *Answer Booklet*.

This High School Starts at 10 a.m.

In September 2009, a Toronto high school started classes an hour later than usual as part of a project to determine if extra sleep improves student attendance and grades.

Research shows teens' brains are wired to go to bed late and get up late. At puberty, the chemical that induces sleep is secreted around 11 p.m. and shuts off around 8 a.m. Studies have shown that about three-quarters of teens don't get their necessary 8.5–9 hours of sleep a night.

The school found that punctuality, attendance, grades and credits earned were the worst in first-period classes, which started at 8:50 a.m. Teachers said many students came to class too tired to learn.

Some schools that have experimented with a later schedule report less student depression, fewer dropouts, better test scores and higher grades.

1

2

3

4

The principal has heard positive reviews from staff and students and said enrolment is up because of the new hours. He knows critics will say the new timetable coddles lazy teens and doesn't reflect the real world, but he points out that not everyone starts work at 9 a.m. "There's a biological need for it," he says.

The time change has had some disadvantages. With the lunch period now an hour later, students get hungry.

One student likes the change but is no longer able to pick up a younger sibling from school. "It's less convenient," she says.

However, most agree with 16-year-old Tiffany. "I like it—I feel more rested."

5

6

7

8



Adapted from the article "This high school starts at 10 a.m." by Kristin Rushowy, published in the *Toronto Star*, September 14, 2009. Reprinted with permission—Torstar Syndication Services.

Provide your answers in the **Answer Booklet**.

Multiple-Choice Questions

- 1** What does the principal mean by “it” in paragraph 5?
- A getting up later *
B going to sleep earlier
C eating more nutritiously
D eating earlier in the day
- 2** Which word is closest in meaning to “coddles” as used in paragraph 5?
- F ignores
G interests
H pampers *
J punishes
- 3** What has been one result of the timetable change at this Toronto high school?
- A higher grades
B more credits earned
C increased enrolment *
D improved test scores
- 4** Which paragraphs present the problem and its solution?
- F paragraphs 1 and 2
G paragraphs 3 and 4 *
H paragraphs 4 and 5
J paragraphs 6 and 7
- 5** Based on the selection, which of the following most likely had the greatest influence on the principal’s decision to change the start time?
- A requests from school staff
B a desire to please students
C research about brain chemistry *
D a need to prepare teens for the real world

Open-Response Question

- 6** What does the schedule change show is a priority for the staff at this school? Use specific details from the selection to support your answer.

Example 3

Dialogue

Read the selection below and answer the questions in the *Answer Booklet*.

“Dinner,” Mom called. 1

Dad came up the stairs from the store and into our family’s apartment. 2

“Heard the news?” he asked. Mom, my older sister Ruth and I shook our heads. “The Lions Club has finally raised enough money to go ahead with the new community centre.” 3

As a teenage boy in the 1950s, I thought my small hometown in Northern Ontario didn’t measure up to its neighbours. Where was our civic initiative? Take Kapuskasing: it had an airport, a pool, an arena. Meanwhile, we shovelled snow 10 times every hockey game and fretted every spring that the ice would take out the old wooden bridge. The least our mayor could do was pave our streets. 4

“What will it be used for?” I asked. 5

“Sports mostly,” Dad said. Ruth moaned. “It’s going to have an indoor hockey rink, dressing rooms, a coffee shop and space for badminton, wedding receptions—things like that.” 6

“An *indoor* rink? At last!” I cried. 7

“The lumber companies will donate materials, and people will contribute their labour. As for the operating expenses, they’ll come out of taxes. So you see, we’re all involved.” 8

“Me too?” I asked. 9

Dad nodded. “Hired tradesmen will do most of the building. But the mayor is declaring three civic holidays so we can all pitch in.” 10



“Goody, goody,” Ruth said sarcastically, rolling her eyes. 11

“When are we going to start?” I asked eagerly, swirling the gravy into the potatoes with my fork until they looked like a tropical hurricane. 12

“Soon as the snow melts.” 13

Adapted from an excerpt taken from the book *Run of the Town* by Terrence Rundle West, published by the General Store Publishing House, page 97. Reprinted with permission.

Provide your answers in the *Answer Booklet*.

Multiple-Choice Questions

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1 Which word is closest in meaning to “fretted” as used in paragraph 4?</p> <p>A hoped
B worried *
C expected
D complained</p> | <p>4 Which event took place before the family’s dinner-table conversation?</p> <p>F Kapuskasing built an arena. *
G Tradesmen agreed to donate their time.
H The wooden bridge was replaced after a washout.
J Taxes were raised to cover the new operating costs.</p> |
| <p>2 What is the function of the colon in paragraph 4?</p> <p>F to indicate a change in topic
G to separate items in a series
H to separate two different ideas
J to join a topic and an explanation*</p> | <p>5 What is the purpose of this reading selection?</p> <p>A to compare time periods
B to describe a northern town
C to entertain with an anecdote *
D to explain community decision making</p> |
| <p>3 What is the purpose of the mayor’s declaration (paragraph 10)?</p> <p>A to fundraise for the construction project
B to provide an opportunity for participation *
C to ask for the donation of building materials
D to allow everyone access to the new community centre</p> | |

Open-Response Questions

- 6** How do the narrator and Ruth differ in their reactions to the new community centre? Use specific details from the selection to support your answer.
- 7** How is the town encouraging a sense of belonging? Use specific details from the selection to explain your answer.

Example 4

Real-Life Narrative

Read the selection below and answer the questions in the *Answer Booklet*.

K'naan Goes Global



Canada had already shown its love for him—he had won a Juno and been nominated for the Polaris Music Prize, and the nation's critics had praised both of his albums. But in March 2010, as the buzz around the release of his charity single grew, Toronto rapper K'naan was about to be heard around the world. This *Dusty Foot Philosopher* (that's the title of his Juno-winning 2006 album) piqued interest with his incredible back story.

K'naan's name means "traveller" in Somali, and his music has helped him live up to it. K'naan was born in Mogadishu, Somalia. His birth name was Keinan Warsame. His family fled the Somali civil war in 1991. He moved to New York before he settled with relatives in Rexdale, Ontario.

Music is part of his family's story. His aunt, Magool, was a well-known singer in Somalia, and he's the grandson of famed Somali poet Haji Mohamed. K'naan has continued that tradition, but put his own spin on it. The 31-year-old father of two has created a mix of rap, hip hop, spoken word and rock that transcends the world music category.

K'naan had a feeling from the start that his song "Wavin' Flag" was special. "I wrote the first melody and hook and recorded it maybe two or three years ago. Then I didn't play it for anyone or release it," he says. "Then I performed it for two years, and finally I recorded it the way I wanted to record it. It's a fragile thing to record a song that you feel great about, because you know what it is in your head, and you don't want to ruin it." "Wavin' Flag" became a standout on the album *Troubadour*, released in February 2009.

Later, during the 2010 Olympics, more than 50 Canadian artists gathered in Vancouver and re-recorded the anthem as a charity single, with proceeds going to relief efforts in Haiti after its devastating earthquake. "I guess we're all trying to somehow make sense of this world and the way it is, and why things happen to places and not other places. I think in those times when we are questioning those things, we want to rid ourselves of the sadness, we want to do something. I wanted to do my part." Later, the song was remixed and selected as the official song of soccer's 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

Read the selection below and answer the questions in the *Answer Booklet*.

While K'naan was pleased about the choice of his song for both Haiti and the World Cup,⁶ it raised a question: Did he fear becoming a one-hit wonder? “I guess I would be...If I really didn’t feel like I made good songs to listen to. If I didn’t have ‘Take a Minute,’ or ‘Fatima’ or other songs that span years and years of my life...But I think when people hear ‘Wavin’ Flag,’ people are intelligent enough to know, if someone writes a song like that, there might be something more,” he says.

K'naan's “strong past” and affable demeanour have contributed to his success, muses Tony “Master T” Young, a long-time hip-hop booster and former MuchMusic VJ.⁷ Another advantage is that K'naan's music and his vision aren't constrained by borders: “He's being positive and being global,” says Young.

Indeed, the Canadian K'naan is a citizen of the world, with a song for the world.⁸



Adapted from the article “Soft-spoken Somali Canadian, Knaan, about to go global” by Raju Mudhar, published in the *Toronto Star*, March 16, 2010. Reprinted with permission—Torstar Syndication Services. Photos: © Christian Lapid/The Canadian Press and Pawell Dwulit/The Canadian Press.

Real-Life Narrative

Provide your answers in the *Answer Booklet*.

Multiple-Choice Questions

- 1** Which of the following is K'naan's birthplace?
- A Haiti
B Canada
C Somalia *
D South Africa
- 2** Which word is closest in meaning to "piqued" as used in paragraph 1?
- F selected
G demanded
H stimulated *
J discouraged
- 3** What is the function of the dash in paragraph 1?
- A to show emphasis
B to combine two ideas
C to indicate a change of topic
D to link an idea and an example *
- 4** Why was the song "Wavin' Flag" first recorded?
- F to celebrate the World Cup
G to aid in Haitian disaster relief
H to be part of an Olympic ceremony
J to be included on the album *Troubadour* *
- 5** How is the information in paragraphs 4 and 5 organized?
- A according to time *
B problem and solution
C by geographical region
D from most to least important
- 6** What do K'naan's words in paragraph 6 show about him?
- F He is curious.
G He is confident. *
H He is concerned.
J He is courageous.
- 7** How has K'naan "lived up to" his name?
- A His family is artistic.
B His songs are popular worldwide.
C He has won international awards.
D He has performed in many places. *
- 8** What event happened first?
- F K'naan won a Juno. *
G *Troubadour* was released.
H Musicians raised money for Haitian relief.
J "Wavin' Flag" became the World Cup song.
- 9** Which paragraph shows K'naan acting as a global citizen?
- A 1
B 4
C 5 *
D 6

Example 5

Graphic Text

Read the selection below and answer the questions in the *Answer Booklet*.

The National Archives is a treasure house of the memory of Canada. We care for and share millions of documents of all kinds —films, maps, diaries, treaties, journals, art, government records, photographs, sound recordings and more. Many are of unique value and exceptional beauty. Some are centuries old. All reveal how we have lived in this place called Canada and enable Canadians to better understand the story of their country and of their fellow citizens.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES of CANADA

Digital Collections

LIVING MEMORY

GAMES INTRO

Explore the gifts of our past - they are the prelude to our future.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION | NEW | SITE MAP | SEARCH | FEEDBACK

Top Ten:
In a recent survey, Canadians were asked to choose the top ten defining moments in Canadian history. The Archives holds documents relating to each one. Can you match the survey result?

Puzzles:
Unscramble puzzles using historical images.

Pop Quiz:
Test your knowledge.

Map Trap:
Match the event and location.

Adapted from the Web site www.archives.ca/08/08_e.html. Reproduced with permission of the National Archives of Canada.

Graphic Text

Provide your answers in the *Answer Booklet*.

Multiple-Choice Questions

- 1** What would you click on if you wanted to know how this Web site is organized?
- A Site Map *
B Welcome
C Contact Us
D Preservation
- 2** What conclusion can you draw from the box labelled “Français”?
- F It is about Quebec.
G The site is bilingual. *
H The site is about France.
J It is available only in Ontario and Quebec.
- 3** Which of these pages could you go to from the “GAMES” page?
- A War
B Feedback *
C Genealogy
D Publications
- 4** Which part of the site would give information about how the National Archives keeps important old newspapers in good condition?
- F Preservation *
G Publications
H Living Memory
J Digital Collections
- 5** How has technology contributed to Canadians’ access to historical documents?
- A It has made Canadian history come alive.
B It has made historical documents available to more Canadians. *
C It has provided documents to the National Archives of Canada.
D It has enabled the government to provide people with their genealogy on request.
- 6** The information on the three screens is organized from
- F past to present.
G oldest to newest.
H present to future.
J general to specific. *

Writing

For the OSSLT, writing is defined as a constructive process of communicating in the forms in which students are expected to write according to the expectations in *The Ontario Curriculum* across all subjects up to the end of Grade 9.

Through a combination of short- and long-writing tasks, the OSSLT focuses on three writing skills:

- developing a main idea with sufficient supporting details;
- organizing information and ideas in a coherent manner and
- using conventions (syntax, spelling, grammar, punctuation) in a manner that does not distract from clear communication.

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

Types of questions

There are three types of writing questions on the OSSLT: long-writing tasks, short-writing tasks and multiple-choice questions.

A. Long-writing tasks

There are two long-writing tasks: a news report and a series of paragraphs expressing an opinion.

I. News report

- Students are required to write a news report based on the picture and headline provided. Students must find a link between the headline and the photograph that could be used as an event for a report that would appear in a newspaper. Students are given one lined page for their written work.
- A news report usually answers the questions who, what, where, when, why and how.

Note: Students should not write an advertisement, a television or radio report, a dialogue or a report about an event that will take place in the future. They should write about an event that has occurred in the past in order to inform readers about the event.

Students must make sure that

- the response is related to the picture and headline;
- the response contains sufficient and specific information and facts related to the event;
- the response is coherent and organized;
- the response is written in the third person with a reportorial tone and
- the grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure are correct.

News report

Write your answers in the *Answer Booklet*.

Students Win Competition



1 Task:

Write a **news report** in the *Answer Booklet* based on the headline and picture above.

- You will have to make up the facts and information to answer some or all of the following questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
- You must relate your news report to **both** the headline **and** the picture.

Purpose and Audience:

to report on an event for the readers of a newspaper

Length:

The lined space provided in the *Answer Booklet* for your written work indicates the approximate length of the writing expected.

2. A series of paragraphs expressing an opinion

- The topic will be current and familiar to teenagers.
- The student must write a minimum of, but is not limited to, three paragraphs, which include an introduction, development (may include more than one paragraph) and a conclusion. Students are given two lined pages for their written work.
- The student must express an opinion and support it with details. The opinion must be stated clearly at the beginning or end of the response.
- The student must adequately support the opinion with reasons, examples or facts.

Students must make sure that

- the opinion is clearly stated;
- they have provided enough specific detail to support it;
- the response is coherent and organized and
- the grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure are correct.

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.).

Audience:

an adult who is interested in your opinion

Length:

The lined space provided in the *Answer Booklet* for your written work indicates the approximate length of the writing expected.

Topic:

Is it important for teenagers to pay attention to world news?

B. Short-writing tasks

These tasks will give students the opportunity to demonstrate their writing skills using their knowledge and personal experience. Responses must be written in complete sentences. Students are given six lines for their response.

Example

Short Writing Task

- 6** What was your favourite game as a child? Explain why you liked it.

ROUGH NOTES

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

Note: In this guide, rubrics are not available. However, Rubrics and Sample Student Responses with Annotations from previously administered tests are available on the EQAO Web site under “Educator Resources.”

C. Multiple-choice questions (writing)

The multiple-choice questions for writing deal with the three writing skills.

Note: In this guide, correct answers to multiple-choice questions are indicated by an asterisk.

Example

- 1** Choose the sentence that does **not** belong in the paragraph.
- (1) Wayne Gretzky's early career foretells what an amazing hockey player he was to become. (2) At ten, while playing in a league with boys four years older, he scored 378 goals in 85 games. (3) That was 238 more goals than the boy who came second. (4) At 18, Gretzky scored 46 goals as an Edmonton Oiler and won the National Hockey League Rookie of the Year award. (5) The Wayne Gretzky Foundation Golf Classic raises over \$120 000 a year for youth in sports.

- A Sentence 2
- B Sentence 3
- C Sentence 4
- D Sentence 5*

- 2** Which is the best way to combine all the information in the following sentences?

Anna's assignment is due tomorrow.

She has to work tonight.

She is feeling rushed.

- F Anna's assignment is due tomorrow because she is rushing to work tonight.
- G Anna is feeling rushed because she has to work tonight and her assignment is due tomorrow. *
- H Since Anna's assignment is due tomorrow and she has to work tonight and she is feeling rushed.
- J Although Anna has to work tonight and her assignment is due tomorrow because she is feeling rushed.

Example

- 3** Choose the sentence that uses capitalization correctly.

- A My friend from manitoba, whose name is ari, earns money by delivering the *Winnipeg herald*.
- B My friend from Manitoba, whose name is Ari, earns money by delivering the *Winnipeg herald*.
- C My friend from manitoba, whose name is Ari, earns money by delivering the *Winnipeg Herald*.
- D My friend from Manitoba, whose name is Ari, earns money by delivering the *Winnipeg Herald*. *

- 4** Choose the correct option to fill in the blank.

Like her mother, the artist Manuela Sanchez

- F painted portraits to support her family. *
- G her paintings of portraits supported her family.
- H and also painted portraits to support her family.
- J whose famous portraits were painted to support her family.

Teachers' Frequently Asked Questions

How does the OSSLT benefit teachers?

The OSSLT gives teachers valuable information about strengths and areas for improvement in their students' learning. In addition, many teachers and principals across Ontario are actively involved in test development and scoring. These experiences provide excellent professional development in curriculum and assessment and give teachers and principals opportunities to share assessment strategies and practices with colleagues.

What is the OSSLT based on?

The OSSLT is based on the expectations for literacy (reading and writing) across all subjects in *The Ontario Curriculum* up to the end of Grade 9. For more information, please refer to the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test Framework, posted on the EQAO Web site, www.eqao.com.

How does EQAO report results from the OSSLT?

EQAO reports on student achievement at the individual, school, board and provincial levels. Each student who participates in the OSSLT will receive an Individual Student Report that indicates whether he or she has successfully completed the OSSLT.

Schools and boards will also receive a report that provides aggregated achievement results, aggregated contextual data about students' literacy preferences and practices and provincial results.

How do boards and schools use the OSSLT results?

Boards use the results to analyze their achievement data in terms of the provincial results, and schools use the results to analyze their achievement data in terms of both provincial and board data. School boards and schools can use this approach to determine relative strengths and areas for improvement in their students' achievement and to address board- and school-level remediation efforts.

Who is required to write the OSSLT?

Students who began Grade 9 during the 2000–2001 school year and those who began it thereafter are required to write the OSSLT, according to *Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements* (2011). These students (and any others who are placed in one of these cohorts) are required to complete the test or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) successfully in order to earn their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). Students normally participate in the test when they are in Grade 10. Students who do not participate in the OSSLT in the year following the year in which they entered Grade 9 require either a deferral or an exemption.

Mature students may enrol directly in the OSSLC without first attempting the OSSLT. A mature student is a student who

- is at least 18 years of age on or before December 31 of the school year in which he or she registers in an Ontario secondary school program;
- was not enrolled as a regular day-school student for a period of at least one school year immediately preceding his or her registration in a secondary program and
- is enrolled in a secondary program for the purpose of obtaining an OSSD.

Which students can be deferred and exempted?

If a student is working toward an OSSD but either has not yet acquired a level of proficiency in English advanced enough to complete the OSSLT successfully or is unable to write the test because of illness, injury or other extenuating circumstances, the principal may grant a deferral for the current year in accordance with the EQAO deferral policy. The student will need to complete the OSSLT or the OSSLC successfully in order to earn an OSSD.

Students who have an Individual Education Plan that indicates that they are not working toward an OSSD may be exempted from writing the OSSLT. Exemptions must be documented according to EQAO's administration guide.

Is it possible for a school to modify the dates for administering the OSSLT?

No. To protect the security of test materials and to ensure the validity and reliability of the results, all students across the province must write the OSSLT at the same time. This policy applies to schools in the publicly funded system and to independent schools, including First Nations schools. Teachers and principals who are responsible for administering the OSSLT must follow this policy.

Why can't staff photocopy test materials? Wouldn't it be helpful for teachers to read the test so they can better support and prepare students?

The OSSLT is a secure test and confidentiality must be ensured. Field-test items are embedded in the OSSLT to be tested for future use. Teachers are encouraged to use the materials on the EQAO Web site, www.eqao.com, to support and prepare students.

Why are there field-test items on the OSSLT, and how do they affect student results?

Field testing ensures the quality of current and future test items and helps to ensure year-to-year comparability. EQAO embeds field-test items in every student's booklets each year. No student is disadvantaged by the placement of these items in the OSSLT. The scores on the field-test items are not included in the student's result. The time allocated to write the test has been calculated to include field-test items.

Students' Frequently Asked Questions

Who has to take the OSSLT?

If you entered Grade 9 in September 2000 or later and are working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma, you must write the OSSLT to graduate. This applies to all students in publicly funded schools and inspected private schools.

Mature students may enrol directly in the OSSLC without first attempting the OSSLT.

A mature student is a student who

- is at least 18 years of age on or before December 31 of the school year in which he or she registers in an Ontario secondary school program;
- was not enrolled as a regular day-school student for a period of at least one school year immediately preceding his or her registration in a secondary program and
- is enrolled in a secondary program for the purpose of obtaining an OSSD.

How long will it take me to write the test?

The allotted time for each of the two sessions is one hour and 15 minutes. It is very important that you manage your time to complete the entire test.

Is the test difficult?

The OSSLT is designed to reflect the requirements of *The Ontario Curriculum*. The test assesses literacy (reading and writing) skills students are expected to have acquired by the end of Grade 9.

Who marks the OSSLT?

The test is scored by qualified individuals who have received special training for this purpose.

Does my name appear anywhere?

Written responses are identified only by a number. Furthermore, the booklets from different schools and different school boards are all mixed up when they are distributed for scoring.

How will I receive my results?

You will receive an Individual Student Report indicating whether or not you have passed the OSSLT.

What happens if I do not pass the OSSLT?

You can take the test again the following year or you can talk to your parents or guardians and your school principal and/or teacher about taking the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) instead of retaking the test.

What is the OSSLC?

The OSSLC is another way of meeting the literacy graduation requirement.

Principals have the discretion to allow a student to enrol in the OSSLC before he or she has had a second opportunity to take the OSSLT if the principal determines that it is in the best educational interests of the student (*Ministry of Education Policy/Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements* [2011]).

What happens if I leave questions blank?

You'll get a score of zero for these questions.

**Education Quality and
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