

Category	Clear Competence (UWR met)	Developing Competence (2nd tier required)	Limited Competence (1st tier required)
Thesis	Thesis gives adequate focus to writer's ideas. Thesis may be implied but is never in doubt.	Thesis present, but may be weak, awkwardly stated, or in an ineffective position.	Thesis may be missing, inadequate, or not entirely clear resulting in confusion for the reader.
Task	The writer responds to the task although some minor aspects may be slighted.	The writer may significantly slight some aspect(s) of the writing task.	The writer may distort or neglect some aspect(s) of the task.
Organization & Coherence	Essay has clear structure, uses a range of transitions and other coherence devices, and is generally easy to follow.	Essay has structure, which may be formulaic at times, may have some transitions and other coherence devices, but may be hard to follow at times.	Essay structure may be overly simplistic or not apparent, may have a very limited number of transitions and other coherence devices, and/or may be hard to follow.
Development	Ideas and evidence support thesis.	Ideas and evidence may not always support thesis.	Ideas and evidence may not be connected to the thesis.
	Arguments are supported with a variety of development strategies.	Arguments may be supported inconsistently; essay may employ a limited number of development strategies.	Arguments may lack support and adequate development; essay may employ very limited number of development strategies with little variation.
Technical Command	The writer's diction contains generally acceptable academic language.	The writer's diction contains some non-academic or colloquial words and phrases that weaken the essay.	The writer's diction contains numerous non-academic and colloquial words or phrases, which distract the reader.
	Language and mechanics generally controlled. A few errors in grammar and/or mechanics may be present, but are of the kind easily remedied.	Language and mechanics moderately controlled. Some errors in grammar and mechanics may be evident, may sometimes be distracting, or may occasionally interfere with comprehension and meaning.	Language and mechanics may be poorly controlled. Vocabulary may be noticeably limited. Errors in grammar and mechanics may be repeatedly evident, highly distracting, or regularly interfere with comprehension and meaning.
	Sentence types are varied.	Sentences may be constructed with limited number of sentence types.	Simple sentences may dominate essay.

WST Essay Scoring Guide

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE READER: The Writing Skills Test (WST) is intended to assess a student's ability to develop an understandable, coherent essay in a timed administration (ninety minutes). As you evaluate these essays, remember that you are reading holistically, not judging the writer's opinions, counting errors, or assessing beauty of style. Remember, too, that repeated mistakes of one type (such as missing articles) should be considered one problem, not a multitude of errors, unless they significantly affect or obstruct comprehensibility.

In these essays, writers are asked to demonstrate their ability to provide a developed presentation of their thoughts through logical reasoning and concrete examples. Writers are also asked to demonstrate competence in following the conventions of written English by structuring their presentations coherently and using appropriate syntax and vocabulary. As you decide on a score, consider the essay's dominant characteristics and overall comprehensibility.

Finally, remember that readers should not penalize ESL writers excessively for slight shifts in idiom, problems with articles, confusion over prepositions, and *occasional* misuse of verb tense and verb forms, so long as such features do not obscure meaning.