



GET TO KNOW...

CONSTRUCTED RESPONSE



Motivating Students to Write

When introducing CR to your class, begin with low-impact exercises that isolate the skills involved. Have students reading text together, then discussing the CR prompt. This low-stress practice in analysis allows students to think without the added stressor of writing. Here is a sample progression of working with Constructed Response in your classroom.

- **Demonstrate how you, as the instructor, would read, approach, write, and check the response to your CR. (I do)**
- **Students work together as a group or in pairs to talk through the same process of reading, planning, writing, and checking the response. Teacher mentors groups and provides feedback. You may want to provide sentence frames in this stage. (We do)**
- **Students work in pairs to practice creating a written response to a CR prompt. Teacher mentors pairs and provides immediate feedback.**
- **Student practices independently and receives feedback on both process and content. (You do)**

If students are struggling with how to tackle the prompt, a simple acronym helps enormously. One of the most common for this type of writing is RACE (Restate, Answer, Cite, Explain). This can become a manageable way of breaking down the task into smaller parts. [See this link for a classroom-ready presentation about using RACE.](#)



What is Constructed Response?

An opportunity for students to engage in writing that demonstrates analysis or evaluation skills in a brief and concise response. It may require thorough analysis of a text, showing and explaining complete work, or demonstrating complete knowledge of a topic.

Why is Constructed Response Important?

Whether we're considering CRs on a State Assessment or outside that context, CR writing allows students to demonstrate their understanding of a topic with a specific set of written skills. Your content will determine the kind of CR that is most appropriate. Regardless, the writing skill involved requires specific scaffolding and support to help students find success in this type of writing.

Students don't always need more instruction.

Sometimes they just need more support.



Building a Constructed Response Prompt

Begin with the end in mind. What knowledge do you want students to demonstrate in their CR? That should be the basis for developing a CR prompt. Then, build the prompt around that topic.



With the topic in mind, build a prompt that will clearly flesh out the content for which you're seeking student understanding. Write a prompt. Then try to answer it. You'll quickly see whether it's a successful prompt or not. Thinking about it from the lens of the writer is one of the best ways to assess the prompt itself.



Grading a Constructed Response

Providing feedback through the stages of the writing process for Constructed Response is more important than providing a grade. The process (and ongoing support along the way) will aid students in building confidence in their process so they are equipped to tackle any content in a Constructed Response.

Sample Constructed Response Prompts (2021 Item Sampler)

From Keystone
Literature:

Analyze the relationship between short-term goals and long-term goals. Use information from the passage to support your analysis.



Read the sentence from the passage.

“She had become really quite expert, she thought, at listening as though she didn’t listen, at sitting in other people’s lives just for a minute while they talked round her.”

Analyze the significance of the sentence to the passage. Use information from the passage to support your analysis.



From Keystone
Biology:

A group of students is given a sample of an unknown substance. The students are asked to gather evidence to determine whether the substance is living or nonliving. The students take a small sample of the substance and observe it using a microscope.

Part A: Describe two characteristics of the substance that could be observed to indicate whether it is living or nonliving.

Characteristic 1: _____

Characteristic 2: _____

Part B: Describe an investigation that could be performed to classify the substance as living or nonliving.



From Keystone
Algebra:

Small baskets of tomatoes are sold at a vegetable stand for \$3 per basket. Large baskets of tomatoes are sold at the stand for \$5 per basket. Only whole numbers of baskets may be purchased.

A customer purchases a total of 8 baskets of tomatoes and pays \$36.

- A.** Write and solve a system of equations that models the number of small baskets (x) and the number of large baskets (y) that the customer purchases. Show or explain all your work.

Another customer claims that he can purchase a total of 10 baskets of tomatoes and pay \$45.

- B.** Use a system of equations that describes this other customer’s purchase to explain why the claim is incorrect.