

## How Can I Prepare?

- Review and practice your language and writing skills.
- Get test-taking tips from the TASC test website:  
<http://www.tasctest.com/blog.html>
- Find a High School Equivalency Preparation Program at:  
[http://www.acces.nysed.gov/ged/nys\\_map/countiesprep.html](http://www.acces.nysed.gov/ged/nys_map/countiesprep.html)
- Find a TASC Test Center at:  
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**New York State  
Education  
Department**



TEST  
ASSESSING  
SECONDARY  
COMPLETION™

# The New York State High School Equivalency Test

## Examinee Guide to the TASC Writing Subtest



This guide provides an overview of the **TASC Writing Subtest** to help you prepare for the exam. To succeed on the Writing Subtest, you must:

- Write an informative or argumentative essay to support a claim, using evidence from provided text.
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard written English through multiple-choice questions by:
  - ⇒ punctuating correctly
  - ⇒ using parallel structure
  - ⇒ combining sentences
  - ⇒ providing a concluding statement
  - ⇒ using various types of phrases to convey specific meaning
  - ⇒ revising sentences to add variety and interest
  - ⇒ using verbs in the active and passive voice to achieve a particular effect.



### About the TASC Writing Subtest

The TASC Writing Subtest is one of the five subject area tests (Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies) required for the High School Equivalency Diploma. The test is a rigorous assessment that measures national college and career readiness standards, including the Common Core. The TASC test is available in paper-based or computer-based formats. When you take the test, you may find the questions difficult but do not get discouraged. Do your best to answer all of the questions.

### How the Writing Subtest is Designed

You are given 105 minutes for the TASC Writing Subtest. The test is in two parts, with no break between parts. The timing is continuous, so you must budget your time wisely.

Part I is 60 minutes and has 52 multiple-choice and constructed-response (short answer) questions. These questions are on editing and revising sentences. For those who take the computer-based test, there are also technology-enhanced (TE) questions. TE questions require you to use the computer mouse to select one object at a time and drag and drop it in front, between, or behind the other objects. You can also select the correct answer from the drop-down menu or menus that may include words, phrases, sentences, symbols, or punctuation.

Part II of the subtest is 45 minutes long, and is an essay. You must write either an informative or argumentative essay, based on two short texts that you will read. You will not be given a choice; the test will have one of the two types of essays.

### Passing Scores for the TASC Writing Subtest

The passing score is 500 or above for the Writing Subtest, with the additional requirement of scoring at least 2 out of 8 on the essay. You pass the TASC test overall when you pass each of the five subtests.

**Locate a Prep or Test Center at**  
<http://www.acces.nysed.gov/ged>



## The Essay (Extended-Response)

- The **informative essay** informs or teaches the reader about something without giving your opinion.
- The **argumentative essay** gives information, but also presents your opinion on the subject. This type of essay presents both supporting and opposing ideas on or about a topic.

Practice writing a 3–5 paragraph argumentative or informative essay based on texts you read. To succeed on the essay:

### Read the Questions and the Texts

As you read the texts provided on the test, think about what details from the texts that you might use in your essay.

### Draft your Essay

After reading the texts, create a plan (outline) for your essay. Think about ideas, facts, details, other information and examples. Determine how you will introduce your topic or claim, the main focus for each paragraph, and how you will end/summarize your essay.

### Write your Essay

- Introduce your *claim* or *topic*.
- *Support* your claim with logical *reasoning* and relevant evidence from the provided texts.
- Acknowledge and address alternate or opposing claims.
- Connect your ideas and clarify the relationships between claims, *counterclaims*, reasons, and *evidence*.
- Establish and maintain a formal style.
- Provide a *concluding statement* or section that follows from and supports the argument or information presented.

# Multiple Choice Questions: Conventions of Standard Written English

## Sentence Combining

Combine two or more sentences and eliminate repeated phrases to provide a clear meaning.

### Examples:

Our production supervisor warned Jed he should punch in on time. He told Jed that he should dress appropriately for the job. He also said that Jed should stop taking extra breaks.

*Our production supervisor warned Jed to punch in on time, to dress appropriately for the job, and to stop taking extra breaks.*

The scientists trained him well. They helped him find a job when his training was through.

*The scientists trained him well and helped him find a job when his training was through.*

I always order cheese fries. The reason why is because they're my favorite.

*I always order cheese fries because they're my favorite.*

## Parallel Structure

Combine two or more sentences and eliminate repeated words; make sure that the **verb tenses** in the new sentence are in the same grammatical form.

### Examples:

The students prepared for their exams at home. They spend extra hours with their tutors. They did the necessary research in the library. They ask questions in their classrooms.

*The students **prepared** for their exams at home, **spent** extra hours with their tutors, **did** the necessary research in the library, and **asked** questions in their classes.*

The philosopher's advice is to live for the present, find some joy in each day, and by helping others.

*The philosopher's advice is to **live** for the present, **find** some joy in each day, and **help** others.*

## Punctuation

Punctuation is the use of marks or symbols to separate words or phrases in writing to make your writing clear and to assist the reader. Some commonly used punctuation marks include:

### Comma (,)

The comma is used to separate parts of a sentence to clarify meaning and prevent confusion.

#### Examples:

Wrong: My cousin Myra is getting married.

Right: *My cousin, Myra, is getting married.*

Wrong: You must stay late, because I said so.

Right: *You must stay late because I said so.*

Wrong: Bill poured his juice into a large, drinking glass.

Right: *Bill poured his juice into a large drinking glass.*

### Colon (:)

The colon is used to introduce a list or gives examples of something in the sentence.

#### Examples:

*The taxi transported three students: Kwame, Tim, and Jorge.*

*He had only one thing to live for: his family.*

### Semicolon (;)

A semicolon is used to separate parts of a sentence (complete clause). Semicolons signal that the clause that follows is closely related.

#### Examples:

*We waited in line for an hour at the amusement park; however, the rides were worth the wait.*

*My husband bought our car ten years ago; since it's always breaking down, we have decided to replace it.*

### Dash (—)

The dash is used to indicate a break in the flow of a sentence or to insert ideas as an afterthought.

#### Examples:

*We drove through three states—Delaware, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.*

*Three students—Jose, Jason and LaQuasia—didn't make it to class.*

## Parts of Speech

There are eight categories used to group words, depending on their functions in a sentence. The eight parts of speech are:

Nouns	Pronouns	Verbs
Adverbs	Adjectives	Prepositions
Conjunctions	Interjections	

Verbs that end with “-ing” and are used as nouns are known as gerunds.

### Examples:

*Swimming is a joy.*

*Fishing is Frank's favorite hobby.*

## Active and Passive Voice

When a verb expresses the action performed by the subject, the sentence is said to be in the **active voice**.

Verbs that express action performed on their subjects are said to be in the **passive voice**.

### Examples:

*Active: Hurricane Sandy devastated southern New York.*

*Passive: Southern New York was devastated by Hurricane Sandy.*

*Active: George Martin wrote a book called Game of Thrones.*

*Passive: A book called Game of Thrones was written by George Martin.*

