



Grade 4 Written Composition

Scoring Guide

Spring 2003

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INTRODUCTION

Writing is a life skill. As students move from grade to grade, writing skills are critical for academic progress. Students who have difficulty putting their thoughts into writing struggle to succeed in social studies, science, and many areas other than English language arts. Because good writing requires good thinking, the act of writing helps students learn to clarify their thoughts and focus their ideas.

The composition section of the TAKS writing test assesses Objectives 1 and 2. Objective 1 focuses on the quality of the composition's content, while Objective 2 focuses on how clearly and effectively the student communicates his or her ideas. These objectives are inextricably linked because good writing must be both substantial and mechanically sound.

Objective 1

The student will, within a given context, produce an effective composition for a specific purpose.

The ability to communicate thoughts and ideas through writing helps students become successful, not only in school but throughout their lives. In order to communicate effectively, students must organize and develop ideas in a logical, coherent, and interesting manner that is easy for the reader to follow and understand. Objective 1 tests each student's ability to produce an organized and well-developed composition in response to a prompt. The prompt is worded so that students have broad latitude in crafting an individual response. Students can use any organizational strategy that allows them to write an effective piece—they can write a story, a description, a philosophical piece, an expository piece—or they can combine approaches. However students choose to respond, it is important that the composition they write is uniquely theirs—that it is authentic and represents their best thinking and writing.

Objective 2

The student will produce a piece of writing that demonstrates a command of the conventions of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure.

To write well, students must be able to apply the conventions of the English language. This means that students must have the following skills. First, when students write a composition, they have the ability to follow the rules of correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. Second, they have the ability to write effective sentences and use words and phrases that enhance the reader's understanding of their ideas. Although students are not expected to produce absolutely error-free writing on the test, they are expected to write as clearly and correctly as possible. The stronger the writing conventions are, the more likely it is that students will be able to produce an effective composition.

TAKS compositions are holistically scored on a scale of 1 (ineffective) to 4 (highly effective). For each score point, the scoring guide presents the rubric as well as four student compositions with explanatory annotations. Using this scoring guide will help you to better understand your students' writing development and the strengths and weaknesses of your school's writing program. However, it is important to remember that readers assign scores to compositions based on overall effectiveness. Because these judgments are holistic, compositions at a particular score point generally do not reflect every characteristic listed on the rubric for that score point.

Write a composition about the best day you ever had.

The information in the box below will help you remember what you should think about when you write your composition.

REMEMBER—YOU SHOULD

- write about the best day you ever had
- make sure that each sentence you write helps the reader understand your composition
- write about your ideas in detail so that the reader really understands what you are saying
- try to use correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and sentences

The names of individuals mentioned in the compositions have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the students whose responses appear in this guide.

SCORE POINT 1

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS AN INEFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- Individual paragraphs and/or the composition as a whole are not focused. The writer may shift abruptly from idea to idea, making it difficult for the reader to understand how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- The composition as a whole has little, or no, sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion, if present, may be perfunctory.
- A substantial amount of writing may be extraneous because it does not contribute to the development or quality of the composition. In some cases, the composition overall may be only weakly connected to the prompt.

Organization

- The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and/or paragraph to paragraph is not logical. Sometimes weak progression results from an absence of transitions or from the use of transitions that do not make sense. At other times, the progression of thought is simply not evident, even if appropriate transitions are included.
- An organizational strategy is not evident. The writer may present ideas in a random or haphazard way, making the composition difficult to follow.
- Wordiness and/or repetition may stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

- The writer presents one or more ideas but provides little or no development of those ideas.
- The writer presents one or more ideas and attempts to develop them. However, this development is so general or vague that it prevents the reader from understanding the writer's ideas.
- The writer presents only a plot summary of a published piece of writing, a movie, or a television show.
- The writer omits information, which creates significant gaps between ideas. These gaps prevent the reader from clearly understanding those ideas.

Voice

- The writer does not engage the reader, therefore failing to establish a connection.
- There may be little or no sense of the writer's individual voice. The composition does not sound authentic or original. The writer is unable to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- There is little or no evidence in the composition that the writer can correctly apply the conventions of the English language. Severe and/or frequent errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure may cause the writing to be unclear or difficult to read. These errors weaken the composition by causing an overall lack of fluency.
- The writer may misuse or omit words and phrases and may frequently write awkward sentences. These weaknesses interfere with the effective communication of ideas.

The Best day I ever had G-4

It is still refreshing and my memory when the day I had passed the school tournament. The first best thing of my life was when I had passed the math. The second best thing that happened to me was when I got my Playstation station two.

The third best thing of my life was when I had got the game just bring it. to my Playstation station two.

The fourth best thing of my life was when my dad told me and my brother NICK that we would start getting checks.

The fifth best thing of my life was when my mom got her income tax and when we went to Wal-Mart and got some brand new cloths.

The sixth best thing is when we went to Superk mart and we bought some CD players and some CDs I had got Mary J Blige. and my Brothe NICK Got Lil Bow Wow CD.

These were the Best days that I ever had and my life.

Score Point: 1

In this response the writer presents a list of the best things in life with little or no development of any of the ideas. The focus shifts abruptly from testing to Playstation to getting checks and spending money, which detracts from the coherence of the composition. In addition, there is little sense of the writer's individual voice. Awkward and repetitive sentence structures make the communication of ideas ineffective.

The Best Day of My Life

I would have to say the best day of my life would be the time I went to the IMAX theater for the first time. I went with my G/A camp two summers ago. My home room teacher was Mrs. CRUZ. She was a very nice lady. We saw a movie in 3-D at the IMAX. At this one part of the movie when it was showing its structure it felt as if the bars were hitting you. I had to go back some day. I love it so much that I wanted to go back with my mom. The movie we watched was 1-2 the city in space. It was about a girl telling a story about her life in space. It was a pretty cool movie. I think you should go and see it. I would have to say that would be the day of my life.

Score Point: 1

The writer attempts to combine narrative and descriptive strategies to discuss a visit to an IMAX theater, but the haphazard presentation of ideas and the lack of effective transitions make the response difficult to follow. (At this one part of the movie when it was showing its structure it felt as if the bars were hitting you. I had to go back some day. The movie we watched was 1-2 the city in space.) The lack of sentence-to-sentence connections weakens the organization of the response. In addition, although the writer attempts to develop some of the ideas, the information provided is very general, limiting the sense of the writer's voice.

The best day i ever had.

me and my best cousin where playing baseball. At the park on Friday evening it was my cousins Birthday we where having a blast. we did a lot of cool stuff like playing tag, football, soccer and me and my cousins favorite game and it is. Baseball me and him goes to play baseball we where playing for the Indians me and him best at baseball we haven even lost the! we kept winning and winning until we were the threat that's when our enemy showed up they were playing for the A's the nasty 1st enemies of them all. there Rud herrell disgusting and cruel the challenge us into a game whoever goes to tens wins but if we lose, theye said while there the party. So we strated to play some ball 2 ganst 2 we where the first ones to bat my cousin whas first to bat and there I whas second he said that I whas clean up duty where he hit the ball it hit the fences we started to win the first Round we wher winning

it was 5 to 5 for the score board
we were in a tie game we needed 4 outs
~~they~~ needed to get one more out so that
they could bat so it was my turn to bat
they pitcher pick the swing the bat I hit the
ball and it went out of here I said that
that was my first home run I
ever made. so the score was 6 to 5 we
needed one more point to win the game it was
my cousin's turn to bat he hit the ball the enemy
caught it so it was their turn to bat we
pitched the ball and there we got him out
out it was his friends turn to bat
and there he hit a home run the
score was even no choice. my cousin said
there I got so mad! I told him! where not
going to let them wreck the party do you
under stand and he said OK! so I pick the
-ball I got him an out and there the next batter
got and out so I told my cousin that
let me bat and he said ok! so they pitched
the ball I hit the it was going, going, and
going and it was a home run we
celebrated me and my cousin it was so
fun to beat them they were
crying like babies? The end

Score Point: 1

The writer of this narrative about a baseball game between rivals uses an effective play-by-play organizational strategy to link and develop ideas and build them to a conclusion that resolves the story line. The introduction contains enough information to set up the situation for the reader, and the writer maintains focus throughout the composition. However, the frequent and severe errors in sentence structure, grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation overwhelm the composition's strengths, interfering with the reader's understanding of the writing. This lack of control of the conventions of written English results in an ineffective presentation of the writer's ideas.

When I was 5 I went to Disney World with Grampa and Grandma we did everything we could do we stayed there for a week. But as soon as we entered Disney World I felt excited, I couldn't wait till the morning came because I knew we were going to have lots of fun. That day we had a blast we rode every ride in Disney World every ride was awesome. When the day was over Grandma, Grandpa and I went to the R.V. and ate popcorn and watched t.v. Finally we went to sleep. That Day at Disney World was the best day of fun in my life

Score Point: 1

This narrative about going to Disney World is clear and focused, but the brief presentation of ideas is extremely general. (That day we had a blast. We rode every ride in Disney World, every ride was awesome.) The vagueness of the presentation does not permit the writer's individual voice to emerge. While conventions are mostly appropriate, the response lacks the depth of development needed for a higher score point.

SCORE POINT 2

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- Individual paragraphs and/or the composition as a whole are somewhat focused. The writer may shift quickly from idea to idea, but the reader has no difficulty understanding how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- The composition as a whole has some sense of completeness. The writer includes an introduction and conclusion, but they may be superficial.
- Some of the writing may be extraneous because it does not contribute to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

- The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and/or paragraph to paragraph may not always be smooth or completely logical. Sometimes the writer needs to strengthen the progression by including more meaningful transitions; at other times the writer simply needs to establish a clearer link between ideas.
- The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses do not enable the writer to present ideas effectively.
- Some wordiness and/or repetition may be evident, but these weaknesses do not completely stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

- The writer attempts to develop the composition by listing ideas or briefly explaining them. In both of these cases, the development remains superficial, limiting the reader's understanding and appreciation of the writer's ideas.
- The writer presents one or more ideas and attempts to develop them. However, there is little evidence of depth of thinking because this development may be somewhat general, inconsistent, or contrived.
- The writer may omit small pieces of information that create minor gaps between ideas. However, these gaps do not prevent the reader from understanding those ideas.

Voice

- There may be moments when the writer engages the reader but fails to sustain the connection.
- Individual paragraphs or sections of the composition may sound authentic or original, but the writer has difficulty expressing his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- Errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure throughout the composition may indicate a limited control of conventions. Although these errors do not cause the writing to be unclear, they weaken the overall fluency of the composition.
- The writer may include some simple or inaccurate words and phrases and may write some awkward sentences. These weaknesses limit the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

One day my dad went to my house and said do you want to go with me to the Park. "yes" I said. So we went to the Park and I fed the ducks, so did my dad. We went to the movies and watched a scary movie. He took me out for pizza but he did not have any money so instead we ate sandwiches with milk, and his car broke down so we had to walk but it was a good walk a very good walk. Then we walked to the lake and rode a boat to the other side of the lake. Then the boat tipped over and we got soaking wet. Then the women who owned the boats gave us towels and said this always happens. Then my dad said it's not your fault so my dad and I walked to the restrooms because I had to go, then he took me home because it was late. Then my mom said why are you soaking wet I told her it a long story mom and that's the story of my best day I ever had.

Score Point: 2

The writer focuses on the good and bad events of a day spent with Dad. This is an effective approach, but the writer shifts quickly from idea to idea with the frequent use of simple transitions (so, then), and as a result there is little evidence of depth of thought. While there is an attempt to explain the episode of the boat overturning, overall the development is general and inconsistent. The writer engages the reader in places (his car broke down so we had to walk, but it was a good walk, a very good walk) but does not maintain a consistently strong voice. Some conventions errors further limit the effectiveness of the composition.

One warm and sunny day after school I call my friend Jenny. I asked to go to her house to sleep over. Her mom said it was ok and my mom said it was ok. So my mom drives me to her house for the very first time. Mary had asked to spend the night to. Jenny and Mary had me down so my mom new where to park. The first thing we did was go on a walk around the apartment complex but we didn't make it. I step in to dog poop on a sidewalk. It was the worst smelling thing I have ever smelled in my life, beside the sewer by my house. So I just put my shoes by the door and we continue our walk. We walk for an hour or more. We went back to Jenny's house and got some blankets. We found a spot with a big view of the sky. We spread out the blankets and spread out on them. We talked for a second and then we tried to count the billions of stars. Mary started to look for no reason at all than I started to look than Jenny started to look. We all ant all ants crawled onto our blanket. Jenny screamed she had been bit by three ants on her big toe and so had I. We ran as fast as we could go. We forgot the blankets

Outside. Then we went in to Jenny's room. We listened to music almost all night. We got some hot colet and pulled out the couch bed. We watched Willey Wank and the Colet Factorreyard fell asleep. When we wake up we play school it was so fun. Mary was the coolest teacher. Then we play for a minute or two then my mom and Mary's mom came to get us. So we got our stuff and left. So that in clods the gratisd day of my live!

Score Point: 2

In this narrative about a sleepover with friends, the writer links ideas logically and attempts to develop all of them. The narrator maintains focus from the short but clear introduction to the brief conclusion, and a good command of vocabulary adds to the depth of thought. (We found a spot with a big view of the sky. We spread out the blankets and sprawled out on them. We talked for a second and then we tried to count the billions of stars.) However, while conventions such as sentence boundaries and sentence structure are correct, numerous and severe spelling errors demonstrate limited control of written English and reduce the overall effectiveness of the composition.

Getting BUDDY

Hello! I am Lee I am going to tell you about a special day in my life. Here is my story.

It all started with my mom and dad talking about my dog, Sam. They were thinking about another dog. They thought he was lonely and wanted a friend. That's when we heard about Buddy.

Buddy was a street dog. My dad's friend, Ted found him. I don't know where. He and his wife decided to keep him until they found a home for him. We couldn't wait to try him out!

The next day we tried training him. Only problem is that he does the exact opposite. When we told him to come, he would stay. When we told him to stay, he would come.

Buddy is getting a lot better. Only problem now is that he burps! Sam on the other hand is now very jealous. He is starting to act like Buddy. Buddy barks at anything. Even catpepers. Sam won't even think about it. They are alike and different in some ways. They are very obedient in a way. They are my only dogs. I love them, and I will never forget them.

Score Point: 2

After a superficial introduction, the writer makes effective use of combined narrative and compare-and-contrast organizational strategies to support the progression of ideas and maintain focus on acquiring a second dog. (Buddy is getting a lot better. Only problem now is that he burps! Sam on the other hand is now very jealous.) Conventions are mostly appropriate, and the writer's voice is evident throughout the composition. However, the overall development lacks the depth needed for a higher score.

The best day I ever had was when I first went to Slitterbane. There are so many water rides there it is so fun.

My favorite ride is the Rageing River. I love that ride I could ride it all day every day it is so fun. You go through a lot of tunnels on that ride, it's my mom's favorite too. It goes really fast and I get ahead of my parents. I even get to go on the river. At the end of the river you get to go on a slide.

My second favorite ride is the Black Knight it is pitch black in that ride you can not see a thing. When you are going down it you start to get dizzy it is fun too. There are all kinds of loops in it.

The other ride that I like is the Wolf Pack only three people at a time. One time my dad, my sister, and I almost flipped because of how high it is and how many loops it has it was so cool.

There is all so a wave pool there. There are so many waves it is like being at the beach and the waves are so big it is so cool there that I could live there. They got a new ride call

-ed the bonge jump the people scream
and wave to us at the same time
It is a great place to me I love
it, but yesterday was the last day
they were open.

Score Point: 2

This informative approach to writing about a trip to an amusement park centers on descriptions of the most enjoyable rides in the park. However, a simplistic organization of the descriptions into favorite ride, second favorite, and so on, with brief and somewhat repetitive development of each idea, limits the effectiveness of the presentation. The description of the rides is sometimes superficial and general (fun, cool, big, so cool) and limits any sense of the writer's unique perspective.

SCORE POINT 3

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A GENERALLY EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- Individual paragraphs and the composition as a whole are, for the most part, focused. The writer generally shows the clear relationship between ideas, making few sudden shifts from one idea to the next.
- The composition as a whole has a sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion add some depth to the composition.
- Most of the writing contributes to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

- The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph is generally smooth and controlled. For the most part, transitions are meaningful, and the links between ideas are logical.
- The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses are generally effective.
- Wordiness and/or repetition, if present, are minor problems that do not stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

- The writer attempts to develop all the ideas included in the composition. Although some ideas may be developed more thoroughly and specifically than others, the development overall reflects some depth of thought, enabling the reader to generally understand and appreciate the writer's ideas.
- The writer's presentation of some ideas may be thoughtful. There may be little evidence that the writer has been willing to take compositional risks when developing the topic.

Voice

- The writer engages the reader and sustains that connection throughout most of the composition.
- For the most part, the composition sounds authentic and original. The writer is generally able to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- The writer generally demonstrates a good command of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. Although the writer may make minor errors, they create few disruptions in the fluency of the composition.
- The words, phrases, and sentence structures the writer uses are generally appropriate and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

The best day I ever had was the day I got a public library card. I had ~~an~~ always wanted to go to the library so that I could get more vocabulary and know more stories. The name of the ^{Library} ~~is~~ is Public Library. On my ~~to~~ first day, I went with my mother, my sister and my brother.

As soon as we entered the building, we went to stand in front of the counter. The woman behind the counter greeted us with a cheerful smile ~~and~~ and gave us a yellow and green sheet to fill. The filling of the sheets included our names, date of ~~our~~ birth, address and other things. When we were done filling the sheets, we put it back and went to check ~~out~~ out some books. ~~At~~ At first I did not know where to go, and that was because there were so many good books. ~~First~~ Finally, I decided to borrow mystery books.

There ~~was~~ were some books which had "Nancy Drew" written ~~on~~ on them. I picked these and other books. My sister picked the same kind of books. But my brother and ~~his~~ mother

didn't. After we took out books and checked them, it was time to head for home. On the way, I started reading. The book was so interesting, I did not want to take my eyes off it.

When we reached home, I was tired, but also happy because I could borrow books from the library anytime. It was also the best day I ever had.

Score Point: 3

The writer of this composition about getting a library card uses a narrative strategy to organize a focused presentation of ideas. Transitions are generally meaningful, and both the introduction and the conclusion add depth to the composition. The inclusion of specific details creates some depth of development in the encounter with the librarian (the woman behind the counter greeted us with a cheerful smile and gave us a yellow and green sheet to fill). Although some ideas are less thoroughly developed than others, the writer's individual perspective on the importance of books and reading provides an authentic sense of voice.

Pure Luck

Once in the 2nd grade, Tom _____, and I got into a fight on the playground when I bit him. Read more to find out what happened.

It was a hot day in March when my class was having recess and I was playing with, Tom _____, and my friends in a game of tag, but when Tom was it and he said I was it that made me mad because I knew he was it. So when I said he was it he charged and knocked me down, but it just so happens that on the way down I bit his finger.

After I got back up I saw Tom telling on me. The teacher sent both of us to the office. The princenbel told us to say we're sorry to eachuthere. So Tom tells me he's sorry for starting the fight, and I told Tom I'm Sorry for biting him. So I don't go to ISS and neither did Tom, but Ms. Ruhl our princenbel told us if we did it again we would go to ISS.

So that we never did that again I told him, "You know maybe we shouldn't be around eachuthere." "Yeah, I guess your right," he replied. So we got up and leaf eachuthere and we woren't friends anymore, and we didn't play together anymore either.

So thats what happened and it was pure luck that we didn't go to ISS. You might of said that we didn't become friends again, but

in the 3rd grade we became friends again.

Score Point: 3

The introduction sets the scene in this focused narrative about a schoolyard fight; having avoided punishment for the fight is the link to the prompt. Meaningful transitions (after I got back up, so that we never did that again) help create a smooth progression of ideas. The overall development of the events enables the reader to generally understand and appreciate the writer's ideas. In addition, the writer engages the reader through a lively and natural use of language, including effective dialogue.

It was a really good day when I built a tree house. I made it with my friend and we had so much fun. If you don't know how to make a tree house I can tell you.

First thing is you got to have a good tree. The branches have to be the right shape and real strong. We used a oak tree but you might have something else that works OK. Then you buy some peices of wood and bring it home. Now you are ready to start bilding!

You start with the floor, use some big pieces of wood for that. After that you can start making the sides with more wood and you nail some parts of the wood together. This is where you need a friend to help to hold the nails and the hammer and pick up the nails because some nails will drop on the ground, trust me they will! Then you get to make a roof and that's your tree house. It took me and my friend alot of time to build our tree house because it was humungus.

If you want you can paint your tree house. That is what we did. You get a can of paint and bring it to the tree house. Then you open the lid and start to paint. Green is a good color for a tree house, thats what we used. Paint the roof and sides first and then the floor or you will stand on wet paint the whole time. It will dry quick out in the wind.

Now bring in some pillows for your tree house

and a little tv so you can watch tv on the pillows, it is real comfortable that way. And bring a little rug if you have one and games to play like cards, and Monopoly. You can bring a flashlight for when it gets dark and oh yeah, don't forget some chips and any kind of snack you like because you will get hungry out in a tree house, more hungry than in a real house! I don't know why but it is very true.

So now you can build a great tree house like I did! I will never forget that day.

Score Point: 3

A "how-to" informative approach combined with some reflection on memories of the day allows the writer to effectively organize and focus this composition about a day spent building a treehouse. Although some points are developed more thoroughly and specifically than others, there is a smooth progression of ideas and some depth of thought (this is where you need a friend to help to hold the nails and the hammer...). The writer's voice is clearly evident throughout the response.

On my tenth Birthday I was given four books. One about Romans, Native Americans, Aztecs, and Egyptians. It turned out to be the best day I ever had. The first book I read was about Romans they almost invented every thing we use today. They built the roads and water pipes. But the main thing I like about them was thiere religion. Like Zeuse, Mars, and Appolo. My favorite God is Mars for he had a army of ugly brave Spartas. Thats what I liked about Romans.

Now the next book was about Aztecs. The funny thing about them was the temples they had. They were tall and looked like Egypten pyramids. Also, the games they played looked fun. They had to throw stone balls with thier fist. They even had yoo with zebras. It was a great book.

My third book I read was about Egyptens. I liked them for the legend heros they had. The Scorpia-n King. Some say he was a myth

but I believe he is true. The Egyptians thought they were the best. Until Roman philosophers discovered the Egyptians. Years past and the Romans got greedy. They know they had gold. Soon enough they attacked the Egyptians and took them over. That was a great book to.

My fourth book was about the Native Americans. They had the most skilled weapons for battle. They had bow and arrow. They had nice long pointy spears to use in battle.

That was also a great book.

Yes, the best day I ever had was the day I got and read those four great books.

Score Point: 3

The writer of this expository composition expresses a unifying theme that connects a description of four different books to each other as well as to the prompt. (Yes, the best day I ever had was the day I got and read those four great books.) Although the writer transitions from book to book in a simplistic way (the first book, the next book, my third book), the ideas are evenly developed and offer a sufficient explanation of why the writer liked the books. For the most part the composition sounds authentic, and the writer is generally able to express his/her unique perspective. Occasional sentence fragments and misspelled words create few disruptions in the fluency of the composition.

SCORE POINT 4

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- Individual paragraphs and the composition as a whole are focused. This sustained focus enables the reader to understand and appreciate how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- The composition as a whole has a sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion are meaningful because they add depth to the composition.
- Most, if not all, of the writing contributes to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

- The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph is smooth and controlled. The writer's use of meaningful transitions and the logical movement from idea to idea strengthen this progression.
- The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses enhance the writer's ability to present ideas clearly and effectively.

Development of Ideas

- The writer's thorough and specific development of each idea creates depth of thought in the composition, enabling the reader to truly understand and appreciate the writer's ideas.
- The writer's presentation of ideas is thoughtful or insightful. The writer may approach the topic from an unusual perspective, use his/her unique experiences or view of the world as a basis for writing, or make interesting connections between ideas. In all these cases, the writer's willingness to take compositional risks enhances the quality of the content.

Voice

- The writer engages the reader and sustains this connection throughout the composition.
- The composition sounds authentic and original. The writer is able to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- The overall strength of the conventions contributes to the effectiveness of the composition. The writer demonstrates a consistent command of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. When the writer attempts to communicate complex ideas through sophisticated forms of expression, he/she may make minor errors as a result of these compositional risks. These types of errors do not detract from the overall fluency of the composition.
- The words, phrases, and sentence structures the writer uses enhance the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

The Day I Finished the Fourth Harry Potter Book

When my mom first brought home the first Harry Potter book, I took one look at it and said "no way am I ever reading that." I thought it was so big. My parents decided that if I wasn't going to read it they would read it to me. After the first few chapters I couldn't take the suspense of waiting a whole day so I started to read it myself. When I finished the first book I read book 2 and book 3. Then since book 4 wasn't coming out until the summer I read them over again. I became known as the Harry Potter girl.

Finally the Fourth book came out. I expected it to be about 400 pages long. It was 743 pages long! I thought "how will I ever read this?" When my dad noticed that I wasn't reading

it, he began to read it to me. I got very hard to understand. So when my dad thought I didn't understand something he would stop and explain it to me.

So just like the first book I began to read it on my own.

So eventually I stopped looking at how long it was and I just enjoyed the story. One day I noticed I was on the last chapter! Then five minutes later I was on the last page!

Then as I began to read the last sentence I got really excited. I read the last word and suddenly started jumping up and down.

It was the best day of my life!

I had finished the book! I felt like that book had helped me become a better reader, by showing me you can do anything if you set your mind to it.

Score Point: 4

The writer maintains a strong focus on the considerable accomplishment of reading all of the Harry Potter books. Although transitions are often simple, the progression of ideas is logical, and each idea is developed in enough depth to be understood by the reader, particularly the excitement of reaching the last chapter, page, sentence, and word of the last book. The writer's own experience is clearly the basis of the composition, and an authentic voice is expressed throughout the response. (When my mom first brought home the first Harry Potter book, I took one look at it and said, "no way am I ever reading that.") Occasional minor errors in conventions do not detract from the composition's overall fluency.

It was a horrible day!

I remember getting up that morning and feeling awful! My nose was runny and my head hurt terribly! But I got up, made my bed, and got dressed for school, anyway. When I went down stairs for breakfast, my mom had my Pop-tart already heated up, even though I wanted a waffle.

School was worse! I bombed a quiz, my lunch was stale and I almost missed my bus! By the time I got home, I was exhausted. But I still had homework to do! I ate some chocolate pudding and asked my mom the same question I'd had been asking for weeks "Can I, please, please, pretty please, have a kitten?"

(You see my neighbor's cat had had kittens a month before.)

My mom said that she had talked it over with my dad, and that they had thought about it and thought about it some more, and they had

finally decided that if I really wanted a kitten (and did I even) that I could have one! BUT, it had to be a **Boy!**

Well that was no problem because my favorite kitten was a boy.

Let me tell you after waiting for my sister, who demanded I bring her, it only only took me a minute to zip over to my neighbors, tell them what my mom said, and pick

up my little Gus!!!

Isn't funny how things work out?!

This was the best day ever!!

Score Point: 4

The writer takes a compositional risk in this narrative, tightly focusing on the events that explain how a bad day ironically turns out to be the best day ever. Meaningful transitional devices and specific word choice contribute to the smooth but rapid progression of thought, providing the reader with just enough information to appreciate the writer's ideas. (School was worse! I bombed a quiz, my lunch was stale and I almost missed my bus!! By the time I got home, I was exhausted.) Lively and natural use of language allows the writer to engage the reader. Good control of conventions and varied sentence structure contribute to the effectiveness of the presentation.

The best day I ever had was when I went river rafting in the Colorado river with my best friends Paul and John. In the middle of the summer my dad and my friends dad had planned this vacation. Now it was finally time to go. We packed up and went. It was a pretty long drive even though we had a Ford Expedition. When we got there I saw some other people there too. So I warned everyone to put on their swimming suit. But they did not listen. So I was the only one who had a swimming suit on. I just hoped that a four hour ride doesn't give me any sunburn. When it was time to go I checked to see how the water temperature was. If you ask me I would say it was kind of cold and kind of hot. So off went with four hours of nothing but fun. Soon we got stuck in some rocks. My dad and everybody else couldn't

help because they didn't bring a swimming suit. So I jumped out of the raft and pushed the raft out of the rocks way. but the water was pretty deep so I stepped on a large rock to get back in but I slipped and splash! I was soaked and wet. At least my feet didn't hurt. because I had water proof sandals on. Once I got back in the raft I soaked Paul, John, My dad, and their dad. My dad screamed at me so I grabbed a pair of goggles and looked underwater to ignore him. Two hours later John saw something weird underwater. So everyone leaned against the side of the raft and boom! The whole raft turned upside down. I was sure glad I brought a swimming suit. Everyone else had their cloths wet. Then I said, "you should of listened to me." Once we flipped the raft over I could see the end. What a fun experiance it was. That was the best and funniest day I ever had.

Score Point: 4

In this narrative the writer's strategy in setting up the fact that he was the only one smart enough to wear a swimming suit while river rafting becomes evident as the events progress and provides a strong focus for the story. Events are described from the unique perspective of the writer in simple, vivid language that enables the reader to get a real sense of the trip and of the writer's voice. (Once I got back in the raft I soaked Paul, John, my dad, and their dad. My dad screamed at me so I grabbed a pair of goggles and looked underwater to ignore him.)

Dear Mrs. _____,

I would really like to tell you about the best day of my life so, I will. But, before I begin, I should tell you that the best day I ever had was also a sad day. It was also a sad day for the rest of the kids in your homeroom third grade class. It was the day that we became fourth graders and you retired. I can still remember it like it was yesterday... It was the last day of school at _____ Elementary School and we were having lots of fun in the classroom. But, still, one small sad thought lingered in my mind, refusing to leave. That thought kept part of me from having fun. Luckily, the part of me that was having fun kept the thought from making me cry. Who would have guessed that one small, sad thought could be and seem so big to me. The small, sad thought that refused to go away was that you were retiring today. When the loudspeaker came on it said that the third grade award ceremony was about to begin. So, you took us to the cafeteria for it. I sat with my parents because they were there, too. Then my small, sad thought turned into a small, sad feeling. I remembered all the times you helped me understand my work. I also remembered the day you hugged me because I was crying about my grandma being sick. You were always there. The award ceremony began. Suddenly, the small, sad feeling grew. Finally, the award ceremony was over, except for one thing... The principal told everybody you were retiring. We all got on stage while you made a speech and received an award of your own. The award wasn't like any of our awards because it was for your retirement. In the middle of your speech you said your speech made you cry. You also said it made you cry to be leaving. Later, you gave

each of us a hug and said goodbye. I left early with some of the other girls to go to LAURA'S house for a pool party, celebrating getting out of third grade and — Elementary School. I had fun because it was fun and, it took my mind off your retiring for a while. But only for a while. Soon, you and your retirement were back in my mind and I was talking about it with everybody. Even now, as I'm writing this, when I think of you I still feel really sad. I can still remember the feeling of standing there when you were making your last speech. I also remember the feeling of trying to hold back tears. I wish you were here with us right now. I miss you.

A former student of yours,

Score Point: 4

This controlled response is cast in the form of a letter to a former teacher, a device that helps convey the personal voice of the writer. The writer takes another, greater compositional risk in going back in time and recreating the feelings of that time through the purposeful repetition of a single phrase (small, sad feeling). The introduction adds depth by concisely setting the scene for the reader and establishing that the "best day" was actually characterized by a complex mix of emotions. The writer creates depth of thought by reflecting on the personal meaning of the events of the day as they are recounted in a progression enhanced by the consistent use of meaningful transitional devices. Varied sentence structure and strong conventions contribute to the effectiveness of the presentation.