



Grade 4 Written Composition

Scoring Guide

Spring 2006

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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 your favorite place to go.

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 your favorite place to go
- 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.

Score Point 1 Guide Papers

TAKS Grade 4
Spring 2006

G-4

You, yeah you sitting on that couch being lazy. I got something for you. Get up you will just love my story. Now get up and listen to favorite places written by: ME. Here it is. My favorite place to go is outback steak house. I really like their food. But that's my favorite restaurant. My favorite place is the bowling alley. That really is my favorite place to go. My second favorite place is Chuck E. - Cheeses. I always go there for my birthday. I like their pepperoni pizza. It is very fun. I want to go there till I am a teenager. My third favorite place is the skating rink. I remember when I was eight years old. My friend gave me 20 dollars. But I spent them all on 10 cookies. My fourth favorite place is my uncle RICK'S house. The reason it is my fourth is because we go there every summer. Anyway we always go fishing there. And also swimming. But my very first place is home. To play my game do ~~the~~ home work, whatever as long as I am home. I love them, and they love me. We love each other. A part of the ecosystem. My mom, my step dad, my brother and my two step sisters. That will be my story for today. I hope you enjoyed my story. See you later. Oh, yeah I forgot my last favorite place is School. I am just glad that it is not one of those schools with fire back grounds. But my school is _____ elementary. It is the most recognized school in _____. That is the end of my story.

Score Point: 1

In this response the writer presents multiple favorite places (restaurants, bowling alley, skating rink, uncle's house, etc.) that are generally linked to the prompt but are not related to each other. The writer shifts abruptly between these places, which weakens the focus and coherence of the composition. Although there is some evidence of voice, there is little development of any of the writer's ideas, causing the composition to be ineffective.

I like all the rides in six flags because they are fast and cool. It is so a sam that I cod go on the rides aging anaging. I want to go on all the rides and the water rides for a long time. And I want to ride superman and Avalanch. And I wan to get wet on the ride and to go on the water slied. And I want to go on the zippers.

I like six flag because it is fun in Six flags that I want to go every year. And do many fun things in six flags and play all the games. And I want to do fun thing and go to the games, rides and all thing I can do.

It is very fun is six flags and I like it alto because you can play games and all kind of vireo games and rides. And I want to have fun in six flags and do fun things in six flags.

I want to go to six flags and have more fun next time I go to six flags.

Score Point: 1

In this ineffective response, the writer is focused on Six Flags. Although the writer's voice is somewhat evident in the expression of excitement (It is so awesome that I could go on the rides again and again), repetition (I like Six Flags because it is fun, do many fun things at Six Flags, very fun at Six Flags, I want to have fun in Six Flags and do fun things in Six Flags) stalls the progression of ideas. The overall development of ideas is general and vague (I want to go on all the rides, play all the games). In addition, frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure weaken the overall fluency of the composition.

My favorite place to go is Lufkin

One day when I was waking up dad said get pack and I said why because we are going out of town and I told him where to Lufkin said my dad, so we started to pack boy I was board to go to Lufkin because we have to walk like 30 min or 1 hour so I decided to draw because we are almost there but goes what I forgot my drawing paper so I had to color instead boy Ishaer don't now how to color and I color whorse then TOMMY so when I was about to color my dad said we are hear boy I couldn't believe this but I am glad to be hear men I shear don't want to go back to the car men it was so boaring. And the first place we go was cicis pizza men me and my dad rush because we where shear hungry boy me and my dad got lots of pizza, and then we went to the area to play games men we played lots of games like racing, basket ball, soccer and base ball and other kind of games. And After the area we went to the zoo we saw lots of animals like lions, tigers, snakes and we went to the gift shop I bought lots of things there like hats unbrats tishirts, and we had to stay in a hotel for a week and I went to Blockbuster with my dad and rented a movie and a video game and we bought a DVD player for fifty dollars. So we went

GoK to the hotel to watch the movie and the movie we
rent was Spiderman 2. Men that movie was cool lots of
action in it so when the movie was over we watch a other
movie and it was won of my favorite it was Sherk 2. Men
that movie is so funny. so when the movie was over
I played the game I rented I had to play for a little wh
because it was time to go to sleep. and that's why
I like to go to Lufkin because it has lots of things.
and that was the best place I like.

Score Point: 1

The writer of this response about going to Lufkin has used a narrative organizational strategy with good detail (I forgot my drawing paper so I had to color instead; I bought lots of things there like hats umbrellas t-shirts) and voice (boy I sure don't know how to color and I color worse than Tommy). However, the frequent and severe errors in sentence boundaries, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation overwhelm the composition's strengths by interfering with the effective communication of ideas. This lack of control of the conventions of written English results in an ineffective response.

Apple Bee's is my favorite place to go because it has a lot of good food there. You might like it if you go there. They have ribs, salad, chicken strips, Buffalo wings, Hot wings and a lot of chicken tables and bars. You really want to know why? Because it has a lot of food you can imagine. Because it is so cool! Oh ya if it's your birthday there they will surprise you! You will have fun if you go there. You might even get a free balloon did you hear me free balloons. You can even get frozen desert or a chocolate shake to. You can even get soda there. You can even sit at a booth table.

Score Point: 1

This response is focused on going to Applebee's. Although the voice of the student is evident (You might even get a free balloon did you hear me? Free balloons), repetition (it has a lot of good food there, it has a lot of food) stalls the progression of ideas. Overall, the writer lists a number of ideas but provides little or no development of any idea.

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.

Score Point 2 Guide Papers

TAKS Grade 4
Spring 2006

G-9a

So do you have a favorite place? I do,

My favorite place is the Skate Ring. I like it there cause you can do any thing! I also get to skate. When they play fast songs I'll challenge my older sister DANIELLE. Then when the worker announces to line up to race, I'll line up to race.

The last time I beat about ten kids. Most of them quit, but me, some guy, and a girl kept on going. Eventually I had won.

Some times I will do some tricks. Once I was going really fast, and I could not stop! So I flew over the berceade! But I was all right.

The really fun part is hiding behind the berceade and tripping other people!

Then I will skate into the ring fast!

I can challenge others to any thing, But I dont care, if I win or loose. The thing

is... At least I still had fun,
so that's my favorite place, The
Skate ing ring!"

Score Point: 2

The writer presents an informative response about the skating rink. Progression between ideas is not always smooth and controlled, but the writer makes an attempt to develop each idea (When they play fast songs I'll challenge my older sister Danielle. Then when the worker announces to line up to race, I'll line up to race), and some voice is evident (The really fun part is hiding behind the barricade and tripping other people!) Although there are a number of spelling errors, these errors do not cause the writing to be unclear. Overall, this composition can be considered somewhat effective.

San Diego, California

Have you been to California? I have and it's my favorite place to go. Let me tell you why I like California and why it's my favorite place. In San Diego, California there is a Disney Land. There we go on rides and have tons of fun. I went on one ride that made you think you were on a ship running into asteroids. When I got off I was so dizzy I almost fell to the ground.

In San Diego there is a beach with short, little waves. It is fun there because you can jump over the waves or tumble over them. There are seagulls that fly all around and wait for food to be thrown to them.

My uncle lives in San Diego with his two daughters and wife. His daughters names are ANGELA and APRIL. His wife is named THERESA. His name is DAN or DANNY. They are a wonderful and happy family. I miss them and love them very very much. I hope to see them again very, very soon.

I want to go back to see my favorite place to go, San Diego, California.

Score Point: 2

In this response focused on San Diego, the writer's enjoyment of the trip is clear and engages the reader, and the conventions are strong. Although there are some specific details (made you think you were on a ship running into asteroids; seagulls that fly all around and wait for food to be thrown to them), the ideas are not developed with any depth, especially the paragraph about the writer's family. This superficial development limits the reader's understanding of the writer's ideas.

"Wahoo!" I screamed as I rode a BITE wave over and over again. As my brother KEVIN and I were riding waves my parents were watching me catch more waves than my brother. We kept riding a lot of waves just like it. I rode everyone don't know about KEVIN throw.

"Wahoo!" I screamed again. I caught this huge huge huge wave. It was about 5 1/2 ft tall. It was awesome. I got kinda scared because I was just using a boogie board, not an actual surf board. But although I was

"Help, Help" I called and shouted. A young man swam as fast as he could pulled me up from under the water, since I was under and put me on his boogie board and swam me to shore. I ran to my mom crying. After I was done crying my mom signed me up for surfing lessons. 3 things so she could get me a surf board, and so I would not drown. Also because so I don't have to use a boogie board. So it was my turn! My mom and dad yelled good luck!

Once I was done I showed my family how much stuff I learned and how good I was. So I kinda showed off but it was

ok to them. KEVIN was really jealous. He
He said that surfing was a boy thing, but I
just ignored him. I more thing with out a
doubt I was a lot better than my brother.

Score Point: 2

The writer uses a narrative organizational strategy somewhat effectively to tell the story of learning to surf. Voice is evident throughout, but there are minor gaps in the narrative, some of which cause the reader difficulty in filling in the information (But although I was..."Help, help" I called and shouted). Overall, the writer exhibits a limited control of conventions.

I still haven't forgotten the time I went to Tai-Wan in the year 2004. It all started when we arrived at the airport in Tai-Wan. It was 6:00pm and I had just reached Tai-Wan. When I noticed my aunt, I dropped all my bags and ran to hug her. When we reached my aunts neighborhood I gasped. Not one single house was in Tai-Wan it was all apartments. How did you guess, my aunt lived in an apartment too. A couple days later I went to my 2nd aunts house where I met two of my cousins one named LI and one named HUA like me I stayed at my aunts house for about 4 weeks during those weeks I went to Leo Foo village (amusement park), Window of China and I went swimming. The day before going to my 1st aunts house I experienced the most things such as... when I woke up that day I went with my second aunt to buy breakfast when I smelled the most terrific scent it smelled like fresh bread and chocolate mixed together. Anyways we went to buy some fresh bread and ham when we got back to my 2nd aunts house the taste of the food was so good it felt like sugar-plums dancing around my head. When I arrived at my first aunts house she pulled my cheeks until they turned red! After a week or two-it was time to go home to America and I decided this is a great place to go and I will come back in 2005. Also, reader I recommend you going because you

probably will also not forget your trip to Tai-Wan like me. When I got back to America I was as happy as a pig rolling in mud. Then I winked. Also when I was in Tai-Wan I want to school-fun school.

Score Point: 2

The writer of this response presents a narrative about visiting family in Taiwan. The response stays focused, and the conventions are appropriate. However, the progression of thought is not always smooth as the writer jumps back and forth between the two aunts (day before going to my first aunt's...I went with my second aunt...When I arrived at my first aunt's), and the concluding sentence is a random idea that seems out of place. Although there is some voice, the development of the ideas remains superficial, making this composition only somewhat effective.

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.

Score Point 3 Guide Papers

TAKS Grade 4
Spring 2006

G-14a

YUM

"I wonder what I shall make this time." I thought for a moment then reached for my cook-book on the top of the refrigerator. Why don't we look around the kitchen to see what we can make? Starting off with the refrigerator-

The refrigerator is a wonderful place to put food. I don't know about you, but I think refrigerators smell horrible, they also make the worst sounds. The reason I said it smells bad is because if you think about it, a combination of different foods from different places don't smell right.

I love it when my mom makes chocolate chip cookies that are chewy and make your mouth very happy^u. The oven is another great place in the kitchen. It's time to start cooking the things we got from the refrigerator. Steam fills the room sometimes when you cook and it makes the kitchen moist. It also makes the windows damp and wet.

I'd love to talk about the oven all day but lets move on to something else now, shall we. "Ahh"! Don't you just love the fresh clean smell of the dishwasher when you first lift the cover right after all the dishes have been washed. "Clash"! As you pull the cart of dishes out bang together and make

extremely loud noises. You start to sweat as steam from the hot water surrounds your face. All different shapes, sizes, and even colors, of utensils are packed into the little carts you have to take them out of.

Let's head over to the sink to clean our hands. "Ohh"! either cold or hot water sooth's my hands as I rub them together with slimmy, wet soap. The water splashes into your cup as you turn the knob to get a drink of water.

I think we've seen just about every thing. "Oh". Got to get back to cooking. Lot's to do and so little time. See ya next time.

Score Point: 3

An engaging introduction and conclusion frame this generally effective response about a tour of the writer's kitchen. Although some ideas are more thoroughly developed than others, specific details (steam fills the room sometimes when you cook and it makes the kitchen moist; "Ahh!" Don't you just love the fresh clean smell of the dishwasher when you first lift the cover right after all the dishes have been washed) add some depth and a sense of authenticity to the response. In addition, the conventions are generally appropriate.

My favorite place to go is Mars to watch space football. And because of the space food like space corn, and space cake and my personal favorite space candy.

Of course it's not about the space food. It's about going to see the Space Warriors U.S. Crader Punks. At the final round it was Space W. 401 Crader P. 104. At the last bell Space W. won the game of space smash. I met a alien. His name was N-8-5. That is a weird ^{name} I said. Weird but cool I said. He brought me to his house. It was 14 stories high and it was painted black with red stripes.

We went into his house and it was the most cleanest house I have ever seen. It was so clean that it looked like it was coral. We went to N-8-5's room it was on the 7th floor. Once we got to N-8-5's room he showed

me the P.S. 5000. It can hold 400 games and you could choose witch game you could play. And the space money is cool too. A dollar bill on Mars is worth 800 dollars on Mars. And N-S-5 gave me some space money so I could show everybody back on earth. The space music is really cool too. I got the limited edition of Space Boys Unleashed. I didn't get to meet Mr. and Mrs. N-S-5. But next time I will. N-S-5 was sending me back to earth. I asked him if I would see him again but he didn't answer. I finally got back to earth. Once I got out of the space pod, everyone started asking questions. I could not answer all of them. I showed them the space money I got. And showed them my smash ball playing cards. And I showed them my Space Boy C.D.

Score Point: 3

This engaging fantasy response is focused on a trip to the writer's favorite place, Mars. The progression of ideas is generally smooth, and there is some depth of development as the writer describes going to a game of "Space Smash," meeting an alien, visiting the alien's home, buying souvenirs, and returning home. Overall the writer demonstrates an appropriate command of conventions.

Four!!

As I prepare to swing I step in the tee box and I see the pin and I wonder if I'll make it on the green this time. You might already know what I'm doing, and you might not, but just in case I'll tell you I'm golfing. Have you ever been golfing? I don't go to courses very often, but when I do I feel like a ten year old pro golfer because I feel like I can drive the ball further than Tiger Woods even though I still need a ton of practice. Do you have a place where you feel free and you don't have a care in the world? Because that is how I feel when I'm on the golf course, because I can smell the freshly cut grass, the soapy golf balls, and finally the delicious food from the pro shop. Some of my favorite things to do there is to try to finally beat my dad's score, play in tournaments to see how well I really play and sometimes the people who hold the tournament give prizes to the winners. Finally one of my most favorite things to play with my dad and brother and if we see somebody on the same hole as us we might ask them to play with us. When ever I win I feel like I own the course but I don't because the Links apartments own's the course which is in Edmond, Oklahoma. Even if I did own it I would have to share it with the other golfers, and anyways some times it is just fun to see other people play and watch the flag flapping in the wind,

the golf clubs just waiting for some one to use them,
and the sand trap and pond stealing all the balls from the
golfers. I guess the saying is true. Some of the best
things in life are free, well for kids anyway.

Score Point: 3

An effective introduction sets up this response about the joys of being at the golf course. Good use of description (watch the flag flapping in the wind, the golf clubs just waiting for someone to use them, and the sand trap and pond stealing all the balls from the golfers) adds to the depth of development and enables the reader to get a sense of the writer's unique perspective. Progression between ideas isn't always smooth and controlled, but the response is still easy to follow. Conventions are appropriate, and overall this response is generally effective.

South Paradise Island

My favorite place to go to in the whole world is South Paradise Island because I get to spend more time with my family and I never get bored. When I told you I never get bored, I mean never! Because there is always something to do. Let's say you want to play on the beach, or go swimming in a pool, you name it, there is Schlitterbahn, surfing, and big hotels. I myself like go carting, and parasailing. One time I was running to the beach and something terrible happened. I ran by the pool and I tripped and fell in the water, and I did a little flip that made a lot of people laugh. But I was okay with it, I laughed so hard that I fell in again. Then when I got to the beach my parents said "Why are you so wet?" I said "I accidentally fell in the swimming pool at the hotel."

My parents laughed at it too. They laughed so hard they spit out their coke. And that was really embarrassing. I think that the best tradition of all is Schlitterbahn. I think that because my family always goes there before anything else. There's a million things to do there at Schlitterbahn. There's water slides, playsets, and a lot of food. And there was one water ride that had a really steep hill that was so steep I almost fell off of my raft! I was scared but it was fun. But the best, best, best thing in the world is family. Family is the best because they love you and will love you forever. That is why we go on this trip and that is why I am writing this. I am writing this to show you that family is the most important thing in your whole life!

Score Point: 3

The writer of this generally effective response presents highlights of family trips to South Padre Island. Sentence-to-sentence progression is, for the most part, smooth, and the writer uses specific detail (I myself like go-carting and parasailing; they laughed so hard they spit out their coke. And that was really embarrassing) to add some depth and voice to the response. In addition, generally good control of conventions adds to the effectiveness of the response.

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.

Score Point 4 Guide Papers

TAKS Grade 4
Spring 2006

G-19a

White sparkling snow surrounded my family and me. We were at Copper Mountain, Colorado. Copper Mountain was a skiing resort. There were tons of people there ready to ski. I was just learning to ski so I took the easiest trail with my dad. My mom was going with my two older brothers
KYLE and TRAVIS.

First we had to catch a ski lift. (Ski lifts are these metal seats connected to an iron pole that'll take you to a certain ski trail.) When we finally got on a ski lift the first thing I did was look down. The snow was a dazzling sight glinting in the first rays of sunlight. The evergreen trees were getting smaller and smaller, until they were just little green dots, but the people were the most spectacular sight of all. They were like a wave of colors, all moving at separate times. I stared in awe at the scenery down below until we had to jump off the ski lift. This was the most terrifying part. My dad and I held hands and jumped when the ski lift was low enough. My dad landed on his feet, but I landed on my knees, and almost pulled him down. My dad helped me up, brushed the snow off my legs, and smiled. I smiled back. I wasn't going to let a little fall get me down.

Now was time for the fun part, learning the steps of skiing. I fell down a lot but I knew that was just a part of learning. First, and most importantly I learned how to stop. Sometimes I stopped with such force I would almost fall, but luckily Dad was always there to catch me. I wasn't very good at skiing itself though. I watched people whiz past me as though skiing was as easy as walking. Lucky, I thought to myself as I watched them longingly. At least I get to spend time with my dad, I thought and cheered up. I slowly started to get it, and the better I got the faster I went. Which means after a while I was more than halfway down the hill!

Sadly though, we soon had to be getting back to our hotel. I hope we come back someday. Because I love this place, I thought with a glance over my shoulder at Copper Mountain.

Score Point: 4

This thoughtful response focuses on a ski trip with the writer's father. Strong details (The snow was a dazzling sight glinting in the first rays of sunlight) add to the development, and effective internal dialogue (Lucky, I thought to myself as I watched them longingly) help add a strong, authentic voice. The student has a consistent command of conventions that enhances this highly effective response.

My Favorite Place In The World

Most people think that a favorite place is a trip to Hawaii or a vacation that you loved. You may think that it's a hot day at SeaWorld or at Fiesta Texas. I guess you don't see it my way. Amusement parks, skiing, a trip to China and stuff like that are not the kind of favorite place that I'm thinking of. The place that I'm thinking of sounds boring, but is extremely fun. My favorite place to go is.... My friend LILY'S house!

Like I said, it sounds boring but is super fun. Here's one reason why. Inside LILY'S room she has a science lab. We collect DNA and run ink tests in the small lab. When we put LILY'S piece of hair on a paper towel, it looks invisible compared to my black hair that looks like a shadow. After collecting DNA, we run fiber tests and take notes. We also go outside to get samples of grasses and see it up close under the microscope. Spiders that we find look like tarantulas and yellow flower petals look like moons under the microscope. LILY'S lab is so much fun that I wish I could be in it every day.

Kaboom! An idea always explodes in LILY'S head that we should go on a walk around the neighborhood. We usually

only walk, but occasionally we ride scooters that seem to go as fast as a rocket. Usually, we collect things for the lab, such as grasses, strange flowers, acorns, pecans, rough rocks, dirt, the bark of trees, worms, insects, and hairy spiders. Other times we go on walks just to talk or to get away from MAX, LILY'S big brother. Riding all over the calm streets is fun, especially when ROSA, LILY'S friend up the street can join us. Then all three of us will skip down the streets and decide what to do next.

There are so many more ways to amuse ourselves for the rest of the day. ROSA always suggests to jump on the trampoline and LILY always says that we should eat something. I always want to go in our clubhouse. After a few minutes of arguing, we decide to spy. We gather some notepads and pens to take notes of what happens. Our codenames are Salsa, for ROSA, Blue Squirrel for LILY, and Green Acorn for me. All of us spy on MAX and write notes down. Then we have a meeting in HQ, practically giggling the entire meeting. We laugh and laugh until we can't laugh anymore. Then we go outside and jump on the tramp for the rest of the day.

When I have to leave for home, it's always hard for me to say goodbye to LILY and ROSA. Then, I leave and our playdate is over. Now you know why my favorite place is not Hawaii or China, but my friend LILY'S house.

Score Point: 4

A meaningful introduction engages the reader in this response about going to the writer's friend's house. The writer maintains a strong focus on the numerous activities she enjoys doing when visiting her friend and provides thorough and specific development regarding each event (collecting DNA for the lab, walking the neighborhood, spying on the friend's brother). Voice and control of conventions are both strong and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the response.

Some places bore me. But you know the mall is fine and arcades are cool but I really like going to the dentist's office. Here is a tipicle day at the Dentist's. You will see why I love it. When I walk in a loud, jingaly, cheerfull, bell rings. It makes me very happy. My eyes are planted to a very big red triangular prisem. I climb into it. My mother then signs me in. In the triangle millions of toys lay on top of the sea of games! Wow! I reach for a yo-yo. A woman's voice yells, "ABBY, are you ready for your cleaning?" without a single word I run and hop into a reclined chair. "Let's get started," says the woman. I close my eyes in comfort and open my mouth in joy. She looks in my mouth with a small mirror. Then she puts it away "No cavitys." She informs me. Docter NASAU owns this wonderful place. He walks by and chuckles at the way I'm sitting. He rubs his black beard. Ow! What was that in my mouth? A large, sharp, silver tool goes between my teeth then hits my gums repeatedly. Geeze! Glad that's over, "Grape or strawberry?" asks the woman. "Grape." I replecy. She pulls on purple grape flavored gloves. She was wearing old plastick green ones. "Bubble gum, ice cream sunday, Brownie, Birthday cake, choclet mint, grape jelly, or strawberry jam?" the lady lists all the tooth pastes. "Um... I can't dicide!" I whisper. "Brownie." I say unsure. The woman grabs a brown bottle. She squeezes some on a clean tooth brush and some on my tonge. She gently brushes my teeth. When finished she orders me to rinse and spit, I obey. Another tool enters my mouth. It sucks around my cheeks. The tool exits my mouth. I giggle at the way that it felt, I was almost like a mini vacume in my mouth. It really tickled! Another tool went into my pie hole and it started humming. But it wasn't on. "Close real tight!" warned the nurse. I did and water spilled into my mouth. Some water even came out of my mouth!

Only for two reasons. One I was laughing so hard and two it was over flowing! Once more flavors of something were listed. "Mint or no flavor?" I wasn't paying much attention so I said mint. A white goop was spread across my teeth. It was left on for awhile. "How are you doing today?" the woman said trying to start a conversation. "aghphph.nakel?" I answer. "Oh sorry." the lady apologizes. She wipes it off my teeth. "You will need some sealant," added the kind dentist. This time she grabbed a big white tube with green and yellow letters. The cap was blue. A magnificent turquoise really. She un-screwed it and with a q-tip spread it on my teeth. Some got on my lips. She wouldn't wipe it off. I didn't bother either. "I'll go talk to your mom about your incredible record of no cavitys!" The woman reported cheerfully. "You go play in the play center." she pointed to a bench with seven puzzles, three etche sketches, and two game cubes. I ran to the game cube and started pounding on the buttons. Minutes later the lady was holding my mom's hand and leading her to me. "ABBY quickly pick your prizes!" ordered the Dentist. I went and picked out a colorful pencil, one sticker, a new blue tooth brush with soft red bristles, plus a bag of floss. We left and I inhaled a deep breath and my mouth felt minty and clean.

So, you tell me, where is your favorite place? See you!

Score Point: 4

The writer of this engaging response chooses an unusual favorite place—the dentist's office. The writer goes into great depth and gives specific details about each event, from the flavor of the hygienist's gloves (She pulls on purple grape-flavored gloves) to the types of tools (A large, sharp, silver tool goes between my teeth then hits my gums repeatedly; it was almost like a mini vacuum in my mouth). The writer's obvious enjoyment of the experience adds strong voice, further enhancing this highly effective response.

My Secret Place

You may not think a bedroom is a favorite place for someone to visit, but in Texas, everything is a treasure and masterpiece. I treasure the one thing that calms me during a tornado watch alarm, or even a simple thunderstorm. My favorite place to attend is T&T Shelter Grounds: my special club house located right by my window. T&T Shelter Grounds was founded in 2004 (sometime in December). It was made because I needed a place to read. It was crowded around the house so I built it quickly. Over the month, it enhanced into a beautiful little fort. I made it with a blanket, 2 chairs, a radio, a tape dispenser, a towel, a pillow, and accessories (a mirror, a pair bow holder, a small table, and a plastic pan to mix potions in). I placed the blanket on top of the chairs and used my radio and tape dispenser to hold the corners in case the "roof" fell. I then spreaded the towel out and put in the pillow to lay on. I set up the accessories by color to represent rooms, and I was finished.

I love doing different activities inside T&T Shelter Grounds, because it seems easier to do those activities in a nice, quiet, comfortable area. I enjoy reading on the towels and pillows, because I focus and understand the context better. I fancy writing stories on the same area, so my writing can flow better. I even adore sleeping on that area, because it is comfort when I'm exhausted. One time, I spent the whole night in T&T Shelter Grounds on the towel and pillow, to camp out. I could n't go to sleep very well because I was so excited. Next thing I knew, it was 9:00 AM when I finally fell asleep. I barely received any rest, because in my family, we're not allowed to sleep after 9:00. I was so sleepy th at day! You can tell can't you? That story is

my most memorable moment out of all my experiences at T&T Shelter Grounds. So you see, I have fun doing lots of different activities at that fort. To have a delightful time, all I have to do is look at my window, then look down and climb inside my secret place.

T&T Shelter Grounds give me elation in my whole body. I don't have to pretend to be someone I'm not. I used to hide in my "shell" and not face the facts. Now, I can face them and realize: I NEED FUN! That's where my special fort comes in. I feel so great when I crawl inside that special place. It may not be the Bahamas or Hawaii! So what if it's not a visit to Disneyland? And I don't care if it's not a tour of Ancient Rome, or the grand finale of Rose Parade! The thing that counts is the happiness and wonderful feeling in yourself when you can finally admit you're laughing, or having fun! Can't you feel the freedom bite you when you're free of worries and hostage. "Come do this!" or "Go do that" suddenly disappears, and it's scary how long you haven't smiled from ear to ear. That's the freedom and elation I was talking about. That's the happiness that replaces your insides. Breathe joy once more, as you create your special spot. Feel great once more when you build your tent. T&T Shelter Grounds is the place for me! So even a tornado watch alarm or a small little thunderstorm can bring me to my calmest atmosphere; T&T Shelter Grounds. Some bad roads can lead to wonderful highways.

Score Point: 4

This insightful, descriptive response focuses on the homemade "shelter" in the writer's room. The writer thoroughly develops not only the physical description of the shelter (I placed the blanket on top of the chairs and used my radio and tape dispenser to hold the corners in case the "roof" fell) but also what the shelter represents emotionally (That's the freedom and elation I was talking about... Breathe joy once more as you create your special spot). This thoughtfulness creates depth and a strong, authentic voice. In addition, the progression of thought is smooth and controlled, and the writer demonstrates a consistent command of conventions throughout this highly effective composition.