e-asTTle Glossary

Category: a device for describing and scoring a particular skill level within an element of the marking rubric. The categories provide an overview of skill development within an element of writing.

Descriptors: statements found in the marking rubric that describe a particular point on the continuum of development in an element of writing. The descriptors for each element enable scoring decisions to be made.

Elements: the seven components of writing that are assessed by e-asTTle writing: ideas, structure and language, organisation, vocabulary, sentence structure, punctuation and spelling

Exemplars: samples of student writing produced in response to each e-asTTle writing prompt. The exemplars have been selected as representative, rather than ideal, examples of writing. Each writing sample has been scored, using the marking rubric. Annotations explain how scoring decisions have been made.

Notes: additional information provided on the marking rubric to assist in making judgments on the most appropriate scores. The notes are not an exhaustive list, but provide guidance on features that may be present in students' writing.

Prompts: open-ended writing topics designed to "prompt" rather than "prescribe" writing. This emphasis encourages students to draw on their individual and cultural knowledge to interpret the writing topic.

Purpose/specified purpose: the goal to be achieved by the writing; the reason for writing. For example, for the prompt "It is wrong to fight", the purpose is to persuade a reader to a point of view in relation to the statement "It is wrong to fight".

Topic: the broad context and subject matter specified by the prompt instructions. For the prompt "It is wrong to fight", the topic is fighting/violence

Glossary

Abstract vocabulary: words or phrases used to describe ideas or concepts that do not have a physical existence (e.g., loyalty, respect, kindness). See also concrete vocabulary.

Academic vocabulary: words and phrases that are commonly used in the classroom and in learning contexts but not often in everyday contexts (or with a different meaning in everyday contexts). Academic vocabulary includes the vocabulary required for classroom discussion and curriculum work, e.g., define, method.

Active voice: a verb form in which the subject of the sentence performs the action of the verb, e.g., We [subject] mixed [verb] the baking soda and vinegar. See also passive voice.

Adjective: a word that modifies (provides more information about) a noun, e.g., red bus, tall building, beautiful flower

Adverb: a word whose main function is to modify (provide more information about) a verb, e.g., He spoke angrily; She walked slowly

Apostrophe: a punctuation mark (') that signals the omission of letters as in a contraction (e.g., can't, didn't) or that indicates possession (e.g., the dog's tail, the girl's hat, the women's dresses)

Article: a word (a, an or the) that introduces a noun. The article may be indefinite (a bus, an umbrella) or definite (the shops).

Blends: two or three consonants that work together, e.g., string, blue, growing. Each consonant sound can be heard in the blend.

Chunk: a sound or a group of letters, within a spoken or written word, that includes more than one phoneme or grapheme. Identifying known or familiar chunks may help students spell or decode unfamiliar words.

Clause: a grammatical structure that contains a subject and a verb, e.g., The butterfly emerges from the cocoon. Clauses may be independent (able to stand alone, expressing a complete thought, as in I play with my friends) or dependent (unable to stand alone or express a complete thought, as in When I am on holiday).

Coherence: the quality of being logical and consistent, so that meaning is clear

Cohesive devices/linking words/text connectives: words or phrases used to make links between items or ideas in a text so that the reader is able to track how meaning is being developed

Colon: a punctuation mark ":" used at the end of a statement (usually a sentence) to introduce an explanation, an example, a list or a quotation, e.g., There are many different kinds of music: classical, pop, rock, rap and folk

Comma: a punctuation mark "," whose functions include the separation of ideas or elements within a sentence. Commas can be used to separate phrases (On Wednesday evening, we went to the movies), clauses (Because it was Dad's birthday, we went to the movies) or items in a list (We ate ice-cream, popcorn and lollies).

Complex ideas: ideas that move beyond the immediate, everyday world of the writer, to draw on wider themes and issues that affect a broad range of people

Complex punctuation: punctuation that may be considered as higher-order, including commas to mark phrases and clauses, punctuation of direct speech, apostrophes for possession, colons, semicolons and parentheses

Complex sentence: a sentence that has a main, independent clause and at least one dependent (subordinate) clause beginning with a subordinating conjunction such as when, how, because, although, e.g., She could paint amazing pictures [independent clause], although she was only six [dependent clause]; When we went to class [dependent clause], I put the certificate in my book bag [independent clause]. The subordinate clause is dependent on the main clause and cannot stand alone.

Compound sentence: a sentence consisting of at least two independent, main clauses. The clauses are independent of each other (each one could stand alone) and are linked by a coordinating conjunction such as and, but, or or, e.g., I mowed the lawn, but you trimmed the edges.

Compound–complex sentence: a sentence consisting of a compound sentence plus as least one dependent clause, e.g., I mowed the lawn, but you trimmed the edges after I had finished

Concrete vocabulary: words and phrases used to describe objects or events that exist in a physical form (e.g., house, table, flower). See also abstract vocabulary.

Conjunction: a word used to link two clauses within a sentence. Conjunctions can be coordinating (joining two independent clauses, e.g., I have two friends and they are both girls) or subordinating (joining an independent and a dependent clause, e.g., I came because I needed to see you).

Continuous texts: texts in which sentences are organised into paragraphs. See also non-continuous text.

Contraction: a shortened version of a word or words, formed by removing one or more letters and replacing them with an apostrophe, e.g., it's, hadn't, couldn't

Dash: a punctuation mark (–) that typically signals added information, an interruption or a change of thought, or that adds emphasis, e.g., I have two friends – both girls – and I play with them every day

Dependent clause: a clause that is unable to stand alone or express a complete thought, as in When I am on holiday. Dependent clauses (also known as subordinate clauses) add more detail to an independent (or main) clause.

Difficult words: words that are not considered to be high-frequency and that do not follow common letter patterns and spelling rules. Difficult words may include:

- Words that contain unusual consonant blends, digraphs and trigraphs (e.g., guide, guess, guard, scholar, schedule, scheme)
- Compound words (e.g., worthwhile, nevertheless)
- Homophones (e.g., course/coarse, practicing/practising, whether/weather)
- Silent letters (e.g., gnome, honest, wrestling, pseudonym)
- Difficult or unusual letter patterns (e.g., hideous, amateur, behaviour, fashion, cautious, comfortable)
- Commonly confused words (e.g., bought/brought, dependent/dependant)
- Irregular words (e.g., height, through, yacht)

Digraph: two letters representing one sound: -th, -ng, -ee, -ou. See also vowel digraph.

Direct speech: the words that are actually said by someone. Direct speech is indicated by inverted commas when included in written text, e.g., "This is the first hike I've ever been on," said Bob. See also reported speech.

Elaborate: to add more detail. Elaboration of ideas in writing may involve description, explanation, analysis, evaluation or additional information.

Ellipsis/ellipses: a punctuation mark (. . .) consisting of three equally spaced dots. It is used to indicate the omission of words or sentences, for example in a quotation. It can also be used, especially at the end of a sentence, to indicate an unfinished thought (e.g., She wondered where the hair straighteners could have got to …).

Expressive language/vocabulary: vivid, lively, and/or emotive words and terms

Extending phrases and/or clauses: words or groups of words added to a simple sentence to add detail, e.g., The three men walked into the dense, overgrown bush, carrying large packs. Extending phrases or clauses may be at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of a sentence.

Figurative language: language that uses images to build meaning without literal description and often without direct comparison, e.g., by using metaphor, as in Night is a Blanket. Other forms of figurative language include similes (the ice cream tasted like a fluffy cloud) and onomatopoeia (the waves crashed on the shore). Also referred to as "figures of speech".

Figure of speech: see figurative language.

Flow: the rhythm, pace and logical consistency of a piece of writing. Writing that has "flow" moves in an easy, natural way so the reader can follow it without difficulty or interruption.

Fragments: see sentence fragments.

Generalisation: moving beyond concrete facts to make links to more abstract or universal principles or themes

Grapheme: a written unit that represents one phoneme: e.g., f, th, o, ee

High-frequency words: words that occur most commonly in writing, such as those listed in essential lists 1-7 (Croft, 1998)

Hyphen: a punctuation mark (-) used to join compound words, most commonly compound adjectives that come before a noun, e.g., a well-known fact. (Note that a compound adjective formed with an adverb ending in –ly is not usually hyphenated, e.g., a beautifully presented portfolio.)

Idiom: a sequence of words with a fixed expression in common usage, and whose meaning is not literal, e.g., raining cats and dogs; kick the bucket; put a sock in it!

Incomplete sentence: see sentence fragment.

Independent clause: a clause capable of standing on its own and that conveys a message.
An example of a sentence with two independent clauses is: The sky grew dark and the clouds rolled in.
An example of a sentence with an independent clause followed by a dependent clause is: They smiled as if they meant it. See also clause; dependent clause.

Language features: the language patterns typically associated with a text written for a particular purpose, including choice of tense, tone, connectives and vocabulary. For example, when narrating, typical language features include past tense, connectives denoting time, expressive and/or descriptive vocabulary, and dialogue.

Linking words/cohesive devices/text connectives: words or phrases that help the reader follow the relationships between the parts of a text (e.g., first, finally, because, therefore)

Metaphor: a figure of speech that makes an imaginative link between two objects or ideas in order to create a clear or surprising image, for example using the idea of a blanket to create an image of the night sky in Night is a Blanket

Modal verbs: verbs that convey judgments about the likelihood of events. The nine modal verbs are can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would.

Mood: the atmosphere created by the writing and conveyed to the reader, for example mysterious, humorous or ominous

Morphemes: the smallest parts of words that have meaning. Snowing has two morphemes, snow and -ing. See also morphology.

Morphology: the study of the forms of words and how they are constructed in terms of parts that have meaning

Nominalisation: forming a noun from a verb or adjective, e.g., the noun breakage formed from the verb break. Nominalisation makes a written text more compact and concise, e.g., When your body reaches an abnormally low temperature, you will need to be taken to hospital might be rewritten with nominalisations as Hypothermia requires hospitalisation.

Non-continuous texts: texts that do not contain sentences organised into paragraphs, e.g., charts and graphs, tables and matrices, diagrams, maps, forms, information sheets, advertisements, vouchers and certificates

Noun: a word class with a naming function: the cat, a dream.

Noun–pronoun referencing: the match between a pronoun and the noun that it refers to.
An example of incorrect noun–pronoun referencing is: The dogs are splashing in the water. It has a shaggy coat.

Objective language/tone: language that does not focus on thoughts, feelings, and opinions. Third person pronouns (e.g., it, they) are reasonably common but first and second (e.g., I, you) are not. See also subjective language.

Onomatopoeia: the use of words that evoke the sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to (e.g., splash, honk)

Orientation: an opening statement/s that provides the reader with a clear idea of what the text will be about, and/or that engages the reader's interest

Overblown language: language that is exaggerated or pretentious

Overgeneralise (spelling rules): apply spelling or morphological patterns more widely than is appropriate, such as to a word that is irregular. An overgeneralisation of the spelling rule "add –ed to a verb to form the past tense" is, I standed up.

Parentheses: punctuation marks, i.e. (), consisting of upright curved lines, most commonly used to mark off qualifying phrases, as in The girl (the one in the red dress) is called Alysha. Also called brackets.

Passive voice: a verb form in which the subject of the verb receives the verb's action, i.e., the subject is the target of the action, as in Baking soda and vinegar [subject] were mixed [verb]. See also active voice.

Personal words/vocabulary: words and phrases that have personal meaning for the writer, such as familiar names and words for places, activities, actions, and feelings that are important to that person

Phoneme: the smallest segment of sound in spoken language

Phoneme–grapheme relationships: the relationships between spoken sound units and the written symbols that represent them

Phrase: A cluster of words smaller than a clause, forming a grammatical unit: the tall trees; in a box

Precise words: words that are exact and accurate in expressing the writer's intention. Precise words may be descriptive, expressive, academic, technical or abstract.

Prepositions: words that describe a relationship between other words in the sentence, most typically location in space (under the bed, in the box, on the television) or time (after the flood, during the race, since my birthday)

Pronoun: a word that can substitute for a noun or a noun phrase, e.g., I've got a red hat and Jane's got a green one; My Uncle Fred's just arrived. He's quite tired.

Referring words: words that create links in the writing, by referring to something that has already been mentioned, e.g., The butterfly has two wings. These are orange, black and white. The most common referring words are pronouns.

Relative pronoun: the pronouns who, whom, whose, that, which. These pronouns introduce relative clauses, such as People who recycle plastic bags are helping to take care of our planet and reduce global warming; The tadpole develops two small legs, which will eventually allow it to move on land.

Reported speech: a summary or paraphrase of what someone said, in which the actual words are not quoted directly. Reported speech does not require inverted commas, e.g., Bob said it was the first hike he'd ever been on. See also direct speech.

Run-on sentences: two or more sentences that have been run together without appropriate punctuation to separate them (i.e., full stop and capital letter, or a semicolon) or an appropriate conjunction to join them. Run-on sentences are often joined inappropriately with commas (also known as comma splices).

Semicolon: the punctuation mark used between two independent clauses (sentences) that are related in meaning: I am going home; I intend to stay there.

Sensory detail/language: language that appeals to the senses, describing how something smells, feels, looks, sounds or tastes

Sentence fragment: a sentence that is incomplete because it is missing at least one essential element, such as a subject or verb. A sentence fragment does not express a complete thought.

Simile: A figure of speech that compares one thing with another, using like or as: The ice cream tasted like a fluffy cloud; Her eyes were as bright as stars.

Simple ideas: ideas that are related to the personal, immediate world of the writer (concrete, predictable, familiar, personal or close to the writer's experience)

Simple sentence: a sentence that contains a single, independent clause: My community needs a new gym

Structural features: the component parts that are typically associated with a text written for a particular purpose. For example, when narrating, structural features may include an orientation to the context, a series of events, a problem and a resolution.

Subject–verb agreement: use of the correct form of the verb (singular or plural) to match the subject. A singular subject takes a singular verb, and a plural subject takes a plural verb.

Technical vocabulary: words that are specific to a particular topic, field, or academic discipline, e.g., antennae, chrysalis, larvae

Tense: a change in the form of a verb to mark the time at which an action takes place (present tense: tell; past tense: told)

Text connectives/cohesive devices/linking words: the words or phrases used to make links between items or ideas in a text so the reader is able to track how meaning is being developed

Tone: the attitude that the writer conveys, through choice of vocabulary and/or phrasing, e.g., informal/formal or objective/subjective

Topic: the subject matter to be addressed by the writing, e.g., dogs at the beach, the life cycle of the Monarch butterfly, or friendship

Topic sentence: the first and most general sentence of a paragraph, which introduces the main idea (topic) being written about in that paragraph

Vowel digraph: two vowels combining to make a single vowel sound, e.g., ea (beat), oa (boat).

Word chunks: see chunk.

References

Croft, C. with Mapa, L. (1998). Spell-write: An aid to writing and spelling (Rev. ed.). Wellington, New Zealand: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Further information

Additional information about language, which will help teachers to analyse student responses to e-asTTle writing prompts, can be found in Thinking about how language works, available through the Assessment Resource Banks (arb.nzcer.org.nz).