ACT College and Career Readiness Standards—Writing

These Standards describe what students who score in specific score ranges on the Writing Test of ACT Explore,® ACT Plan,® and the ACT® college readiness assessment are likely to know and be able to do.

Score Range	Expressing Judgments (EXJ)
3–4	**EXJ 201.** Show a little understanding of the persuasive purpose of the task but neglect to take or to maintain a position on the issue in the prompt **EXJ 202.** Generate reasons for a position that are irrelevant or unclear
5–6	**EXJ 301.** Show a basic understanding of the persuasive purpose of the task by taking a position on the issue in the prompt **EXJ 302.** Generate reasons for a position that are vague or simplistic; show a little recognition of the complexity of the issue in the prompt by — briefly noting implications and/or complications of the issue, and/or — briefly or unclearly responding to counterarguments to the writer's position
7–8	**EXJ 401.** Show clear understanding of the persuasive purpose of the task by taking a position on the issue in the prompt and offering some context for discussion **EXJ 402.** Generate reasons for a position that are relevant and clear; show some recognition of the complexity of the issue in the prompt by — acknowledging implications and/or complications of the issue, and/or — providing some response to counterarguments to the writer's position
9–10	**EXJ 501.** Show strong understanding of the persuasive purpose of the task by taking a position on the specific issue in the prompt and offering a broad context for discussion **EXJ 502.** Generate thoughtful reasons for a position; show recognition of the complexity of the issue in the prompt by — partially evaluating implications and/or complications of the issue, and/or — anticipating and responding to counterarguments to the writer's position
11–12	**EXJ 601.** Show advanced understanding of the persuasive purpose of the task by taking a position on the specific issue in the prompt and offering a critical context for discussion **EXJ 602.** Generate insightful reasons for a position; show understanding of the complexity of the issue in the prompt by — examining different perspectives, and/or — evaluating implications or complications of the issue, and/or — anticipating and fully responding to counterarguments to the writer's position

Scores below 3 do not permit useful generalizations about students' writing abilities.

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Score Range	Focusing on the Topic (FOC)
3–4	**FOC 201.** Maintain a focus on the general topic in the prompt throughout most of the essay
5–6	**FOC 301.** Maintain a focus on the general topic in the prompt throughout the essay
7–8	**FOC 401.** Maintain a focus on the specific issue in the prompt throughout most of the essay **FOC 402.** Present a thesis that establishes focus on the topic
9–10	**FOC 501.** Maintain a focus on discussing the specific issue in the prompt throughout the essay **FOC 502.** Present a thesis that establishes a focus on the writer's position on the issue
11–12	**FOC 601.** Maintain a precise focus on discussing the specific issue in the prompt throughout the essay **FOC 602.** Present a critical thesis that clearly establishes the focus on the writer's position on the issue

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Score Range	Developing Ideas (DEV)
3–4	**DEV 201.** Offer little development in support of ideas; attempt to clarify ideas by merely restating them or by using general examples that may not be clearly relevant **DEV 202.** Show little or no movement between general and specific ideas and examples
5–6	**DEV 301.** Offer limited development in support of ideas; clarify ideas somewhat with vague explanation and the use of general examples **DEV 302.** Show little movement between general and specific ideas and examples
7–8	**DEV 401.** Provide adequate development in support of ideas; clarify ideas by using some specific reasons, details, and examples **DEV 402.** Show some movement between general and specific ideas and examples
9–10	**DEV 501.** Provide thorough development in support of ideas; extend ideas by using specific, logical reasons and illustrative examples **DEV 502.** Show clear movement between general and specific ideas and examples
11–12	**DEV 601.** Provide ample development in support of ideas; substantiate ideas with precise use of specific, logical reasons and illustrative examples **DEV 602.** Show effective movement between general and specific ideas and examples

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Score Range	Organizing Ideas (ORI)
3–4	**ORI 201.** Provide a discernible organizational structure by grouping together a few ideas **ORI 202.** Use transitional words and phrases that are simple and obvious, or occasionally misleading **ORI 203.** Present a minimal introduction and conclusion
5–6	**ORI 301.** Provide a simple organizational structure by logically grouping some ideas **ORI 302.** Use simple and obvious transitional words and phrases **ORI 303.** Present an underdeveloped introduction and conclusion
7–8	**ORI 401.** Provide an adequate but simple organizational structure by logically grouping most ideas **ORI 402.** Use some appropriate transitional words and phrases **ORI 403.** Present a somewhat developed introduction and conclusion
9–10	**ORI 501.** Provide a coherent organizational structure with some logical sequencing of ideas **ORI 502.** Use accurate and clear transitional words and phrases to convey logical relationships between ideas **ORI 503.** Present a generally well-developed introduction and conclusion
11–12	**ORI 601.** Provide a unified, coherent organizational structure that presents a logical progression of ideas **ORI 602.** Use precise transitional words, phrases, and sentences to convey logical relationships between ideas **ORI 603.** Present a well-developed introduction that effectively frames the prompt's issue and writer's argument; present a well-developed conclusion that extends the essay's ideas

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Score Range	Using Language (USL)
3−4	**USL 201.** Show limited control of language by —correctly employing some of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, and mechanics, but with distracting errors that sometimes significantly impede understanding —choosing words that are simplistic or vague —using only simple sentence structure
5−6	**USL 301.** Show a basic control of language by —correctly employing some of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, and mechanics, but with distracting errors that sometimes impede understanding —choosing words that are simple but generally appropriate —using a little sentence variety
7−8	**USL 401.** Show adequate use of language to communicate by —correctly employing many of the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, and mechanics, but with some distracting errors that may occasionally impede understanding —choosing words that are appropriate —using some varied kinds of sentence structures to vary pace
9−10	**USL 501.** Show competent use of language to communicate ideas by —correctly employing most conventions of standard English grammar, usage, and mechanics, with a few distracting errors but none that impede understanding —generally choosing words that are precise and varied —using several kinds of sentence structures to vary pace and to support meaning
11−12	**USL 601.** Show effective use of language to communicate ideas clearly by —correctly employing most conventions of standard English grammar, usage, and mechanics, with just a few, if any, errors —consistently choosing words that are precise and varied —using a variety of kinds of sentence structures to vary pace and to support meaning

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