

WIAT[®]-III^{A&NZ} Essay Composition: “Quick Score” for Theme Development and Text Organisation

The following steps can be used to score most essays quickly and reliably. To ensure accurate scores, however, you must familiarise yourself with the Scoring Guide (in the online scoring platform or in appendix B.6 of the Examiner’s Manual) prior to using this Quick Score.

If an essay is particularly challenging to score, and you are having difficulty making scoring decisions using these steps, you should refer back to the more thorough scoring rules and examples provided in the Scoring Guide and in the Scoring and Normative Supplement for School Aged Children.

If you need clarification of a grammatical term (e.g., independent clause), refer to the Basic Rules for Written Grammar and Mechanics in appendix B.2 of the Examiner’s Manual or the list of Helpful Definitions at the very beginning of appendix B.6 of the Examiner’s Manual.

If you need to see scoring examples, refer to the Scoring Guide and the Scoring and Normative Supplement for School Aged Children.

Step 1: Read the Essay

Give the essay a quick read-through. At this point you’re just getting a lay of the land. You will notice (but not score) whether reasons are stated in the introduction, how the student presents reasons in the body of the essay, and whether reasons are stated in the conclusion. You will also notice whether paragraph structure is used.

Step 2: Score Introduction

Score the Introduction using the following rules:

0 points: If no thesis statement is provided (a complete sentence that includes the name of a game and expresses fondness for it), score Introduction 0 points, and move on to scoring Conclusion.

1 point: If the beginning of the essay includes a thesis statement, the score for Introduction is at least 1 point.

- If you didn’t notice any restatement of reasons when you read through the essay, the score for Introduction remains 1 point, and you can move on to scoring Conclusion.

2 points: The score for Introduction is 2 points if the student summarised his/her reasons in the introduction by restating key words

- If, on your initial read through, you noticed that the student attempted to restate his/her reasons in the introduction, check to see whether each reason in the introduction includes 1 or more of the same key words as the reasons in the body of the essay. If so, score Introduction 2 points.

Step 3: Score Conclusion

Score the Conclusion using the following rules:

0 points: If no thesis statement is provided, score Conclusion 0 points and move on to scoring Paragraphs.

1 point: If the end of the essay includes a thesis statement (a complete sentence that includes the name of a game and expresses fondness for it), the score for Conclusion is at least 1 point.

- If you didn't notice any restatement of reasons when you read through the essay, the score for Conclusion remains 1 point, and you can move on to scoring Paragraphs.

2 points: The score for Conclusion is 2 points if the student summarised his/her reasons in the conclusion by restating key words.

- If, on your initial read through, you noticed that the student attempted to restate his/her reasons in the conclusion, check to see whether each reason in the conclusion includes 1 or more of the same key words as the reasons in the body of the essay. If so, score Conclusion 2 points.

Step 4: Score Paragraphs

Score Paragraphs using the following rules:

- Count the number of paragraphs in the essay. Each paragraph = 1 point (max = 5 points).
 - ▶ If there is only one block of text, it can be counted as 1 paragraph as long as it contains at least 2 punctuation marks, each following a different statement.
 - ▶ If there are multiple blocks of text, each one (up to 5) can be counted as a paragraph as long as they:
 - include at least 2 punctuation marks, each following a different statement (in other words, the paragraph must have at least 2 statements, but those statements could be complete sentences, fragments, and/or run-on sentences), and
 - are separated from each other using either indentation or line spacing.

Step 5: Score Transitions

Score Transitions using the following rules:

- Do not reread the essay.
- Find every ending punctuation mark. Circle any word that comes after an ending punctuation mark if it is in the *List of Acceptable Transitions* provided at the end of this document.

Tip: You will quickly develop a mental list of words that are commonly used but **do not** receive credit (e.g., “There are,” “And,” “But”).

- Each circled word = 1 point for Transitions (max = 5 points).
 - ▶ If the same transition was used more than once, only count it once.

Step 6: Find Reasons Why

Find all the reasons why the student likes the game.

In the following discussion, A–H correspond to A–H in the section of the Scoring Guide for scoring Reasons Why and Elaborations.

Tip: Identify **every** reason in the essay (even though the maximum score for Reasons Why is 3). This allows you to give credit for all possible elaborations in Step 8.

Go through the essay with a highlighter and **highlight the flags** described below; these flags signal the most common ways that students present reasons:

A. Key words in the body of the essay that were restated in the Introduction and/or Conclusion (you would have already found these in Step 2)

- Highlight each independent clause or complete sentence that includes a key word.

B. The topic sentence of a paragraph

- If the essay is only 1 paragraph, skip B.
- If the essay includes 2 or more paragraphs, look at the first sentence **of all but the first paragraph**.
 - ▶ Highlight the sentence if it is a complete thought that summarises the information presented in that paragraph. If it is a run-on, highlight the first independent clause only (credit is still given for a run-on topic sentence).

C. Bulleted/Numbered lists

- Highlight each bulleted or numbered statement that is an independent clause or complete sentence.
- Highlight each bulleted or numbered statement that forms an independent clause or complete sentence when joined with a carrier phrase. Treat each one as one reason when scoring in Step 7.

D. Enumerative words/phrases that specify number or order (e.g., one, two, three; first, second, third; finally, last, next)

- Highlight each clause or sentence that includes an enumerative word or phrase.
 - ▶ If the statement including the enumerative word or phrase clearly refers to a clause or complete sentence next to it, highlight that as well (e.g., This leads me to my first reason. My family loves it.). Treat as one reason when scoring in Step 7.

E. The word “reason” or “reasons”

- Highlight each clause or complete sentence that includes the word “reason” or “reasons.”
 - ▶ Each usage of the word should be treated as one reason when scoring in Step 7 (e.g., The reasons I like it are that it’s fun and interesting and challenging = 1 reason).
 - ▶ If the statement including the word “reason” or “reasons” clearly refers to a clause or complete sentence next to it, highlight that as well (e.g., You get to use chips. That is the reason I like bingo.). Treat as one reason when scoring in Step 7.

F. The phrase “that is (that’s) why” or “this is why”

- Highlight each clause or complete sentence that includes the phrase “that is (that’s) why” or “this is why.”
 - ▶ If the statement including the phrase “that is (that’s) why” or “this is why” clearly refers to a clause or complete sentence next to it, highlight that as well (e.g., You get to use chips. That is why I like bingo). Treat as one reason when scoring in Step 7.

G. Superlatives (e.g., best, favourite, most, coolest, biggest, fastest, greatest, etc.)

- Highlight each clause or complete sentence that uses a superlative to express praise for the game. (Do **not** highlight negative superlatives like worst, dumbest, etc.)
 - ▶ If the statement including a superlative clearly refers to a clause or complete sentence next to it, highlight that as well (e.g., You get to use chips. That is the best). Treat as one reason when scoring in Step 7.

H. Additive conjunctions other than “and” (e.g., also, in addition, another, the other, as well as, furthermore, plus, too)

- Highlight each clause or complete sentence that includes an additive conjunction other than “and.”
 - ▶ If the statement including the additive conjunction other than “and” clearly refers to a clause or complete sentence next to it, highlight that as well (e.g., The game has many levels. This is *also* a reason why it’s fun.). Treat as one reason when scoring in Step 7.

I. The word “because”

- Highlight each time the word “because” is used. Only highlight the word “because”—don’t highlight the rest of the sentence. Refer to Steps 7 and 8 to determine how to score.

Step 7: Score Reasons Why

Score Reasons Why using the following rules:

- All highlighted statements are scored as *reasons why*. Score each reason 1 point (max = 3 points).
- If you highlighted the word “because” as a flag, you need to determine if the statement is a reason or an elaboration by following these rules:
 - ▶ If the word “because” immediately follows a highlighted reason, it’s being used as an elaboration. Do **not** score it as a reason. Score it as an elaboration in Step 8.
 - ▶ All other statements that include the word “because” are scored as reasons. Highlight the rest of the sentence that includes the word “because” to indicate that it’s a reason. Score each reason 1 point (max = 3 points).

Step 8: Score Elaborations

Score Elaborations using the following rules:

- Underline each independent clause or sentence that immediately follows a highlighted reason and is **not** a contrasting statement. Score each 1 point (max = 3 points).

Tip: Contrasting statements include words like *although, yet, however*.

- Underline each dependent clause beginning with “because” that immediately follows a highlighted reason. Score each 1 point (max = 3 points).

Step 9: Score Remaining Reasons Why

Score Any Remaining Reasons using the following rules:

- If the essay has fewer than 3 reasons, and you highlighted additive conjunctions, you may be able to give credit for more reasons (max = 3 points).
 - ▶ Students often use additive conjunctions (e.g., also, in addition, too) to present additional reasons, so the statement just before a reason with an additive conjunction might also be a reason (e.g., You get to hit the ball. It helps you build endurance *too*. = 2 reasons why).
 - ▶ Look at the highlighted reasons that include an additive conjunction other than “and.” If there is an independent clause or complete sentence immediately preceding any of these reasons that is not highlighted, you can highlight and score that clause/sentence as a reason as well.

Step 10: Check Score

Quickly check your scoring using the following guidelines:

1. Make sure the first word of the essay does **not** receive credit as a Transition in Step 5 (see *List of Acceptable Transitions* provided at the end of this document).
2. Make sure each reason is a complete thought. If it is not, do **not** give it credit.
3. Make sure each reason is different (repetitions of the same reason do not get credit).
4. Make sure each reason and elaboration is not just a restatement of the thesis. Restatements of the thesis statement do not get credit as reasons or elaborations (e.g., I like Soccer. It’s my favourite game because I like it.).
5. Make sure the first sentence of a paragraph is **not** scored as an elaboration. An elaboration **must** immediately follow a reason to get credit.
6. Make sure the Elaborations score does **not** exceed the Reasons Why score.

Frequently Asked Questions About Score Interpretation

1. What makes a high-scoring essay?

The following 6 features:

- 5 paragraphs
- An introduction that includes a thesis statement and summarises the reasons that will be presented; reasons are most effectively summarised for the reader by restating one or more of the same key words
- Use of transitions to show relationships between ideas
- 3 or more reasons to support the thesis statement
- 1 or more elaborations to support each reason
- A conclusion that summarises the reasons presented; reasons are most effectively summarised for the reader by restating one or more of the same key words

Tip: Remember that scores for this subtest are based upon a first draft written in 10 minutes.

2. How do I interpret the Essay Composition scores?

Compare the student's performance in each of the following areas to evaluate strengths and weaknesses:

Grammar and Mechanics

Evaluate the Grammar and Mechanics supplemental score. A low score may indicate weaknesses in the areas of grammar, spelling, capitalisation, and/or punctuation.

Tip: Also consider using correct minus incorrect word sequences (CIWS) within curriculum-based measures as a progress monitoring tool.

Content and Organisation

To interpret the Essay Composition (Content and Organisation) subtest score, compare the score for Word Count with the score for Theme Development and Text Organisation. Using the scoring software, these scores are reported separately in the Subtest Component Score Summary table. Reporting these scores separately allows you to compare productivity (measured by Word Count) with Theme Development and Text Organisation in order to identify specific skill strengths and weaknesses and to focus instruction accordingly.

A low Word Count score indicates a weakness in written productivity, whereas a low Theme Development and Text Organisation score indicates difficulties in organising and presenting ideas in written form. Note that these scores are **not** designed to measure grammar or mechanics.

As with any subtest or composite score, if there is a discrepancy between the scores that contribute to a subtest or composite, then the subtest or composite score may mask weaknesses. If the Essay Composition subtest produces discrepant scores, reporting the subtest component scores to describe discrepancies is advised. For example, if a student writes an essay that is very productive (high Word Count score) but lacking in content and quality (low Theme Development and Text Organisation score), the overall subtest score may mask the student's skill weaknesses. In this case, it is important to describe the student's performance using the subtest component scores for Word Count and Theme Development and Text Organisation.

List of Acceptable Transitions

1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.	Despite	In sum/summary/summation	On the whole	Then
A further	Doubtless	In the (season of the year)	On top of that	Thereafter
A second/third/etc.	Due to	In the end	Once	Therefore
A similar	During	In the first place	One	These are/were
Above all	Earlier	In the future/past	Ordinarily	Third
Additionally	Equally important	In the meantime	Other	This also means
After	Especially	In the same manner/way	Otherwise	This concludes
Afterward(s)	Even	In the second place	Overall	This is/can
Again	Eventually	In truth	Particularly	This/That means
All in all	Ever since	Incidentally	Perhaps	Those are/were
All these reasons	Fifth	Indeed	Plus	Though
Also	Finally	Instead	Possibly	Thus
Alternatively	First(ly)	It follows that	Presently	To begin with
Although	For example/instance	It is true	Previously	To conclude
Altogether	For one (thing)	It seems	Probably	To do this
An additional	For that/these/this/those	Just as	Provided that	To doubt that
An example	Formerly	Last(ly)	Rarely	To explain
Another	Fourth	Lately	Rather	To illustrate
As a consequence/result	Frequently	Later	Recently	To put it another way
As an example	Further/Furthermore	Like	Regardless	To put it differently
As I said/have shown	Generally	Likewise	Remarkably	To start with
As long as	Given	Maybe	Right now	To sum (it) up
As soon as	Granted	Meanwhile	Second(ly)	To summarise
As well as	Hence	Moreover	Shortly	To this end
As you can see	Here is/are	Most important(ly)	Similarly	Today
At first	However	Most of all	Simultaneously	Tomorrow
At last	Immediately	Most of the time	Since	Truly
At that time/point	Importantly	My first/second/third/etc.	So far	Typically
At the same time	In (my) conclusion	My last/final/concluding	So that	Ultimately
At times	In addition	Namely	Sometimes	Unless
Basically	In any case/event	Naturally	Soon	Unlike
Because	In brief	Nevertheless/Nonetheless	Specifically	Until
Before	In case	Next	Still	Usually
Besides	In contrast	Not only	Subsequently	When
Best of all	In fact	Now	Surely	Whenever
Beyond	In general	Obviously	That is	Whereas
Certainly	In order to/for	Occasionally	The final/last/concluding	While
Clearly	In other words	Of course	The first/second/third/etc.	Without (a) doubt
Consequently	In particular	Often (times)	The main	Worst of all
Contrarily	In short	On one hand/the other hand	The next	Yesterday
Conversely	In simpler terms	On the contrary	The other	Yet another
Currently	In spite of			