

## Basic Skills Test (096)

### Purpose

The purpose of the Basic Skills test is to identify examinees who have demonstrated the fundamental skills in reading comprehension, language arts, mathematics, and writing required of entry-level educators in Illinois. The test is based upon the Basic Skills standards that were recommended by the Basic Skills Advisory Group—made up of representatives of public schools, higher education, professional associations, teachers' unions, and other stakeholders—and that were validated by educators who specialize in the teaching of reading, language arts, and mathematics. Information on who is required to pass the test and when the test should be taken may be obtained from program advisors, campus certification officers, regional offices of education, and the Illinois State Board of Education's Certification Web site: [www.isbe.net/teachers.htm](http://www.isbe.net/teachers.htm).

### Test Characteristics

**Number of test items:** 125 multiple-choice test questions and 1 constructed-response assignment

**Score scale:** The Basic Skills test is scored on a scale from 100 to 300.

**Passing requirements:** a scaled total test score of 240 or higher AND a score at or above the minimum allowable score for each test subarea

### Test Structure

The Basic Skills test contains the following subareas and test item structure.

Subarea No.	Subarea Title	No. of Scorable Multiple-Choice Test Questions	No. of Scorable Constructed-Response Assignments
I.	Reading Comprehension	31 to 40	
II.	Language Arts	31 to 40	
III.	Mathematics	21 to 30	
IV.	Writing		1

### Test Framework

The complete test framework for this field, containing the test objectives and descriptive statements for each subarea, can be found on the ICTS Web site at [www.icts.nesinc.com](http://www.icts.nesinc.com).

## Test Administration

The Basic Skills test is a full-session test administered at scheduled test administrations during the morning test session. Each test session is five hours long. Examinees may complete each of the four sections of the Basic Skills test in any order in which they choose. No one approach is recommended, but examinees should feel free to complete the test in the order with which they feel most comfortable.

## Scoring

Results are reported as scaled scores in a range from 100 to 300. The total test score is based on an examinee's performance on the entire test, including the number of multiple-choice questions answered correctly and the score received on the constructed-response writing assignment. The proportion of the total test score derived from the multiple-choice test questions is 85 percent; the proportion derived from the constructed-response writing assignment is 15 percent.

To pass the Basic Skills test an examinee must obtain a scaled total test score of 240 or above and must score at or above the minimum allowable score for each test subarea. The minimum allowable scores for each subarea are:

- Reading Comprehension: 50% of questions correct
- Language Arts: 50% of questions correct
- Mathematics: 35% of questions correct
- Writing: Score of 5 out of 12

If any of the test subarea scores do not meet the minimum allowable score for the subarea, an examinee will not pass the test—regardless of how high the total test score may be. Further, if the minimum allowable score for each subarea is met but the total test score is not 240 or higher, an examinee will not pass the test.

Please note:

- There is no penalty for guessing.
- Subarea scores are presented on the same scale as the total test score.
- The total test score required to pass the test is greater than the sum of the minimum allowable scores for each subarea. Therefore, it is possible to obtain the minimum allowable score in each subarea and not pass the test because the total test score is less than 240.
- Subarea scores reflect different numbers of questions and are represented differently in the computation of the total test score; therefore, the average of the subarea scores generally will not equal the scaled total test score.
- Subarea scores will help assess an examinee's areas of relative strength and weakness.
- If an examinee did not pass the total test and did not obtain a Writing subarea score of 240 or higher, the features of writing that may need improvement will be indicated.

## Interpreting the Writing Score

The Basic Skills test writing responses are scored according to standardized procedures during scoring sessions held after each test administration. Scorers with relevant professional backgrounds receive training and use a process called focused holistic scoring. The process yields a score based on overall quality rather than on an analysis of response components. In general, a writing response that receives a passing score demonstrates the following performance characteristics.

Writing Subarea Performance Characteristics	
<b>1. Focus</b>	The clarity with which the response presents and maintains the main idea.
<b>2. Support/Elaboration</b>	The extent to which the main idea is supported and explained by details and reasons.
<b>3. Organization</b>	The explicitness of the text structure or plan and the clarity of the logical flow of ideas.
<b>4. Grammar and Conventions</b>	The extent to which the response shows control of the use of standard written English and the extent to which errors interfere with communication of the main idea.

Each writing response is scored on a scale from 1 to 6, with 1 representing an undeveloped response and 6 representing a response that is very well developed. No information about the examinee who prepared the response (e.g., name, institutional affiliation) is provided to the readers. Each response is read and scored independently by two readers; the sum of the two readers' scores is the total score assigned to the response. If the two initial readers' scores differ by more than one point, the essay is scored by a third reader.

The final score is then converted to the scaled score that is reported on the Individual Score Report. The score conversion is as follows.

Two Readers' Scores Assigned	Total Essay Score	Scaled Score
6 + 6	12	300
5 + 6	11	288
5 + 5	10	276
4 + 5	9	264
4 + 4	8	252
3 + 4	7	240
3 + 3	6	220
2 + 3	5	200
2 + 2	4	180
1 + 2	3	160
1 + 1	2	140
U—Unscorable	0	100
B—Blank	0	100

## **Scoring Scale**

The scoring scale that is used to assign scores to examinees' responses to the constructed-response assignment in this test field can be found on the following pages.

## **Score Report Explanation**

Each score report contains a section titled "How to Read Your Score Report" to help examinees interpret their test results accurately. Examples can be found on the ICTS Web site at [www.icts.nesinc.com](http://www.icts.nesinc.com).

## **Study Guide**

The study guide for this field can be found on the ICTS Web site at [www.icts.nesinc.com](http://www.icts.nesinc.com).

## **Basic Skills Diagnostic Practice Test**

The Basic Skills Diagnostic Practice Test can be found on the ICTS Web site at [www.icts.nesinc.com](http://www.icts.nesinc.com).

## Basic Skills Constructed-Response Scoring Scale

Score Point	Score Point Description
<b>6</b>	<p><b>The 6 response is very well formed.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Focus is effectively stated and clearly maintained.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The introduction is effective.</li> <li>• The thesis is very appropriate to the topic; logical connections to the thesis are clearly maintained throughout.</li> <li>• An effective closing relates to the thesis without simply restating it.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Support is extensive.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major points are supported and elaborated fully and evenly.</li> <li>• Ideas are supported using multiple strategies.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. The organizational plan is effective and clear.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coherence is maintained by an effective vertical plan; paragraphs present a purposeful, logical structure.</li> <li>• Cohesion is maintained by effective horizontal connections.</li> <li>• Transitions are effectively used to signal vertical and horizontal relationships.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>4. The writing shows mastery of grammar and conventions.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very few minor errors occur in proportion to the amount written.</li> <li>• Sentence structure is varied and effective.</li> <li>• Usage is precise throughout the essay.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>5</b>	<p><b>The 5 response is well formed.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Focus is clearly stated and maintained.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The introduction is presented well.</li> <li>• The thesis is appropriate to the topic; logical connections to the thesis are substantially maintained throughout.</li> <li>• The closing relates to the thesis without simply restating it.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Support is substantial.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most major points are supported fully, but elaboration may be uneven.</li> <li>• Ideas may be supported using multiple strategies.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. The organizational plan is clear.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coherence is maintained by a vertical plan; paragraphs present a logical structure.</li> <li>• Cohesion is maintained by horizontal sequencing.</li> <li>• Transitions are logically used to signal vertical and horizontal connections.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>4. The writing shows good control of grammar and conventions.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few minor errors occur in proportion to the amount written.</li> <li>• Sentence structure shows variation.</li> <li>• Usage is often precise.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>4</b>	<p><b>The 4 response is adequately formed.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Focus is stated and generally maintained.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The purpose is adequately stated.</li> <li>• The thesis is generally appropriate to the topic; logical connections are adequately maintained.</li> <li>• The closing may simply restate the thesis.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Support is adequate.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most major points are adequately supported; elaboration may be uneven.</li> <li>• Ideas may be supported using a single strategy; support may be general.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. The organizational plan is adequate.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coherence is generally maintained by a vertical plan.</li> <li>• Cohesion is generally maintained by horizontal sequencing.</li> <li>• Transitions are sometimes used to signal vertical and horizontal connections.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>4. The writing shows adequate control of grammar and conventions.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor and perhaps a few major errors occur, but they do not interfere with meaning.</li> <li>• Sentence structure is adequate but may not be varied.</li> <li>• Usage is adequate.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

*(continued on next page)*

## Basic Skills Constructed-Response Scoring Scale *(continued)*

<b>3</b>	<p><b>The 3 response is partially formed, but all performance characteristics are present.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Focus may be clear, but it is not adequately maintained.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The purpose may need to be inferred.</li> <li>• Although the thesis may be appropriate to the topic, minor drifts in focus or lapses in logic may be present.</li> <li>• The closing may be absent or only a repetition of the introduction.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Support may be limited.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some points are partially supported.</li> <li>• Elaboration that is present may lack depth.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. An organizational plan may be inferred.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coherence is partial; only some major points are appropriately paragraphed.</li> <li>• Cohesion is partial because sequencing may be disrupted.</li> <li>• Transitions may be inappropriate, intrusive, or absent.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>4. The writing shows partial control of grammar and conventions.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some minor and major errors occur and may be distracting.</li> <li>• Some control of basic sentence structure is evident.</li> <li>• Usage may be imprecise.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>The 2 response displays only the rudiments of techniques for forming an essay.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Focus may be vague and poorly maintained.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The purpose is vague or prompt-dependent.</li> <li>• The thesis may be inappropriate to the topic and contain unrelated, illogical, or redundant ideas.</li> <li>• The closing, if present, may be unrelated to the opening.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Support is rudimentary.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few points are supported by specific or relevant detail.</li> <li>• Elaboration may be redundant or simply a list of specifics.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. An organizational plan is attempted.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coherence is rudimentary, showing little evidence of a vertical plan.</li> <li>• There is often disjointedness in the writer's efforts to transition from one idea to another and relate ideas to selected examples. Cohesion is rudimentary.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>4. The writing shows rudimentary control of grammar and conventions.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many minor and major errors interfere with communication.</li> <li>• Sentence structure may be rambling or fragmentary.</li> <li>• Usage is imprecise.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>1</b>	<p><b>The 1 response fails to form an essay.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Focus is unclear.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The purpose is unclear and/or inappropriate to the topic.</li> <li>• Any discussion present is confused.</li> <li>• There may be no discernable conclusion.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Support is insufficient.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and elaboration, if present, are irrelevant, insufficient, and/or confused.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. An organizational plan is not evident.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is so little control of paragraphing that the response lacks coherence.</li> <li>• Cohesion is not evident. Sequencing is confused. Almost no points are logically related.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>4. The writing shows little control of grammar and conventions.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor and major errors are so various and numerous that meaning is seriously impeded.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>U</b>	<p><b>The response is unscorable because it is unrelated to the assigned topic, illegible, primarily in a language other than English, or of insufficient length to score.</b></p>
<b>B</b>	<p><b>The written response form is blank.</b></p>