

SECTION 3

DESCRIPTION OF TEST ITEM FORMATS FOR THE READING AND WRITING SUBTESTS

This section of the Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment (VCLA) Study Guide provides a description of the test item formats for the multiple-choice and short-answer items and the writing assignments for the reading and writing subtests. Refer to Section 5: Sample Test Items for the Reading Subtest and Section 6: Sample Test Items for the Writing Subtest to see sample test items for each subtest.

Multiple-Choice Item Formats

VCLA test items are designed to assess communication and literacy knowledge and skills described in the test blueprint. You will be asked to think critically about information, analyze it, apply it, consider it carefully, compare it with other knowledge you have, or make a judgment about it. The purpose of this section is to describe the most common multiple-choice item formats you may see on the VCLA. This section also suggests possible ways to approach thinking about and answering these items.

Multiple-Choice Item Format One: Single Test Items

In the single test-item format, a problem is presented as a direct item or an incomplete statement, and four response options (A, B, C, and D) appear below the item.

For test items in this format, a suggested approach is to read the entire item carefully and critically. Think about what it is asking and the situation it is describing. It is best to read and evaluate *all* four response options to find the best answer; you should not stop at the first answer that seems reasonable. After reading all four response options, eliminate any obviously wrong answers and select the best choice from the remaining answers. There is no penalty for incorrect multiple-choice item answers; therefore, it is better to select an answer than not to respond at all.

Multiple-Choice Item Format Two: Test Items with Stimulus Material

Some test items are preceded by stimulus material to which the test items relate. Some examples of stimulus material that may be included on a subtest are reading passages, charts, tables, graphs, maps, and descriptions of classroom situations. In some cases, there is only one test item related to the stimulus provided. In other cases, two or more test items are related to a single stimulus. Each stimulus is preceded by a direction line indicating how many items are related to that stimulus.

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The following approach is suggested when responding to test items with stimulus material. First, examine the stimulus. Note how the information is presented. It is best to read and evaluate *all* four response options to find the best answer; you should not stop at the first answer that seems reasonable. After reading all four response options, eliminate any obviously wrong answers and select the best choice from the remaining answers. There is no penalty for incorrect multiple-choice item answers; therefore, it is better to select an answer than not to respond at all.

Format for the Short-Answer Items and the Writing Assignments

The VCLA writing subtest includes three short-answer items and two writing assignments that correspond to test objectives in the test blueprint. You should answer all short-answer items and writing assignments. Each item or assignment is designed to test the candidate's knowledge of effective communication as defined in the test objectives. Refer to the test blueprint in Section 4 of this study guide or at www.va.nesinc.com.

Short-Answer Item Format

The writing subtest includes several short-answer items. In this part of the test, candidates are presented with several sentences containing two grammatical errors each. Candidates are asked to rewrite the sentences in proper grammatical form, correctly using grammar and writing mechanics (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization).

Format for the Writing Assignments

The VCLA writing subtest includes two writing assignments—a written summary and a written composition—that correspond to the test objectives in the VCLA test blueprint. You should write a response to each of the writing assignments. Each writing assignment is designed to test the candidate's ability to effectively communicate in writing.

- For the written summary, candidates are expected to produce a written response of about 150 to 250 words.
- For the written composition, candidates are asked to prepare a multiple-paragraph composition of about 300 to 600 words on an assigned topic. You should plan to use about 45 minutes to respond to each of the writing assignments (the summary and the composition).

Refer to the test blueprint in Section 4 of this study guide or at www.va.nesinc.com.

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Each writing assignment will typically include:

1. contextual or background information that presents the topic of the assignment;
and
2. one or more specific directions or assignments that advise you of the elements that you are expected to provide in your response.

Refer to the sample assignments and associated score scales in Section 6 of this study guide for more specific information regarding the writing assignments for the VCLA.