



Grade 4 Written Composition

Scoring Guide

Spring 2009

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INTRODUCTION

Writing is a life skill. As students move from grade to grade, writing skills are critical for academic progress. Students who have difficulty putting their thoughts into writing struggle to succeed in social studies, science, and many areas other than English language arts. Because good writing requires good thinking, the act of writing helps students learn to clarify their thoughts and focus their ideas.

The composition section of the TAKS writing test assesses Objectives 1 and 2. Objective 1 focuses on the quality of the composition's content, while Objective 2 focuses on how clearly and effectively the student communicates his or her ideas. These objectives are inextricably linked because good writing must be both substantial and mechanically sound.

Objective 1

The student will, within a given context, produce an effective composition for a specific purpose.

The ability to communicate thoughts and ideas through writing helps students become successful, not only in school but throughout their lives. In order to communicate effectively, students must organize and develop ideas in a logical, coherent, and interesting manner that is easy for the reader to follow and understand. Objective 1 tests each student's ability to produce an organized and well-developed composition in response to a prompt. The prompt is worded so that students have broad latitude in crafting an individual response. Students can use any organizational strategy that allows them to write an effective piece—they can write a story, a description, a philosophical piece, an expository piece—or they can combine approaches. However students choose to respond, it is important that the composition they write is uniquely theirs—that it is authentic and represents their best thinking and writing.

Objective 2

The student will produce a piece of writing that demonstrates a command of the conventions of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure.

To write well, students must be able to apply the conventions of the English language. This means that students must have the following skills. First, when students write a composition, they have the ability to follow the rules of correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. Second, they have the ability to write effective sentences and use words and phrases that enhance the reader's understanding of their ideas. Although students are not expected to produce absolutely error-free writing on the test, they are expected to write as clearly and correctly as possible. The stronger the writing conventions are, the more likely it is that students will be able to produce an effective composition.

TAKS compositions are holistically scored on a scale of 1 (ineffective) to 4 (highly effective). For each score point, the scoring guide presents the rubric as well as four student compositions with explanatory annotations. Using this scoring guide will help you to better understand your students' writing development and the strengths and weaknesses of your school's writing program. However, it is important to remember that readers assign scores to compositions based on overall effectiveness. Because these judgments are holistic, compositions at a particular score point generally do not reflect every characteristic listed on the rubric for that score point.

Write a composition about a time when something surprising happened.

The information in the box below will help you remember what you should think about when you write your composition.

REMEMBER—YOU SHOULD

- ☐ write about a time when something surprising happened
- ☐ make sure that each sentence you write helps the reader understand your composition
- ☐ write about your ideas in detail so that the reader really understands what you are saying
- ☐ try to use correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and sentences

The names of individuals mentioned in the compositions have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the students whose responses appear in this guide.

SCORE POINT 1

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS AN INEFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- ☐ Individual paragraphs and/or the composition as a whole are not focused. The writer may shift abruptly from idea to idea, making it difficult for the reader to understand how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- ☐ The composition as a whole has little, or no, sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion, if present, may be perfunctory.
- ☐ A substantial amount of writing may be extraneous because it does not contribute to the development or quality of the composition. In some cases, the composition overall may be only weakly connected to the prompt.

Organization

- ☐ The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and/or paragraph to paragraph is not logical. Sometimes weak progression results from an absence of transitions or from the use of transitions that do not make sense. At other times, the progression of thought is simply not evident, even if appropriate transitions are included.
- ☐ An organizational strategy is not evident. The writer may present ideas in a random or haphazard way, making the composition difficult to follow.
- ☐ Wordiness and/or repetition may stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

- ☐ The writer presents one or more ideas but provides little or no development of those ideas.
- ☐ The writer presents one or more ideas and attempts to develop them. However, this development is so general or vague that it prevents the reader from understanding the writer's ideas.
- ☐ The writer presents only a plot summary of a published piece of writing, a movie, or a television show.
- ☐ The writer omits information, which creates significant gaps between ideas. These gaps prevent the reader from clearly understanding those ideas.

Voice

- ☐ The writer does not engage the reader, therefore failing to establish a connection.
- ☐ There may be little or no sense of the writer's individual voice. The composition does not sound authentic or original. The writer is unable to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- ☐ There is little or no evidence in the composition that the writer can correctly apply the conventions of the English language. Severe and/or frequent errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure may cause the writing to be unclear or difficult to read. These errors weaken the composition by causing an overall lack of fluency.
- ☐ The writer may misuse or omit words and phrases and may frequently write awkward sentences. These weaknesses interfere with the effective communication of ideas.

Score Point 1 Guide Papers

TAKS Grade 4
Spring 2009

G-4

Guess what! today I am haveing a party at my house and my said that my friends can come over to my party in it is going to be fun because Patrick is going to be there that's way it is going to be fun there in after the party is over I get to have a sleep over and my mama said I can have a sleep over in it is going to be fun we get to watch tv and eat Pizza I like my sleep over in I get to have another sleepover because I have 2 sleepover every year for my birthday. Wow! guess what I had to good days for a sleepover it was fun invited my friends over to come to come to my sleep over they had like my sleepover my one friend said that you should have another sleepover for three day Debbie but I only get to have it 2 days guys don't ask me because I will ask my mom can I have it for three days and I ask her and she said yes and we all were happy for my mama.

Score Point: 1

In this ineffective response the writer is focused on two birthday sleepovers, but frequent repetition stalls the progression of ideas (I get to have a sleepover, my mama said I can have a sleepover). The overall development of ideas is general and vague (it is going to be fun because Patrick is going to be there, that's way it is going to be fun there; I had to good days for a sleepover it was fun). In addition, a variety of conventions errors weakens the composition by interfering with the effective communication of ideas.

Game Day

I am going to tell you about very surprising day I had. It was my very first day of school Jan 19/07. We had a surprise party for me because it was my first day of school new here good. so we got five stars. so we got 45 min. of game day. It was very surprising for me because I never had anything like that is why it was a very surprising day for me.

I would like to thank my Teacher miss. Scott for letting us have 45 min of game day. and my class for being good. so that we could get those five stars and have 45 min of game day.

Score Point: 1

In this response the writer is focused on a surprising day at school, but repetition of ideas (we were good, we got five stars, we got 45 minutes of game day; being so good, we could get those five stars and have 45 minutes of game day) stalls the progression of the composition. In addition, there is little or no development of any of the events of the day. While there is some indication of the writer's appreciation (I would like to thank my teacher...and my class), the problems with progression and development make this an ineffective composition.

When something surprising happened...

When I was five years old my mother was planning me a surprise birthday party everybody knew except me so when I got home from school I did my homework and finished my chores and then ask my mother can I go outside to play with my friends and she said "yes" so when I went outside my friends ask me did I want to play football and I said "yes" so we went to get people to play while we were doing that my mother was getting the house ready for the surprise she put up decorations and she was getting the cake, candles in the middle of the cake was the number five when they were ready my mother sent my big brother to come and get me and but before I could catch him he was already at the house and when I got there all the lights were out and everybody was in the dining room ready to say surprise and when I walked in the dining room all I heard was "SURPRISE" happy birthday "David" and we all gathered around the table to sing happy birthday and for me to make a wish and blow out

the candles and when I was finished
doing that my mother helped me cut every-
body a piece of cake.

Score Point: 1

The writer of this response about a surprise birthday party uses a narrative organizational strategy to describe the numerous events of the day. While the writer develops some of his ideas (She put up decorations and she was getting the cake, candles in the middle of the cake was the number five), the almost total absence of sentence boundaries overwhelms the composition's strengths by interfering with the effective communication of ideas. This lack of control of the conventions of written English results in an ineffective response.

Have you ever had something surprising happen to you? Well I have and it was bad.

When I was coming home from school, I was happy. But then I saw my sister Sandra. She is 17 going on 18.

When she opened the door I saw her on the floor. I said "What happened?" She said "I was hit by a car. I couldn't believe it."

Well I guess that's all. That's my story. I was really surprised.

Score Point: 1

This response is focused on the writer's surprise upon learning of a sister's car accident. The writer's voice is evident, and the conventions are appropriate. However, although the few events in the narrative are chronologically linked, there is little or no development of any idea. Therefore, the composition remains ineffective.

SCORE POINT 2

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- ☐ Individual paragraphs and/or the composition as a whole are somewhat focused. The writer may shift quickly from idea to idea, but the reader has no difficulty understanding how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- ☐ The composition as a whole has some sense of completeness. The writer includes an introduction and conclusion, but they may be superficial.
- ☐ Some of the writing may be extraneous because it does not contribute to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

- ☐ The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and/or paragraph to paragraph may not always be smooth or completely logical. Sometimes the writer needs to strengthen the progression by including more meaningful transitions; at other times the writer simply needs to establish a clearer link between ideas.
- ☐ The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses do not enable the writer to present ideas effectively.
- ☐ Some wordiness and/or repetition may be evident, but these weaknesses do not completely stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

- ☐ The writer attempts to develop the composition by listing ideas or briefly explaining them. In both of these cases, the development remains superficial, limiting the reader's understanding and appreciation of the writer's ideas.
- ☐ The writer presents one or more ideas and attempts to develop them. However, there is little evidence of depth of thinking because this development may be somewhat general, inconsistent, or contrived.
- ☐ The writer may omit small pieces of information that create minor gaps between ideas. However, these gaps do not prevent the reader from understanding those ideas.

Voice

- ☐ There may be moments when the writer engages the reader but fails to sustain the connection.
- ☐ Individual paragraphs or sections of the composition may sound authentic or original, but the writer has difficulty expressing his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- ☐ Errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure throughout the composition may indicate a limited control of conventions. Although these errors do not cause the writing to be unclear, they weaken the overall fluency of the composition.
- ☐ The writer may include some simple or inaccurate words and phrases and may write some awkward sentences. These weaknesses limit the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

The time when something suprising happened

Good bye! I Shouted to my little brother as I left for class. When I entered the class I looked at the clock and waited for nine fifty park time. The whole class waited for nine fifty. It was finally nine fifty.

As I approached the park something unexpected happened. Look! Look! my friend said. A little puppy! A little puppy came walking toward us. Well of course it was on the other side of the fence, luckily our teacher got it.

We all went back to the classroom with the puppy. We wanted to see who could keep her. Then I raised my hand to see if I could keep her. So I called my mom.

She had said yes. It was a shock! So I showed my six year old brother her. He wasn't that much excited.

Then my mother came to pick her up. She said "Wow I didn't know she was that small." Yes she is. I said. So we named her Sophie and my mom took her home.

Score Point: 2

In this focused narrative the writer tells how the class found a puppy in the park and the writer was allowed to keep it. Some wordiness (I looked at the clock and waited for nine fifty park time. The whole class waited for nine fifty. It was finally nine fifty) slows but does not completely stall the progression of ideas. The control of conventions is generally good, and some voice is evident. The development, however, remains superficial, limiting the reader's understanding and appreciation of the writer's ideas. Overall, the composition is somewhat effective.

I was really surprised when I got to go to Mexico for the first time. It was really fun when I went to Mexico for the first time. I like going to Mexico a lot because it is really really fun there. The funnest there was to go deep sea fishing. Another really really fun thing is to go snorkeling. When we went deep sea fishing I caught most of the fish. We mostly caught toona fish.

When we went snorkeling we got on a bus so we could get tickets to go snorkeling. So then we would get on a big boat and go out to sea. I stayed close to my mom and I saw a lot and lot of fish. The funnest activity was going zipline riding. To ride on the zipline you would have to have a strap around you with a roller on a wire so you can go down the wire. Some of the wires were really really long. The longest one was called the big daddy. To slow down you have to pull down on the wire with your glove to slow down.

How Mexico was fun was because of all the activities. The best thing to do was to go surfing at the beach. The best part about the beach the waves are really really big, the waves still go over my head even when I try to

jump over them. I really really like going boogie
boarding I got a rash when I went boogie boarding
because I didn't have a swim shirt on. My parents and
I found a lot and lot of sand dollars in the sand.
I found some crabs buried in the sand when I thought
they were sand dollars. I like to drive a jet ski
on the water with my dad.

Score Point: 2

Focused on the fun of a surprise trip to Mexico, the writer tries to develop the composition by listing the activities enjoyed on the trip: deep sea fishing, snorkeling, riding the zip line, boogie boarding on the beach, and searching for sand dollars. The writer provides a number of details, but overall the development remains superficial. Quick shifts between descriptions of the activities result in progression that is not always smooth (Another really really fun thing is to go snorkeling. When we went deep sea fishing I caught most of the fish). The writer exhibits a limited control of conventions in this somewhat effective composition.

Mine Mine Mine All Mine! Me
all by myself with my grandmother!
This is a shock because I get to
go where ever I want to go! I'll go
to the mall, McDonalds, and to Sears! I'm
going to have so much fun in Houston!

Finally! We're in Houston! My
grandmother ask me where I wanted
to go? And I said to the
Mall. We got to the mall and we
went to Claire's. I looked around for
about 10 minutes before I found a
hair band and some earrings that's
all I got because Claire's is so
much money. Now we are leaving
the mall to go to McDonalds.

Yipee! We made it to McDonalds.
I'm going to get a double cheese
burger because it's cheesy and
delicious all at the same time.
After all that food I got to
get an ice cream cone I got
Vanilla it was great! I had so
much fun! Now it's time to go

to Sears.

We made it to Sears. I got out of the car and ran in side to the kids clothes. I found some Mary Kate and Ashley clothes they were cute. Then I found some Hannah Montana High Hills and the matching dress. I was ready to go back to Beaumont because I was really tired. We made it back home safely!

I had fun that day but that night I fell asleep fast? It was a fun day going to the Mall, McDonalds, and to Sears that's a suprising day I will never forget.

Score Point: 2

In this response about an outing with Grandmother, the writer attempts to develop the composition by listing the places they visit and providing a few details about each place. The writer includes an introduction and a conclusion, but they remain superficial. While the individual paragraphs are focused and the writer's voice is evident, the list-like presentation and superficial development limit the reader's understanding and appreciation of the writer's ideas. Overall, this is a somewhat effective composition.

The day I was surprised was when I went to Min-evel times for my birthday. It took place outside with every body there. Then we went inside. In the arena I was surprised how big it was. After we went in we got a picture with a bird.

I was amazed how cool every thing was. I enjoyed every bit of the show. I was so excited I was jumping up and down in my chair. I mostly like the fights as the part of the show. The games where also fun to watch.

My Parents let me take only one friend. I got to take only one friend because how expensive it is. The friend I took was Gabriel. He liked it alot even more than I did. He mostly liked the fighting.

Gabriel and I both
bought a souvenir at the
gift shop. We got a sword,
and a ring my ring had
a skull on it. Gabriel's ring
was wirey looking one. Me and
him both had a good time.
Me and Gabriel both want
to go back again.

That was the time
I was surprised. That was
the day I was surprised
what my parents did for me.
I was very excited what
they did for me. I will
never forget how loud it was
when we left. When we left
to drop off Gabriel he
said "Thanks for inviting me
Travis."

Score Point: 2

The writer of this somewhat effective narrative focuses on a birthday celebration at Medieval Times with a friend and parents. The progression of thought is generally smooth, but with few specific details, the descriptions of the day and the venue (In the arena I was surprised how big it was. I was amazed how cool everything was) are superficial. Although the conventions are appropriate and the writer's voice is evident, the composition lacks the depth of development needed for a higher score.

SCORE POINT 3

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A GENERALLY EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- ☐ Individual paragraphs and the composition as a whole are, for the most part, focused. The writer generally shows the clear relationship between ideas, making few sudden shifts from one idea to the next.
- ☐ The composition as a whole has a sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion add some depth to the composition.
- ☐ Most of the writing contributes to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

- ☐ The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph is generally smooth and controlled. For the most part, transitions are meaningful, and the links between ideas are logical.
- ☐ The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses are generally effective.
- ☐ Wordiness and/or repetition, if present, are minor problems that do not stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

- ☐ The writer attempts to develop all the ideas included in the composition. Although some ideas may be developed more thoroughly and specifically than others, the development overall reflects some depth of thought, enabling the reader to generally understand and appreciate the writer's ideas.
- ☐ The writer's presentation of some ideas may be thoughtful. There may be little evidence that the writer has been willing to take compositional risks when developing the topic.

Voice

- ☐ The writer engages the reader and sustains that connection throughout most of the composition.
- ☐ For the most part, the composition sounds authentic and original. The writer is generally able to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- ☐ The writer generally demonstrates a good command of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. Although the writer may make minor errors, they create few disruptions in the fluency of the composition.
- ☐ The words, phrases, and sentence structures the writer uses are generally appropriate and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

Come on, I thought as I walked out of the door, why does mom make us do all the work on Saturday? Stepping into the car I glanced around. Emptied bottles, candy wrappers, bits of paper, toys, and lots of other junk littered the car floor. "Well," I said a little annoyed of all the junk, "this mess isn't going to clean up its self." So, I did what any 7-year-old girl would do start to clean. First the emptied bottles and food were the first to go, then it was the toys. Finally, all I had left was the candy wrappers and bits of paper. I scooped up a hand full of trash and just as I was about to get out of the car I slipped. I just don't mean a little slip. I mean where you fall out of the car and get hurt slip. When I did slip I hit the side of my right ankle on the rock hard ledge that my dad's workbench is sitting on. Screaming in pain I cried and cried until my startled brother and sister ran out side to see what had happened. Seeing my ankle was hurt they ran inside to get my mom. When she came out she picked me up, took me inside, and layed me on the couch. After that the hurting stopped but, it started to swell. We waited three days before I went to the E. R. and found out my ankle was twisted. I was put on crutches until I could put presher on it. After that I never cleaned out the car again.

Score Point: 3

The writer of this concise response relates how cleaning the family car resulted in an ankle injury. The narrow focus on a single event allows the writer to provide enough details to develop the topic with some depth and facilitates the smooth progression of ideas. The writer's command of conventions, clear and specific word choice (glanced, scooped up, startled), and varied sentence structure (Seeing my ankle was hurt, they ran inside to get my mom) further enhance this generally effective response.

The Thing I Didn't Know I Could Do

Have you ever done something that you could do? Well I have. In my football game. It was an afternoon. My game was at 5:00. It was in the west side. So I was getting ready. I put my shoulder pads on and all my equipment. This is how my suprising moment happened.

When we got there, all my best friends were there. We started to practice before the game started. Then our coach got there. He told us to run 3 laps around the park. When we got back more people were there. Until the other team showed up. They were big and mad.

Soon the game started and we were loosing 22-14. We were in the last counter with 2 minutes remaining. We were in the 3 yardline. It was second down. "Hut Hut!" they gave it to me. Seven guys were after me. They were like giant Elephants. Just

one knocked out by my T. E. I ran into the safety zone. Ahhh! "boom!" I ran over every body. I broke 7 tackles. They looked like a bulldozer ran over them. I ran all the way.

The final score was 22-33. The reason I thought that was so surprising was because I had never done that in my whole life.

Both my dad and my coach were happy for what I did and because of me we beat the state champions. And in a bigger division.

In conclusion I thought that I did very well. And like I said before it could be anything you like, soccer, basketball or like me. But not all of it has to be sports. It could be whatever you like.

Score Point 3

This focused narrative describes how the writer's effort led to victory in a football game. Progression is generally smooth as the writer presents the significant events of the day: the pre-game activities and the winning play. Specific descriptions (They were like giant elephants. I broke 7 tackles. They looked like a bulldozer ran over them) add depth and authenticity to the response. The writer's apparent pride (Both my dad and my coach were happy for what I did and because of me we beat the state champions) contributes to the expression of the writer's voice in this generally effective composition.

The Big Suprise

I remember when I had my first suprise birthday party. It was three years ago when I was seven. I had the Suprise birthday when I was seven because sevens a lucky number.

My mom had told me that we were going to laser tag. I was so glad that I let out a yahooo! The reason I was so happy was that all my cousins were coming. When the game started I was hit first. They didn't have any rules so people were running and jumping over rails and everything. At the end of the game I had only 1000 points. My cousin Albert had 6000 and won.

When we got home we wated to eat cake. I sat at the table and I could smell the cake. I told my cousins it would be chocholate cake with chocholate icing and chocholate sprinkles with chocholate ice cream on top. When my mom brough it and set it on the table it was exatly what I thought it would be. My mom knew I loved

icing so she covered the top of the cake in icing. The icing looked so creamy, it smelled delicious and it tasted chocolaty.

When the cake was all gone we were going to open presents. I knew which one I was going to open first. I've been looking at it since the party started. It's the biggest one there. I've decided that since every year I opened all of my presents so fast that I'm going to open it slow. I took twenty minutes to only open two thirds of it and then I ripped open the rest as fast as I could. It was the ripstick I've been wanting.

The party is over. I look back and remember what I did this morning. When I go to brush my teeth I see the chocolate icing on my face and I will never forget this wonderful surprise.

Score Point 3

This generally effective composition is focused on the writer's seventh birthday party. The progression of ideas from paragraph to paragraph is generally smooth and controlled as the writer describes playing laser tag, eating the cake, and opening the presents. The effective introduction (I had the surprise birthday when I was seven because seven is a lucky number) and conclusion (When I go to brush my teeth I see the chocolate icing on my face and I will never forget this wonderful surprise) add voice and some depth. The generally good command of conventions strengthens the composition.

Are Time Machines Real?

Tim it's time for bed," cried my upressed mother. "Wait mom I'm trying to figure out what I should write about," Tim exclaimed to her. "5 more minutes" said Tim's stubborn mother. "Dang it I haven't written one stinken word in 2 whole hours," Tim shouted to himself. Times up! mother scram. So as he climbed into bed he felt butterflies in his stomach. Then he pulled the sheets, tucked himself in, & then went to dream world.

Meep, meep, meep. Oh man, I accidentally switched the alarm clock to 12:00 a.m. not 6:00 a.m., why now, I need to rest & not I won't be able to make my story today. **BOOM BAMM BANG!!** Tim heard something so loud you could hear all the way to another galaxy.

Something's in the backyard, Tim thought. Tim ran with all his strength, then he stopped at the door that separated him & the wilderness. "What in the world is that?" questioned Tim in a whiny way. "I am Time Mac 3000 and you master are my time traveler, Timothy Johnson," said Time Mac 3000. "You're write about my name & besides I don't think I'm cut out for travel ain't I," Tim questioned. "Of course you are, Tim it is in your blood you're fifth great grandfather invented me & said, 'My seventh decendent shall know my secret & he will tell his seventh decendent & so on,' she said. So he decided to give in. "O-kay, but I have to be back by 1:30 a.m.," Tim shouted. "No worries time freezes," Time Mac replied in an astonishing way. "Select Next Page Next Page Next Page Next Page Next Page"

your time zone, Time Mac 3000 told him. "Alamo 1835,"
Tim said.
"BOOM BAMM BAMM" "where am I?" questioned
Tim. "Well young'un you're at the Alamo, I'm William,
Will, or Willie B. Travis. Who are you & what on Earth
are you wearing?" questioned Travis. Then Tim got up &
answered, "Oh, I'm Tim, pleased to meet you," Tim replied. Then
Travis added "Oh, I sorry sorry, but what does that
mean?" "It means hello Willie," Tim exclaimed. "Ohh okay
got it, well hello to you too," said Travis smiling.
Tim got up slowly, time for breakfast, replied
Travis with his eyes swirling. Then I woke up &
mom was calling. Timmy, darling get up time for
breakfast. "Coming mom & I also know what to
write about today," Tim cried out.

Score Point 3

This engaging fantasy response is focused on how a dream about a time machine led to choosing a writing topic. The writer's effective use of dialogue contributes to the smooth and controlled progression of thought. After a thorough and specific explanation for the appearance of the time machine in the dream, the actions at the time zone destination are less developed. Despite the uneven development of ideas, the composition as a whole reflects some depth of thought, and the control of conventions contributes to the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

SCORE POINT 4

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER'S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

- ☐ Individual paragraphs and the composition as a whole are focused. This sustained focus enables the reader to understand and appreciate how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- ☐ The composition as a whole has a sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion are meaningful because they add depth to the composition.
- ☐ Most, if not all, of the writing contributes to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

- ☐ The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph is smooth and controlled. The writer's use of meaningful transitions and the logical movement from idea to idea strengthen this progression.
- ☐ The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses enhance the writer's ability to present ideas clearly and effectively.

Development of Ideas

- ☐ The writer's thorough and specific development of each idea creates depth of thought in the composition, enabling the reader to truly understand and appreciate the writer's ideas.
- ☐ The writer's presentation of ideas is thoughtful or insightful. The writer may approach the topic from an unusual perspective, use his/her unique experiences or view of the world as a basis for writing, or make interesting connections between ideas. In all these cases, the writer's willingness to take compositional risks enhances the quality of the content.

Voice

- ☐ The writer engages the reader and sustains this connection throughout the composition.
- ☐ The composition sounds authentic and original. The writer is able to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

- ☐ The overall strength of the conventions contributes to the effectiveness of the composition. The writer demonstrates a consistent command of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. When the writer attempts to communicate complex ideas through sophisticated forms of expression, he/she may make minor errors as a result of these compositional risks. These types of errors do not detract from the overall fluency of the composition.
- ☐ The words, phrases, and sentence structures the writer uses enhance the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

The sun beat down its hot rays onto the bus, as it pulled up to a stop. I could see my mom and dad waving wildly at me from the curb. It had been a long, tiresome ride all the way from camp, but we finally made it back to our church. As I began to gather my things, I wondered if my parents had a surprise for me.

As I climbed out, I was given a million hugs. My mom cried and my dad couldn't let go of me. They acted as if I was a new born baby just waiting for someone to cuddle and love me. It was kinda gross if you think about it. All those squeezes started to make my stomach hurt.

"Come on!" "Get out!" I yelled. We were about to head to the car and I was trying to get my suitcase out of the trunk. I wasn't having much luck though. I pulled and pulled, but it wouldn't budge. "Man!" I grunted. I tugged again, and finally it came out. My dad picked up the bag and headed off in the direction of the car, with my mom trailing behind. "Wait up!" I cried. I had to run to catch up with them. "Why are you guys walking so fast?" I asked. "You'll see," replied my mom. All I could see right then, was my dad already starting the car. "Wait up!" I cried again.

I made it, just in the nick of time. I hopped in the back and saw something on my seat. A little

birthday bag with white tissue paper coming out at the top stood there in my seat. I looked a little closer and I gasped. "Is that for me?" I asked, in a whisper. "Open it and find out." My dad said impatiently. I took out the white tissue paper and looked inside. Something silver glistened back at me. I knew what that was. I began to take it out of the bag. I was right! It was a shiny silver c.d. player. The c.d. player that I always have wanted for a long time. "This is the best surprise ever!" I yelled.

For the rest of the day I listened to my c.d. player with the c.d.s other people have bought me. I knew one day I would receive one, but I never knew that day would be so soon. That was the greatest surprise ever and it always will be on the top of my list.

Score Point: 4

The author of this highly effective response focuses on the events leading up to a gift received on the way home from summer camp. The meaningful introduction vividly sets the scene and at the same time reveals the hint of a possible surprise to come. Effective use of dialogue ("Why are you guys walking so fast?" I asked. "You'll see," replied my mom) contributes to both the smooth progression of thought and the development of ideas. Specific word choice (cuddle, budge, glistened) and a consistent command of conventions enhance the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.

A New Family Member

by: Jacob

Jacob . Jacob ! Jacob !! Hu? As I opened my eyes, I saw two little blue circles staring right at me. Dan? What are you doing in my room? Oh no, did some one die? Is the house on fire? I . Mom in the hospital? Well... no, no, and... gulp... yes. What?!! I raced downstairs and instead of seeing Mom and Dad, I saw Grandma and Dad standing side by side. What do you mean Mom is in the hospital?!

Jacob , my Dad replied. She is not in there for the reason you think. What, so she is not in there because she got hit by a car? Well then, what did happen to her? Well, you see, your mother had a baby. Oh, I replied in a whisper voice. Well, I have two more questions..

Is it a boy or is it a girl? And what is it's name? My dad and grand ma smiled. Well, you'll just have to find out when we get there. I thought you would say that. A couple hours later, we were in front of my mom's hospital room. Well, time to meet my new family member. I slowly opened the door and suddenly my eyes were full of happy tears. A sparkling little baby girl

was laying in my mother's lap. Her little baby fingers were trying to grab my mom's nose. Would you like to hold her? I was surprised, I was shocked, I felt warm inside. As I picked her up, to my surprise, she grabbed my nose. Ouch! For a little baby girl, she had a big grip. While I gave her back to my mom, I asked her the million dollar question. What is her name? Melanie. I thought about her little bit of blond hair and her hazel eyes and replied - It's perfect.

Score Point: 4

The writer of this tightly focused response describes the surprising day of his sister's birth. Showing strong control of the narrative, the writer thoroughly develops each idea, from first being awakened (Oh no, did someone die? Is the house on fire? Is Mom in the hospital? Well...no, no, and ...gulp...yes), to finally meeting his new family member. Precise word choice (a sparkling little baby girl, her little bit of blond hair and her hazel eyes) and meaningful reflection (to my surprise, she grabbed my nose. Ouch! For a little baby girl, she had a big grip) engage the reader and reveal the writer's unique perspective. The student demonstrates a consistent command of conventions that further enhances this highly effective response.

"Inez, it's time for you to get glasses." That's what I heard my mom say. What, I thought. When was this decided? Yesterday? "How could this be?", I asked. "I can see just fine!". My mom placed me at the back of the room and then she held up a poster with big words on it. She asked me to read it. This is what I read: He bow dumped cover he soon. It was actually supposed to be: The cow jumped over the moon. I guess I really do need glasses! So that same afternoon, my mom took me to the eye doctor and she had them check my eyes. First, they had me look in these lens and they told me to keep my eye on the red dot. It was pretty easy except the fact that I couldn't blink. Then all of the some air blew into my eye! I didn't even know that they were going to do that because it happened so fast. It felt like she blew my eyeball to the back of my head. I decided right then and there that I did not like what she just did. After that was over, she had me hold my right hand on my right eye. Then she showed me some letters. There were about 4 rows of letters. She asked me if I could read the bottom letters. It was pretty hard but I managed. Next she put some eyedrops in my eye. I don't know what they were for really, but when she put them in

my eye, I smelt it and it smelled funny. After that, she told me to go to this room with a display of glasses on 3 walls. She also told me to pick one that I liked. It was hard choosing because there were a lot of glasses and some of them were different colors. I found a section for kids and as I scanned the row there was one pair that caught my eye. As I picked those glasses up I felt all around the frame and it felt smooth. The glasses that I picked up were dark blue and they were just the right size. So, I got that pair and I brought them up to the doctor. She asked, "Do you want these?" I said, "Yes, of course!" My mom and I sat at a table in the back of the waiting room. This tall lady sat down in front of us and she calculated the price of the glasses and all that other stuff. After she did that, she told me that my glasses would be ready in about one to two weeks. Well, I guess glasses aren't so bad after all!

Score Point: 4

This highly effective response focuses on the surprising time the writer learned she needed glasses. The progression of ideas is smooth and controlled as the writer describes first denying she needs glasses, taking the eye exam, and finally selecting glasses. The writer develops each event with specific details that add depth (As I scanned the row there was one pair that caught my eye. As I picked those glasses up I felt all around the frame and it felt smooth). Other details provide a clear sense of the writer's perspective (This is what I read: He bow dumped cover he soon; I guess I really do need glasses!) and a strong, authentic voice. In addition, the writer demonstrates a consistent command of conventions that contributes to the overall effectiveness of the composition.

What does a bike, a swimming pool, a plaque, and a baseball field have to do with this you may ask? Well, they're all part of something suprising that happened to me one sunny day. So just sit back and let me tell you this story.

I started one day when my mom asked me if I wanted to be in the triathalon. I replied yes and soon I was signed up for it. For two years I had raced in the triathalon, and both years I had won bronze. "This year is going to be different though," I thought, "this year I'm going to win gold." The next day my mom took me out to the olympic pool where the race would take place. The pool was closed so I couldn't practice the swimming part of the race but I could still practice the running and biking part. We struggled to get my bike out of the car but finally did. Once we got it down we set it by the course. Then, I sat down on it and shot off down the rocky road. Then I ran around the baseball field really fast. When we drove home I felt very confident in myself. Then, finally, after many days of practice, the big day came. Everyone in the boys six and under division sat on the edge of the pool. As we sat there I tried to start a conversation but failed. Suddenly all of the confidence that I had left me and I felt nervous. Right then somebody yelled ready and then a little bit later blew a whistle. Then all of us dove into the water and took off across the pool. I, not being a strong swimmer at six, struggled across the pool. When I reached the other side I was still in third though. I then leaped out of the pool, put my shoes on

quickly, and darted for my bike which was conveniently waiting for me by the course. When I got on my bike I saw two kids speed by me. I then darted after them and soon I was on second place's tail when Jose Alonzo, who was in first, hit a bump and skidded out. When I saw this I skidded to a halt right next to him. One, two, three people sped by me while I waited by Jose. Then, finally, the safety instructor came. While he took care of Jose I sped ahead determined to get back into the top three. I passed a couple of kids but doubted I was in third. As I dashed around the baseball field I passed another kid and was right on the heels of another, but he more of a lead as we scrambled up a tall hill. As we crossed the finish line I was right behind him and guessed forth would have to do but when I asked the people in charge they said I got third! Later as I waited Jose and the safety manager crossed the finish line.

Later that day when they held up the bronze plaque I didn't sigh that sigh of disappointment I usually would have. I felt good that I had helped Jose in the middle of the race.

Score Point 4

The writer of this thoughtful narrative focuses on the surprising events of a triathlon competition. Complex sentence structure and precise word choice contribute to the smooth progression (I, not being a strong swimmer at six, struggled across the pool; I then leaped out of the pool, put my shoes on quickly, and darted for my bike which was conveniently waiting for me by the course). The writer's internal reflections (Later that day when they held up the bronze plaque I didn't sigh that sigh of disappointment I usually would have) provide insight into the writer's unique point of view. The concise but vivid description of the action (When I saw this I skidded to a halt right next to him. One, two, three people sped by me while I waited by Jose) builds momentum and adds excitement and authenticity to this highly effective composition.