

FACTS AND QUESTIONS ABOUT THE OSSLT

Who creates the Literacy Test?

- EQAO (The Education Quality and Accountability Office) is responsible for creating the test. This is same organization that wrote the grade 3, 6 and 9 tests. The tests are written by teams of teachers in Ontario.

Why is the literacy test necessary?

- Functional literacy is a necessary skill both in secondary school and beyond. The OSSLT is one indicator that you have mastered the essential reading and writing skills.

What percentage do I need to get to pass this test?

- The test is scored out of 400. You must earn 300, or 75%. This is the provincial standard.

Do I have to complete the OSSLT?

- If you intend to graduate from high school, you must write the OSSLT. If you are unsuccessful a plan will be put in place. This may include rewriting the test the following year, and/or taking the Ontario Literacy Course which will count as one of your 30 credits and the OSSLT graduation requirement.

I'm a grade 9 student in a grade 10 class; do I have to write the test?

- No. You write the test in your second year of high school regardless of what classes you are currently enrolled in.

Is this part of my English course?

- No. Literacy is a common expectation across all high school courses. The OSSLT is not a part of any one course.

Test Format

How big will the test be?

- The test will consist of four booklets - a question and an answer booklet that you will use before the break, and a second set that you will use after the break.

Are there long answer, true or false, or fill-in-the-blank questions?

- There are two "long" answer questions - a one page news report, and a series of paragraphs expressing an opinion (5 paragraphs). These long writing tasks are worth a high percentage of your final mark. Make sure you complete them thoroughly!
- There are no true or false questions.
- There are no fill-in-the-blank questions.

How many multiple choice questions are on the test?

- Slight changes may be made year-to-year, but the sample booklet has 45 multiple choice questions.

Logistics of the Literacy Test

When is the test?

- Thursday March 30th. This is the **ONLY day** the test is offered for the entire school year. Your attendance is essential.

How long will the test be?

- The test is made up of two 75 minute sessions with a 15 minute break in the middle.

Where will this be taking place?

- Students will be grouped with their homeroom. Some students with either Special Education or ESL exceptionalities will write in alternate locations (e.g. PLC or LRC) but this will be communicated to you well ahead of time.

Can you ask your teacher questions if you do not understand what the question is asking?

- No.
- Here is what EQAO says:
 - “Once the test materials have been opened, no one may use information from the test to provide instruction on any concept or item being tested prior to, during or after the administration of the test.”
 - “During the test, no one may explain, define, translate or provide examples of reading vocabulary or writing terminology to students, including those with accommodations.”
 - “During the test, nothing may be said or done to influence student responses, including, but not limited to, actions such as drawing a student’s attention to an unanswered question.”

Is it hard to finish in the allotted time period?

- If you stay on task and limit your answers to the length suggested by the lines provided in the answer booklet, you should have time to finish the test.

Do I have to only write on the lines provided?

- Yes. (Additional space or paper is NOT provided. NO ANSWERS, OTHER THAN WHAT IS ON THE LINES PROVIDED WILL BE MARKED.)

Can we write in the empty sides of the answer booklet?

- You may use this space for brainstorming and planning notes, but IT WILL NOT BE MARKED!

What if my homeroom is a grade 11 class?

- You will be writing in room A201 unless you have been told to write in the Library or PLC.

What do you do if you finish early?

- Read and re-read every question and every answer you have provided. You may not leave, you may not talk, and you may not have your cell phone in the room.

Are we allowed to eat during the break?

- Yes, a snack will be provided. You may also bring your own snack. Students with double-time in the library and PLC are encouraged to bring a lunch.

Are we allowed to socialize during the break?

- Yes

Do we write the test in a room with different students?

- If you are in a grade 10 homeroom you will write with the students in that class. If you are in a grade 9, 11, or 12 homeroom, you will write in room A201 with other students in the same situation. If you are provided extra time (IEP or ELL students), you will write in the Library or PLC with students in the same situation.

Do I have to take the test in Grade 12 if I take the OLC course?

- No. Every student who intends to graduate must write the test at least once. If you are unsuccessful in grade 10, you may be asked to write it again in grade 11 depending on your circumstances. Students who have not successfully completed the test by grade 12 will take the Ontario Literacy Course. This course will teach the foundational skills from the literacy test and students will be evaluated on this work. OLC counts as a replacement for passing the literacy test, and as a credit toward the 30 required for graduation.

Level of Difficulty

Do my grade nine marks tell me how I will do - approximately?

- They can be a predictor, but remember that classroom assessments are more varied and not all “on demand” in terms of time.

If I do well in English, is it likely I will pass the test?

- Literacy is taught across the curriculum. Your English mark will not be the only indicator of your success on the literacy test.

Is it easy? How hard is it going to be?

- The OSSLT is based on grade 9 curriculum expectations. You write it mid-way through grade 10 so these skills you have been developing for a long time.

Test Preparation

What can I do to prepare and practice for the test?

- Go over the written feedback provided to you from the Practice Test held on March 2nd.
- Attend the period three literacy prep classroom visits by Ms. Westlake in March.
- Attend the after school literacy help sessions in the library the week of the test.
- Visit the PLC to see Ms. Rankin for extra support.
- Come to the Student Success Office at lunch or after school for extra support.
- Check out the resources posted in Edsby and on the school’s website <http://crestwood.kprdsb.ca/Programs/Literacy>
- Go to www.eqao.com for additional resources.

Will studying help me pass the test?

- The OSSLT is a skills based test, not a knowledge based test. You do not need to “study”, but you will want to “practice”. Looking at the student sample answers and scoring guides will be very helpful. Familiarize yourself with the tip sheets and resources linked above.

Concerns Regarding Special Education and English Language Learners

Do you get extra time if you have an IEP?

- You will receive the accommodations outlined in your IEP. If your IEP allows for extra time and you regularly use extra time as an assessment accommodation you will be provided with this opportunity. Likewise, you can also use a computer or a scribe if your IEP outlines this as an assessment accommodation.

Will my IEP lower my required mark for passing?

- No. Every writer must achieve 300/400. This is a standardized test.

What level of ELL does a student have to be at to pass?

- Most students defer writing the test until they are in ESL “E”.

After the Test

Will the mark that I receive on the OSSLT be on my high school transcript?

- Your transcript will indicate that you have successfully completed the OSSLT. No mark will be recorded.

Is my mark on the OSSLT going to appear on my report card?

- No.

What happens if you don't meet the 75% requirement? / What happens if you are unsuccessful on the test?

- You will need to write the test next year and/or you will need to take the Ontario Literacy Course. .

Does the Literacy Test mark count toward your English mark?

- No. The test assesses literacy across the curriculum. It is not an English test.

Will post-secondary institutions be able to access these marks?

- No. They will see that you have successfully completed the OSSLT, but no mark will be indicated.

Do future employers see our marks?

- No.

What if you get 299/400? Would that technically be a failure?

- Yes. (Although in reality 295 is the highest mark you can score and still be considered unsuccessful. The “scores” are rubric based, and are calculated by level, not by individual numbers, so a score of 299 cannot happen.)

If a 74% is given, will the teachers be lenient?

- No. Different teachers mark different sections. In fact, each question is marked twice, by two different teachers. They have no knowledge of what marks you earned on the other sections of the test. Each teacher's response is downloaded to a computer database and then final marks are calculated.

Will we get feedback on our test results once it is evaluated?

- Yes. This link shows you what your individual report will look like. There is an example for successful and unsuccessful students. (http://www.eqao.com/pdf_e/14/sample-individual-student-report-osslt.pdf)