

NAPLAN Writing: 12 practice prompts and a self-marking checklist

These prompts are written by Science with Shobha in the style of the test; they are not past NAPLAN prompts. Use one a week: 5 minutes to plan, 30 to write, 5 to edit. Year 3 by hand; Years 5, 7 and 9 typed. The genre is not announced before the test, so practise both.

Narrative, Years 3 and 5

1. The box. A box has been left outside your front door with your name on it. Write a story about what happens.
2. The wrong bus. Write a story about a character who gets on the wrong bus.
3. 'It was not a normal Saturday.' Write a story that begins with this sentence.

Narrative, Years 7 and 9

4. The message. A character receives a message meant for someone else. Write the story.
5. Turning back. Write a story in which a character has to decide whether to turn back.
6. What was left behind. Write a story about something found in an empty house.

Persuasive, Years 3 and 5

7. Every child should learn to cook at school. Do you agree or disagree?
8. Homework should be optional. What do you think? Persuade a reader.
9. It is better to have one best friend than many friends. Agree or disagree.

Persuasive, Years 7 and 9

10. Phones should be allowed in classrooms. Take a position and persuade a reader.
11. Teenagers should be able to vote at sixteen. Agree or disagree.
12. Sport should be compulsory until Year 12. What is your view?

Plan before you write (5 minutes)

Narrative: who and where; the ONE problem; how the character solves it (write the ending first).

Persuasive: my position in one sentence; two to four reasons, each with a 'because' or an example; the last line I want the reader to remember.

The ten criteria, and the checklist

Criterion	Narrative	Persuasive	Ask yourself (yes / no)
Audience	0-6	0-6	Clear where we are by sentence 3? Is there an ending?
Text structure	0-4	0-4	One clear problem, solved? / Position first and last?
Ideas	0-5	0-5	Did I explain an idea, not just name it?
Character and setting / devices	0-4	0-4	One specific detail? / One device on purpose?
Vocabulary	0-5	0-5	Three words chosen because they were exact?
Cohesion	0-4	0-4	Something other than 'and then'?
Paragraphing	0-2	0-3	New paragraph for new time, place, speaker, reason?
Sentence structure	0-6	0-6	One short, one long, one not starting with the subject?
Punctuation	0-5	0-5	Capitals and full stops everywhere? Commas, speech marks?
Spelling	0-6	0-6	Five hard words attempted and checked?
Total	47	48	

Source for the criteria and marks: ACARA NAPLAN writing marking guides (narrative and persuasive).

Where the marks are

Audience, sentence structure and spelling are worth 6 each: 18 marks, over a third. Spelling rewards the difficulty of the words you get right, so use the word you mean, not the word you are sure of. Audience is won in the opening and the ending.

Five mistakes that cost the most

1) No ending. 2) Preparing only one genre. 3) A memorised piece bent to fit the prompt. 4) Safe words only. 5) Not using the five editing minutes.

Eight weeks to the test

Weeks 8-7: one piece in each genre, untimed; find the two weakest criteria. Weeks 6-5: planning only, ten prompts, five minutes each. Weeks 4-3: one timed piece a week, alternate genres; typing practice from Year 5. Week 2: one timed piece in each genre; rewrite only the opening and ending. Week 1: nothing new.

1-on-1 online English and writing, Years 2 to 9: sciencewithshobha.com/subjects/naplan/