



# Preparing Your Children for the 5th, 8th or 10th Grade SOL Writing Tests

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE SOL WRITING TESTS

- The SOL Writing Tests are administered at grades 5, 8, and 10.
- The SOL Writing Tests assess students' writing by using two distinct formats: multiple-choice and a direct writing prompt.
- The multiple-choice component requires students to thoughtfully respond to questions that focus on the application of the writing process, organization, revising, and editing on provided writing samples.
- The direct writing component requires students to respond to a writing prompt in paragraph format.
- Both tests are administered on separate days, and students are given unlimited time to complete each component.
- Released SOL Writing assessments can be found at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Assessment/releasedtests.html>.

## TIPS FOR SOL SUCCESS

*Kids can't "cram" for the SOL Writing tests. They actually prepare for these tests throughout the school year. Below are a few tips to help your child feel confident and prepared for these tests.*

- **Eat.** Make sure your child is in the habit of taking the time for a nutritious breakfast every day. Even toast and a piece of fruit will provide body and brain energy.
- **Sleep.** Establish a regular sleep routine. Then stick to it! Most children need at least eight hours of sleep each night, especially the night before a test!
- **Familiarize** your child with the test format and how the test will be administered. Preparing students for the format will minimize the opportunity for surprises and create a calm, focused environment for writing. (<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Assessment/releasedtests.html>)
- **Explain** the importance of reading the directions carefully before starting the test. Understanding what is being asked is just as important as getting the right answer.
- **Encourage** your child to look over the test quickly. Before answering any questions, skim quickly through the test. This will reaffirm the test format and prepare the student for the types of questions they will encounter. Then encourage your child to go back and carefully read and respond to the test items.

## 5TH, 8TH and 10TH GRADE SOL WRITING TESTING DATES:



March 1-2 Multiple-Choice Writing Test  
March 3 Direct Writing Test  
March 4-5 Make-up Tests





# Family Focus on Writing

## TOP 10 WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD BECOME A BETTER WRITER

- 10 Provide a suitable place for writing
- 9 Provide a variety of writing materials
- 8 Share examples of real writing
- 7 Be a good writing model
- 6 Provide opportunities for your child to write for real purposes
- 5 Write together
- 4 Encourage your child's writing efforts
- 3 Open your child's eyes to the wonderful world of words
- 2 Play word games
- 1 Read! Read! Read!

## WRITING ACTIVITIES FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

- **REAL WRITING** — Your child needs to write for real purposes. Encourage your child to write letters to relatives, friends, and pen pals. Writing phone messages, reminder notes, and instructions can also provide authentic writing practice.
- **GENERATE LISTS** — It is a good practice to write lists and help your child become more organized. Your child might make lists of his/her CDs, books, school assignments, projects, and dates for tests.
- **JOURNAL WRITING** — This is an excellent writing practice as well as a good outlet for expressing feelings. Encourage your child to write his/her personal feelings about things that happen at home and at school.
- **WRITE TOGETHER** — Have your child help you write letters, even routine ones such as ordering items from an advertisement or writing to a business firm. This helps your child to experience firsthand that writing is a life skill. Exchange “sticky notes” with your child. Put the notes on pillowcases, mirrors, books, or in lunch boxes.
- **CREATE A FAMILY SCRAPBOOK** — Help your child assemble photo albums of family events and write captions and/or short stories for the photos.
- **CREATE A FAMILY NEWSLETTER OR WEBSITE**—Help your child create a family newsletter or website to share with family members near and far.
- **WORD GAMES & PUZZLES**—Play games and solve word puzzles with your child that help to increase vocabulary and fluency in speaking and writing.
- **READ! READ! READ!** — Reading to your child exposes him/her to good models of writing. It also helps to spark imagination and provides him/her with ideas to stimulate writing.

## WRITING WELL IS AS EASY AS 1, 2, 3...

1. **TIME TO THINK** — Good writers do a great deal of thinking. Be patient and allow time to think.
2. **FEEDBACK & PRAISE** — Be interested in your child's thoughts and take a positive approach to his/her writing.
3. **FOSTER INDEPENDENCE** — Allow your child to take responsibility for his/her finished product.

Provided by:  
Office of Language Arts/English Instruction

Johanna Burks  
Instructional Specialist  
Elementary Language Arts

Randi Smith  
Instructional Specialist  
Secondary Language Arts

