

New Mexico SAT ELA Performance Level Descriptors

Introduction

This document contains performance level descriptors, or PLDs, in English language arts/literacy founded on SAT Reading and SAT Writing and Language test data. Each PLD represents a composite of student performance at one (or more) of several score bands on the Reading and the Writing and Language Test, and the framework is correlated with empirically derived test benchmarks for college and career readiness and success as well as New Mexico's standards.

Each PLD has the following components:

- A general statement broadly defining demonstrated achievement at that level in relation to college and career readiness and success
- A series of indicators representing student performance at that level

Each PLD focuses on the performance of **borderline** students. For example, the PLD for level 2 describes the skills and knowledge of students who demonstrate the minimal understanding and answered the minimum number of questions required to be classified at that level. The difference between "borderline student performance" at a given PLD and "typical student performance" (which would be around the midpoint of a given level) is crucial when making judgments during a standard-setting event.

Because PLD 1 is at the bottom of the range, minimal borderline student performance guidance is provided.

The TDs also include definitions for the text complexity levels included in the reading-related indicators. An appendix includes brief Reading Test passage samples at the various text complexity levels as well as a continuum showing how each indicator develops across performance levels.

Reading-related text complexity definitions

(See appendix for brief passage samples at the various levels.)

Level	Typical characteristics
Moderately challenging <i>A passage (or passage pair) that likely poses some challenge for college- and career-ready students</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A single, relatively straightforward purpose (informational text); one or possibly multiple levels of meaning (literary text), the understanding of which is useful to full comprehension• Relatively subtle central ideas or themes, either explicitly stated or relatively easy to infer• Moderately challenging information, ideas, and relationships, either explicitly stated or relatively easy to infer• Experiences and ideas sometimes unfamiliar to high school audiences• Abstract or theoretical concepts possible• Moderate information density; information conveyed at a fairly rapid pace• Relatively straightforward text structure• Moderately challenging syntax, including some complex sentences• Somewhat elevated diction that is somewhat distinct from everyday language• Moderate vocabulary demands• Moderate to moderately high demands on students' knowledge of the world, culture, and/or subject matter
Complex <i>A passage (or passage pair) that likely poses a challenge for college- and career-ready students</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One or more relatively subtle or complex purposes (informational text); multiple levels of meaning (literary text), the understanding of which is important to full comprehension• Relatively subtle or complex central ideas or themes, either explicitly stated or relatively challenging to infer• Challenging information, ideas, and relationships, often implicit and relatively challenging to infer• Experiences or ideas often unfamiliar to high school audiences• Abstract or theoretical concepts likely• Moderately high to high information density; information conveyed at a fairly rapid to rapid pace• Relatively intricate or complex text structure• Challenging syntax, including many complex sentences• Elevated diction that is distinct from everyday language• Moderately high vocabulary demands• Moderately high to high demands on students' knowledge of the world, culture, and/or subject matter• May be some important connections to other texts (e.g., allusions, references to prior studies)
Highly complex <i>A passage (or passage pair) that poses significant challenge for</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multiple subtle or complex purposes (informational text); multiple levels of meaning (literary text), an understanding of which is necessary to full comprehension• Subtle or complex central ideas or themes, either explicitly stated or challenging to infer

college- and career-ready students

- Highly challenging information, ideas, and relationships, frequently implicit and challenging to infer
- Experiences or ideas frequently unfamiliar to high school audiences
- Abstract or theoretical concepts highly likely
- High to very high information density; information conveyed at a rapid to very rapid pace
- Intricate or complex text structure
- Highly challenging syntax, consisting mostly of complex sentences
- Elevated diction that is sharply distinct from everyday language
- High vocabulary demands
- High to very high demands on students' knowledge of the world, culture, and/or subject matter
- Likely to be some critical connections to other texts (e.g., allusions, references to prior studies)

ELA/Literacy PLD 1

Students have not achieved PLD 2 and demonstrate a basic understanding of and ability to apply the reading, revising, and editing skills and knowledge needed for college and career readiness and success. These students may be able to demonstrate some ability to read and analyze moderately challenging (and simpler) texts and to revise and edit texts in basic ways and in simple contexts but are not able to demonstrate achievement sufficient for PLD 2.

ELA/Literacy PLD 2

Students at PLD 2 demonstrate a level of reading, revising, and editing achievement approaching but not meeting the college and career readiness benchmark. These students may be able to demonstrate some ability to read and analyze moderately challenging and complex (and simpler) texts and an ability to revise and edit in straightforward ways and contexts but not at the level of achievement requisite for college and career readiness and success.

Students performing at this level are likely able to

When reading

- Read a complex or moderately challenging passage (or simpler text) closely to identify explicitly stated information or ideas or to draw a reasonable inference (moderately challenging passage) or relatively simple reasonable inference (complex passage).
- Determine the best textual evidence for an inference even when the evidence requires some interpretation or analysis.
- Determine the central idea or theme of a complex passage (or simpler text).
- Determine a relationship between information, ideas, or people depicted in a passage (e.g., establishing a cause-effect, comparison-contrast, or sequential relationship).
- Determine the meaning of a common or relatively common high-utility academic (tier 2) word or phrase in context; determine the meaning of a simple or straightforward figurative expression.
- Determine the main purpose or effect of an author's word choice in a complex passage (or simpler text).
- Determine the main purpose of a portion of a passage (e.g., a detail or a metaphor) in relation to the passage as a whole when the purpose is clear and direct (e.g., providing an example or factual support).
- Identify point of view or perspective in a complex passage (or simpler text); draw a straightforward reasonable inference about point of view or perspective in a complex passage (or simpler text) (e.g., identifying the impact of a technique the author uses to shape point of view in a literary passage; distinguishing among the multiple perspectives in an informational passage).
- Determine the main purpose of a moderately challenging passage (or simpler text) or of one of its paragraphs.
- Establish a similarity or difference in how authors present information or ideas (e.g., in terms of content included, point of view, structure, or relationships) in a pair of complex passages (or simpler texts).
- Locate data or make an accurate interpretation of data in an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart (e.g., comparing the sizes of numerous bars; determining which of two lines, each revealing a clear trend, represents a generally higher value; drawing a valid conclusion based on an understanding of a bar graph's overall purpose; summarizing a clear trend from several data points); draw a straightforward supportable connection between a graphic and its accompanying passage (e.g., determining a graphic's clear main purpose and finding a matching assertion in the passage).

When revising and editing writing

- Clarify an aspect of the structure of a paragraph or passage (e.g., using a phrase to preview examples that follow in subsequent sentences).
- Use supporting information to achieve a simple or straightforward purpose (e.g., providing a short list of examples introduced by *for instance*; providing a cause for an effect; offering direct evidence for a claim).
- Delete information or ideas that are clearly irrelevant to a paragraph or passage (e.g., eliminating a detail that has no apparent relationship to a passage's topic, interrupts an explanation, or significantly digresses from the main topic).
- Use a general understanding of an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart, to revise a passage (e.g., drawing on knowledge of what a graph's bars represent to improve the accuracy of a passage's description of the graph).
- Order the sentences in a paragraph to achieve a simple or straightforward purpose (e.g., grouping related information together; establishing a basic chronology; repositioning a supporting detail immediately after a sentence that makes a claim).
- Introduce or conclude a paragraph or passage based on a general understanding of its content and purpose (e.g., adding a conclusion that restates the passage's main claim).
- Use a transitional word or phrase to establish a simple or straightforward logical relationship between sentences (e.g., indicating a sequence, suggesting a contrast, introducing a definition).
- Make an effective word or phrase choice based on vocabulary knowledge and an understanding of the context (e.g., using a common but still appropriate expression instead of an awkward or meaningless one; recognizing when a particular adjective does or does not meaningfully describe a person or object).
- Eliminate wordiness or redundancy within a sentence (e.g., removing repetition within a short phrase; recognizing when adjectives with the same meaning or very similar meanings, such as *fast* and *rapid*, are used to describe the same thing).
- Maintain a basic consistency in style and tone within a passage (e.g., revising language that is clearly too informal or formal for the context).
- Combine sentences in a relatively simple or a straightforward way (e.g., making a second sentence into a relative clause or prepositional phrase of the first) or to achieve a relatively simple or a straightforward purpose (e.g., eliminating obvious awkwardness or repetition; establishing a logical arrangement of sentence elements).
- Demonstrate limited command of the conventions of standard written English sentence structure, usage, and punctuation.

Examples: Recognizing and correcting disruptions in sentence structure; determining the appropriate verb tense or pronoun person and number on the basis of an understanding of the context; recognizing and correcting an obviously vague or ambiguous pronoun; maintaining subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement in straightforward or somewhat challenging situations; using conventional expression in straightforward or somewhat challenging situations; distinguishing among singular, singular possessive, plural, and plural possessive nouns;

appropriately punctuating items in series; using punctuation to set off nonrestrictive elements;

eliminating unnecessary punctuation in straightforward or somewhat challenging situations

ELA/Literacy PLD 3

Students at PLD 3 demonstrate a level of reading, revising, and editing achievement meeting the college and career readiness benchmark. These students demonstrate the ability to read and analyze complex (and simpler) texts and to revise and edit in challenging contexts at the level of achievement requisite for college and career readiness and success.

Students performing at this level are likely able to

When reading

- Read a complex passage closely to draw a reasonable inference.
- Determine the best textual evidence for an inference when the evidence requires some interpretation or analysis and the inference requires close reading.
- Determine the central idea or theme of a complex passage that features several important ideas.
- Distinguish between an accurate and an inaccurate summary.
- Determine a relationship between information, ideas, or people depicted in a complex passage (e.g., establishing a cause-effect, comparison-contrast, or sequential relationship).
- Determine the meaning of a relatively uncommon high-utility academic (tier 2) word or phrase in context; determine the meaning of a moderately challenging figurative expression.
- Determine the main purpose or effect of an author's word choice in a complex passage or in a simpler text when the purpose or effect is fairly subtle or complex (e.g., an author using wordplay or parody).
- Determine the main purpose of a portion of a passage (e.g., a detail or a metaphor) in relation to the passage as a whole when the purpose is fairly subtle (e.g., providing an explanation for a concept).
- Draw a reasonable inference about point of view or perspective in a complex passage (e.g., identifying where point of view switches in a literary passage; distinguishing among conflicting perspectives in an informational passage).
- Determine the main purpose of a complex passage or of one of its paragraphs.
- Determine a claim or counterclaim in a complex argument; analyze a subtle argumentative technique (e.g., an application of a principle) or flaw (e.g., an author using weak reasoning in support of a claim).
- Compare two authors' positions in a pair of complex passages (e.g., determining the extent to which two authors agree or disagree about a claim).
- Make an accurate, somewhat subtle or complex interpretation of data in an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart (e.g., comparing results in terms of two variables; recognizing an implication of the values represented on a table); draw a supportable connection between a graphic and its accompanying passage (e.g., characterizing a broad trend exhibited in a graph using the concepts and language of the passage).

When revising and editing writing

- Establish and clarify the structure of a paragraph or passage (e.g., adding a sentence to frame a paragraph's content or to present a claim that the paragraph subsequently supports).
- Use supporting information to develop a point or claim logically (e.g., offering a specific, relevant example; using a quotation that clarifies a concept or observation).
- Sharpen the focus of a paragraph or passage by making a thoughtful decision about adding, revising, or deleting information or ideas (e.g., eliminating material that is broadly relevant to a topic but that is poorly placed or integrated).
- Locate or interpret data in an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart, and incorporate them in a passage in an accurate, relevant way (e.g., identifying the value in a table that is associated with a particular condition; distinguishing between accurate and inaccurate interpretations and between information relevant and irrelevant to a particular question or issue).
- Place or order sentences in a paragraph to address a critical issue of logic or cohesion (e.g., adding a sentence to fill a discernible gap in a chronological sequence; repositioning a sentence to provide a needed transition between ideas).
- Introduce or conclude a paragraph or passage based on an understanding of its content and purpose (e.g., ensuring that a passage's conclusion offers an adequate sense of closure; achieving a particular rhetorical aim, such as suggesting implications of the findings discussed in the passage).
- Use a transitional word, phrase, clause, or sentence to establish a logical relationship between sentences or paragraphs (e.g., signaling a shift in emphasis or focus).
- Make a nuanced word or phrase choice based on well-developed vocabulary knowledge and an understanding of the context (e.g., distinguishing among relatively uncommon words that have similar denotations but differing connotations or uses).
- Eliminate relatively subtle wordiness or redundancy within a sentence or between sentences (e.g., recognizing when information overexplains a concept and correcting accordingly; deleting repetition involving fairly sophisticated language).
- Make a thoughtful decision about style and tone in a passage based on an understanding of the context (e.g., revising language that is too informal or formal in a fairly challenging context; achieving a particular rhetorical aim, such as choosing language that sets a contextually appropriate mood).
- Combine sentences to accomplish a relatively subtle purpose (e.g., inserting a conjunction to establish a logical relationship; blending elements of two sentences to improve logic and flow).
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard written English sentence structure, usage, and punctuation.

Examples: Recognizing and correcting relatively subtle disruptions in sentence structure; determining appropriate verb tense and mood or pronoun person and number on the basis of a well-developed understanding of the context; recognizing and correcting vague or ambiguous pronouns based on an understanding of the context; making careful distinctions among the possessive determiners *its* and *their*, the contractions *it's* and *they're*, and the adverb *there*;

maintaining subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement in challenging situations;
using conventional expression in challenging situations; making careful distinctions among
singular, singular possessive, plural, and plural possessive nouns based on an understanding of
the context;
making informed decisions about how or whether to use punctuation to set off one or
more sentence elements based on an understanding of the context; eliminating unnecessary
punctuation in challenging situations

ELA/Literacy PLD 4

Students at PLD 4 demonstrate a level of reading achievement exceeding the college and career readiness benchmark. These students demonstrate the ability to read and analyze highly complex (and simpler) texts and to revise and edit at a level of achievement higher than that requisite for college and career readiness and success.

Students performing at this level are likely able to

When reading

- Read a highly complex passage closely to identify explicitly stated information or ideas or to draw a reasonable inference.
- Determine the best textual evidence for an inference when the evidence is subtle, abstract, or figurative and the inference requires multiple steps.
- Determine the central idea or theme of a highly complex passage.
- Determine a relationship between information, ideas, or people depicted in a highly complex passage (e.g., establishing a cause-effect, comparison-contrast, or sequential relationship).
- Determine the meaning of an uncommon high-utility academic (tier 2) word or phrase in context, including an archaic usage found in a text from an earlier time period; determine the meaning of a subtle or complex figurative expression.
- Determine the main purpose or effect of an author's word choice in a highly complex passage or in a simpler text when the purpose or effect is subtle or complex (e.g., an author establishing meaning chiefly through tone via understatement, exaggeration, or sarcasm).
- Determine the main purpose of a portion of a passage (e.g., a detail or a metaphor) in relation to the passage as a whole when the purpose is subtle or complex (e.g., an author using rhetorical questions to indicate self-evident truths).
- Draw a nuanced inference about point of view or perspective in a complex or highly complex passage (e.g., tracing a subtle shift in point of view in a literary passage; associating particular opinions with the individuals who hold them in an informational passage).
- Determine the main purpose of a highly complex passage or of one of its paragraphs.
- Compare two authors' positions in a pair of highly complex passages or in a simpler pair when the comparison is subtle or complex (e.g., determining the extent to which two authors agree or disagree philosophically).
- Make an accurate subtle or complex interpretation of data in an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart (e.g., comparing results in terms of three or more variables; determining which individual bars in a bar graph ["paid vacation," "health insurance"] can reasonably be considered part of an overarching category ["job benefits"]); draw a subtle or complex supportable connection between a graphic and its accompanying passage (e.g., summarizing the results displayed in a table using the concepts and language of the passage).

When revising and editing writing

- Make a sophisticated decision relating to the structure of a paragraph or passage (e.g., using a clause to set up information when the content is complex, the language is challenging, and the linkage is subtle).
- Use supporting information to develop a point or claim logically on the basis of a thorough understanding of a challenging context (e.g., indicating the last step in a complex sequence; including an example that is similar in content to one or more other examples in a paragraph).
- Sharpen the focus of a paragraph or passage by making a sophisticated decision about adding, revising, or deleting information or ideas (e.g., adding or retaining optional but relevant material because it enhances meaning and clarity).
- Interpret, paraphrase, or summarize data in an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart, and incorporate them in a passage in an accurate, relevant way (e.g., encompassing multiple data points in a single relevant general statement).
- Place or order sentences in a paragraph to address a subtle or complex issue of logic or cohesion (e.g., deciding to reposition rather than delete a sentence that, when properly placed, improves the flow of ideas in a paragraph).
- Introduce or conclude a paragraph or passage based on a thorough understanding of its content and purpose (e.g., ensuring that a passage's conclusion offers a subtle or sophisticated sense of closure).
- Use a transitional word, phrase, clause, or sentence to establish a subtle or complex logical relationship between sentences or paragraphs; recognize when such a device is not needed or is problematic (e.g., drawing on an understanding of the context to eliminate a word or phrase, such as *therefore*, that wrongly suggests a cause-effect relationship).
- Make a sophisticated word or phrase choice based on highly developed vocabulary knowledge and a thorough understanding of a challenging context (e.g., distinguishing among uncommon words that have similar denotations but differing connotations or uses when the distinctions are subtle).
- Eliminate subtle wordiness or redundancy within a sentence or between sentences and paragraphs (e.g., recognizing that a seemingly sophisticated but wordy expression is less effective than a simpler and more economical one; eliminating the second appearance of the same detail in successive paragraphs).
- Make a sophisticated decision about style and tone in a passage based on a thorough understanding of the context (e.g., achieving a subtle rhetorical aim, such as closely matching a sentence pattern already established in a passage).
- Combine sentences to accomplish a subtle or complex purpose (e.g., drawing on an understanding of the context to place a blended sentence's emphasis on its most important idea).
- Demonstrate a thorough command of the conventions of standard written English sentence structure, usage, and punctuation.

Examples: Recognizing and correcting subtle or complex disruptions in sentence structure;
maintaining subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement in highly challenging situations;
drawing logical comparisons using like terms (e.g., *The cost of living in the city differs from that*

in the suburbs instead of *The cost of living in the city differs from the suburbs*); using conventional expression in highly challenging situations; using semicolons to join closely related independent clauses; using colons to introduce elaborations

Appendix

Reading-related text complexity samples

The following samples, excerpted from much longer Reading Test passages, help illustrate the text complexity levels described above.

Moderately challenging

US and world literature

My favorite place in the whole city was the Sempere & Sons bookshop on Calle Santa Ana. It smelled of old paper and dust and it was my sanctuary, my refuge. The bookseller would let me sit on a chair in a corner and read any book I liked to my heart's content. He hardly ever allowed me to pay for the books he placed in my hands, but when he wasn't looking I'd leave the coins I'd managed to collect on the counter before I left. It was only small change—if I'd had to buy a book with that pittance, I would probably have been able to afford only a booklet of cigarette papers. When it was time for me to leave, I would do so dragging my feet, a weight on my soul. If it had been up to me, I would have stayed there forever.

From Carlos Ruiz Zafón, *The Angel's Game*. ©2008 by Dragonworks, S.L. Translation ©2009 by Lucia Graves.

Science

There are two reasons birds might fly in a V formation: It may make flight easier, or they're simply following the leader. Squadrons of planes can save fuel by flying in a V formation, and many scientists suspect that migrating birds do the same. Models that treated flapping birds like fixed-wing airplanes estimate that they save energy by drafting off each other, but currents created by airplanes are far more stable than the oscillating eddies coming off of a bird. "Air gets pretty unpredictable behind a flapping wing," says James Usherwood, a locomotor biomechanist at the Royal Veterinary College at the University of London in Hatfield, where the research took place.

Adapted from Patricia Waldron, "Why Birds Fly in a V Formation." ©2014 by American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Complex

US and world literature

Unlike the gold which needed nothing, and must be worshipped in close-locked solitude—which was hidden away from the daylight, was deaf to the song of birds, and started to no human tones—Eppie was a creature of endless claims and ever-growing desires, seeking and loving sunshine, and living sounds, and living movements; making trial of everything, with trust in new joy, and stirring the human kindness in all eyes that looked on her. The gold had kept his thoughts in an ever-repeated circle, leading to nothing beyond itself; but Eppie was an object compacted of changes and hopes that forced his thoughts onward, and carried them far away from their old eager pacing towards the same blank limit—carried them away to the new things that would come with the coming years, when Eppie would have learned to understand how her father Silas cared for her; and made him look for images of that time in the ties and charities that bound together the families of his neighbors.

Adapted from George Eliot, *Silas Marner*. Originally published in 1861.

Science

Moore and his colleagues discovered salt's stretchiness accidentally. They were investigating how water sticks to a surface such as salt and created a super-dry salt sample for testing. After cleaving a chunk of salt about the size of a sugar cube with a razor, the scientists guided a microscope that detects forces toward the surface. When the tip was far away there was no measured force, but within about seven nanometers a very strong attraction rapidly developed between the diamond tip of the microscope and the salt. The salt actually stretched out to glom on to the microscope tip. Using an electron microscope to see what was happening, the researchers observed the nanowires.

Adapted from Rachel Ehrenberg, "Salt Stretches in Nanoworld." ©2009 by Society for Science & the Public.

Highly complex

US founding documents and the Great Global Conversation

Contending for the rights of woman, my main argument is built on this simple principle, that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue; for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice. And how can woman be expected to co-operate unless she know why she ought to be virtuous? unless freedom strengthen her reason till she comprehend her duty, and see in what manner it is connected with her real good? If children are to be educated to understand the true principle of patriotism, their mother must be a patriot; and the love of mankind, from which an orderly train of virtues spring, can only be produced by considering the moral and civil interest of mankind; but the education and situation of woman, at present, shuts her out from such investigations. . . .

Adapted from Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Originally published in 1792.

Social science

The production, circulation, and reception of public knowledge is a complex process. It is generally accepted that public knowledge should be authoritative, but there is not always common agreement about what the public needs to know, who is best placed to relate and explain it, and how authoritative reputations should be determined and evaluated. Historically, newspapers such as *The Times* and broadcasters such as the BBC were widely regarded as the trusted shapers of authoritative agendas and conventional wisdom. They embodied the *Oxford English Dictionary's* definition of authority as the "power over, or title to influence, the opinions of others." As part of the general process of the transformation of authority whereby there has been a reluctance to uncritically accept traditional sources of public knowledge, the demand has been for all authority to make explicit the frames of value which determine their decisions. Centres of news production, as our focus groups show, have not been exempt from this process.

Adapted from Stephen Coleman, Scott Anthony, and David E. Morrison, "Public Trust in the News."
©2009 by Stephen Coleman.

Skill/knowledge continua

Skill/knowledge	Performance Level		
	2	3	4
Reading closely	Read a moderately challenging or complex passage (or simpler text) closely to identify explicitly stated information or ideas or to draw a reasonable inference (moderately challenging passage) or relatively simple reasonable inference (complex passage).	Read a complex passage closely to draw a reasonable inference.	Read a highly complex passage closely to identify explicitly stated information or ideas or to draw a reasonable inference.
Citing textual evidence	Determine the best textual evidence for an inference even when the evidence requires some interpretation or analysis.	Determine the best textual evidence for an inference when the evidence requires some interpretation or analysis and the inference requires close reading.	Determine the best textual evidence for an inference when the evidence is subtle, abstract, or figurative and the inference requires multiple steps.
Determining central ideas and themes	Determine the central idea or theme of a moderately challenging or complex passage (or simpler text).	Determine the central idea or theme of a complex passage that features several important ideas.	Determine the central idea or theme of a highly complex passage.
Summarizing		Distinguish between an accurate and an inaccurate summary.	
Understanding relationships	Determine a relationship between information, ideas, or people depicted in a passage (e.g., establishing a cause-effect, comparison-contrast, or sequential relationship).	Determine a relationship between information, ideas, or people depicted in a complex passage (e.g., establishing a cause-effect, comparison-contrast, or sequential relationship).	Determine a relationship between information, ideas, or people depicted in a highly complex passage (e.g., establishing a cause-effect, comparison-contrast, or sequential relationship).
Interpreting words and phrases in context	Determine the meaning of a common or relatively common high-utility academic (tier 2) word or phrase in context; determine the meaning of a simple or	Determine the meaning of a relatively uncommon high-utility academic (tier 2) word or phrase in context; determine the meaning of	Determine the meaning of an uncommon high-utility academic (tier 2) word or phrase in context, including an archaic usage found in a text from an earlier time period;

Skill/knowledge	Performance Level		
	2	3	4
	straightforward figurative expression.	a moderately challenging figurative expression.	determine the meaning of a subtle or complex figurative expression.
Analyzing word choice	Determine the main purpose or effect of an author’s word choice in a moderately challenging or complex passage (or simpler text).	Determine the main purpose or effect of an author’s word choice in a complex passage or in a simpler text when the purpose or effect is fairly subtle or complex (e.g., an author using wordplay or parody).	Determine the main purpose or effect of an author’s word choice in a highly complex passage or in a simpler text when the purpose or effect is subtle or complex (e.g., an author establishing meaning chiefly through tone via understatement, exaggeration, or sarcasm).
Analyzing part-whole relationships	Determine the main purpose of a portion of a passage (e.g., a detail or a metaphor) in relation to the passage as a whole when the purpose is clear and direct (e.g., providing an example or factual support).	Determine the main purpose of a portion of a passage (e.g., a detail or a metaphor) in relation to the passage as a whole when the purpose is fairly subtle (e.g., providing an explanation for a concept).	Determine the main purpose of a portion of a passage (e.g., a detail or a metaphor) in relation to the passage as a whole when the purpose is subtle or complex (e.g., an author using rhetorical questions to indicate self-evident truths).
Analyzing point of view	Identify point of view or perspective in a complex passage (or simpler text); draw a straightforward reasonable inference about point of view or perspective in a complex passage (or simpler text) (e.g., identifying the impact of a technique the author uses to shape point of view in a literary passage; distinguishing among the multiple	Draw a reasonable inference about point of view or perspective in a complex passage (e.g., identifying where point of view switches in a literary passage; distinguishing among conflicting perspectives in an informational passage).	Draw a nuanced inference about point of view or perspective in a complex or highly complex passage (e.g., tracing a subtle shift in point of view in a literary passage; associating particular opinions with the individuals who hold them in an informational passage).

Skill/knowledge	Performance Level		
	2	3	4
	perspectives in an informational passage).		
Analyzing purpose	Determine the main purpose of a moderately challenging passage (or simpler text) or of one of its paragraphs.	Determine the main purpose of a complex passage or of one of its paragraphs.	Determine the main purpose of a highly complex passage or of one of its paragraphs.
Analyzing arguments		Determine a claim or counterclaim in a complex argument; analyze a subtle argumentative technique (e.g., an application of a principle) or flaw (e.g., an author using weak reasoning in support of a claim).	
Analyzing multiple texts	Establish a similarity or difference in how authors present information or ideas (e.g., in terms of content included, point of view, structure, or relationships) in a pair of complex passages (or simpler texts).	Compare two authors' positions in a pair of complex passages (e.g., determining the extent to which two authors agree or disagree about a claim).	Compare two authors' positions in a pair of highly complex passages or in a simpler pair when the comparison is subtle or complex (e.g., determining the extent to which two authors agree or disagree philosophically).
Analyzing quantitative information	Locate data or make an accurate interpretation of data in an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart (e.g., comparing the sizes of numerous bars; determining which of two lines, each revealing a clear trend, represents a generally higher value; drawing a valid conclusion based on an understanding of a bar graph's	Make an accurate, somewhat subtle or complex interpretation of data in an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart (e.g., comparing results in terms of two variables; recognizing an implication of the values represented on a table); draw a supportable connection between a graphic and its accompanying passage (e.g.,	Make an accurate subtle or complex interpretation of data in an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart (e.g., comparing results in terms of three or more variables; determining which individual bars in a bar graph ["paid vacation," "health insurance"] can reasonably be considered part of an overarching

Skill/knowledge	Performance Level		
	2	3	4
	overall purpose; summarizing a clear trend from several data points); draw a straightforward supportable connection between a graphic and its accompanying passage (e.g., determining a graphic’s clear main purpose and finding a matching assertion in the passage).	characterizing a broad trend exhibited in a graph using the concepts and language of the passage).	category [“job benefits”]); draw a subtle or complex supportable connection between a graphic and its accompanying passage (e.g., summarizing the results displayed in a table using the concepts and language of the passage).
Proposition	Clarify an aspect of the structure of a paragraph or passage (e.g., using a phrase to preview examples that follow in subsequent sentences).	Establish and clarify the structure of a paragraph or passage (e.g., adding a sentence to frame a paragraph’s content or to present a claim that the paragraph subsequently supports).	Make a sophisticated decision relating to the structure of a paragraph or passage (e.g., using a clause to set up information when the content is complex, the language is challenging, and the linkage is subtle).
Support	Use supporting information to achieve a simple or straightforward purpose (e.g., providing a short list of examples introduced by <i>for instance</i> ; providing a cause for an effect; offering direct evidence for a claim).	Use supporting information to develop a point or claim logically (e.g., offering a specific, relevant example; using a quotation that clarifies a concept or observation).	Use supporting information to develop a point or claim logically on the basis of a thorough understanding of a challenging context (e.g., indicating the last step in a complex sequence; including an example that is similar in content to one or more other examples in a paragraph).
Focus	Delete information or ideas that are clearly irrelevant to a paragraph or passage (e.g., eliminating a detail that has no apparent relationship to a passage’s topic, interrupts an	Sharpen the focus of a paragraph or passage by making a thoughtful decision about adding, revising, or deleting information or ideas (e.g., eliminating material that is broadly	Sharpen the focus of a paragraph or passage by making a sophisticated decision about adding, revising, or deleting information or ideas (e.g., adding or retaining optional but

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	2	3	4
Quantitative information	<p>explanation, or significantly digresses from the main topic). Use a general understanding of an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart, to revise a passage (e.g., drawing on knowledge of what a graph's bars represent to improve the accuracy of a passage's description of the graph).</p>	<p>relevant to a topic but that is poorly placed or integrated). Locate or interpret data in an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart, and incorporate them in a passage in an accurate, relevant way (e.g., identifying the value in a table that is associated with a particular condition; distinguishing between accurate and inaccurate interpretations and between information relevant and irrelevant to a particular question or issue).</p>	<p>relevant material because it enhances meaning and clarity). Interpret, paraphrase, or summarize data in an informational graphic, such as a table, graph, or chart, and incorporate them in a passage in an accurate, relevant way (e.g., encompassing multiple data points in a single relevant general statement).</p>
Logical sequence	<p>Order the sentences in a paragraph to achieve a simple or straightforward purpose (e.g., grouping related information together; establishing a basic chronology; repositioning a supporting detail immediately after a sentence that makes a claim).</p>	<p>Place or order sentences in a paragraph to address a critical issue of logic or cohesion (e.g., adding a sentence to fill a discernible gap in a chronological sequence; repositioning a sentence to provide a needed transition between ideas).</p>	<p>Place or order sentences in a paragraph to address a subtle or complex issue of logic or cohesion (e.g., deciding to reposition rather than delete a sentence that, when properly placed, improves the flow of ideas in a paragraph).</p>
Introductions and conclusions	<p>Introduce or conclude a paragraph or passage based on a general understanding of its content and purpose (e.g., adding a conclusion that restates the passage's main claim).</p>	<p>Introduce or conclude a paragraph or passage based on an understanding of its content and purpose (e.g., ensuring that a passage's conclusion offers an adequate sense of closure; achieving a particular rhetorical aim, such as</p>	<p>Introduce or conclude a paragraph or passage based on a thorough understanding of its content and purpose (e.g., ensuring that a passage's conclusion offers a subtle or sophisticated sense of closure).</p>

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	2	3	4
		suggesting implications of the findings discussed in the passage).	
Transitions	Use a transitional word or phrase to establish a simple or straightforward logical relationship between sentences (e.g., indicating a sequence, suggesting a contrast, introducing a definition).	Use a transitional word, phrase, clause, or sentence to establish a logical relationship between sentences or paragraphs (e.g., signaling a shift in emphasis or focus).	Use a transitional word, phrase, clause, or sentence to establish a subtle or complex logical relationship between sentences or paragraphs; recognize when such a device is not needed or is problematic (e.g., drawing on an understanding of the context to eliminate a word or phrase, such as <i>therefore</i> , that wrongly suggests a cause-effect relationship).
Precision	Make an effective word or phrase choice based on vocabulary knowledge and an understanding of the context (e.g., using a common but still appropriate expression instead of an awkward or meaningless one; recognizing when a particular adjective does or does not meaningfully describe a person or object).	Make a nuanced word or phrase choice based on well-developed vocabulary knowledge and an understanding of the context (e.g., distinguishing among relatively uncommon words that have similar denotations but differing connotations or uses).	Make a sophisticated word or phrase choice based on highly developed vocabulary knowledge and a thorough understanding of a challenging context (e.g., distinguishing among uncommon words that have similar denotations but differing connotations or uses when the distinctions are subtle).
Concision	Eliminate wordiness or redundancy within a sentence (e.g., removing repetition within a short phrase; recognizing when adjectives with the same meaning or very similar meanings, such as <i>fast</i> and <i>rapid</i> ,	Eliminate relatively subtle wordiness or redundancy within a sentence or between sentences (e.g., recognizing when information overexplains a concept and correcting accordingly; deleting	Eliminate subtle wordiness or redundancy within a sentence or between sentences and paragraphs (e.g., recognizing that a seemingly sophisticated but wordy expression is less effective than a simpler and

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	2	3	4
	are used to describe the same thing).	repetition involving fairly sophisticated language).	more economical one; eliminating the second appearance of the same detail in successive paragraphs).
Style and tone	Maintain a basic consistency in style and tone within a passage (e.g., revising language that is clearly too informal or formal for the context).	Make a thoughtful decision about style and tone in a passage based on an understanding of the context (e.g., revising language that is too informal or formal in a fairly challenging context; achieving a particular rhetorical aim, such as choosing language that sets a contextually appropriate mood).	Make a sophisticated decision about style and tone in a passage based on a thorough understanding of the context (e.g., achieving a subtle rhetorical aim, such as closely matching a sentence pattern already established in a passage).
Syntax	Combine sentences in a relatively simple or a straightforward way (e.g., making a second sentence into a relative clause or prepositional phrase of the first) or to achieve a relatively simple or a straightforward purpose (e.g., eliminating obvious awkwardness or repetition; establishing a logical arrangement of sentence elements).	Combine sentences to accomplish a relatively subtle purpose (e.g., inserting a conjunction to establish a logical relationship; blending elements of two sentences to improve logic and flow).	Combine sentences to accomplish a subtle or complex purpose (e.g., drawing on an understanding of the context to place a blended sentence's emphasis on its most important idea).
Standard English conventions	Demonstrate limited command of the conventions of standard written English sentence structure, usage, and punctuation.	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard written English sentence structure, usage, and punctuation.	Demonstrate a thorough command of the conventions of standard written English sentence structure, usage, and punctuation.

