

This guide can be used to orient you and your students to some important aspects of the new writing assessment. The following explains the components of the writing prompts.

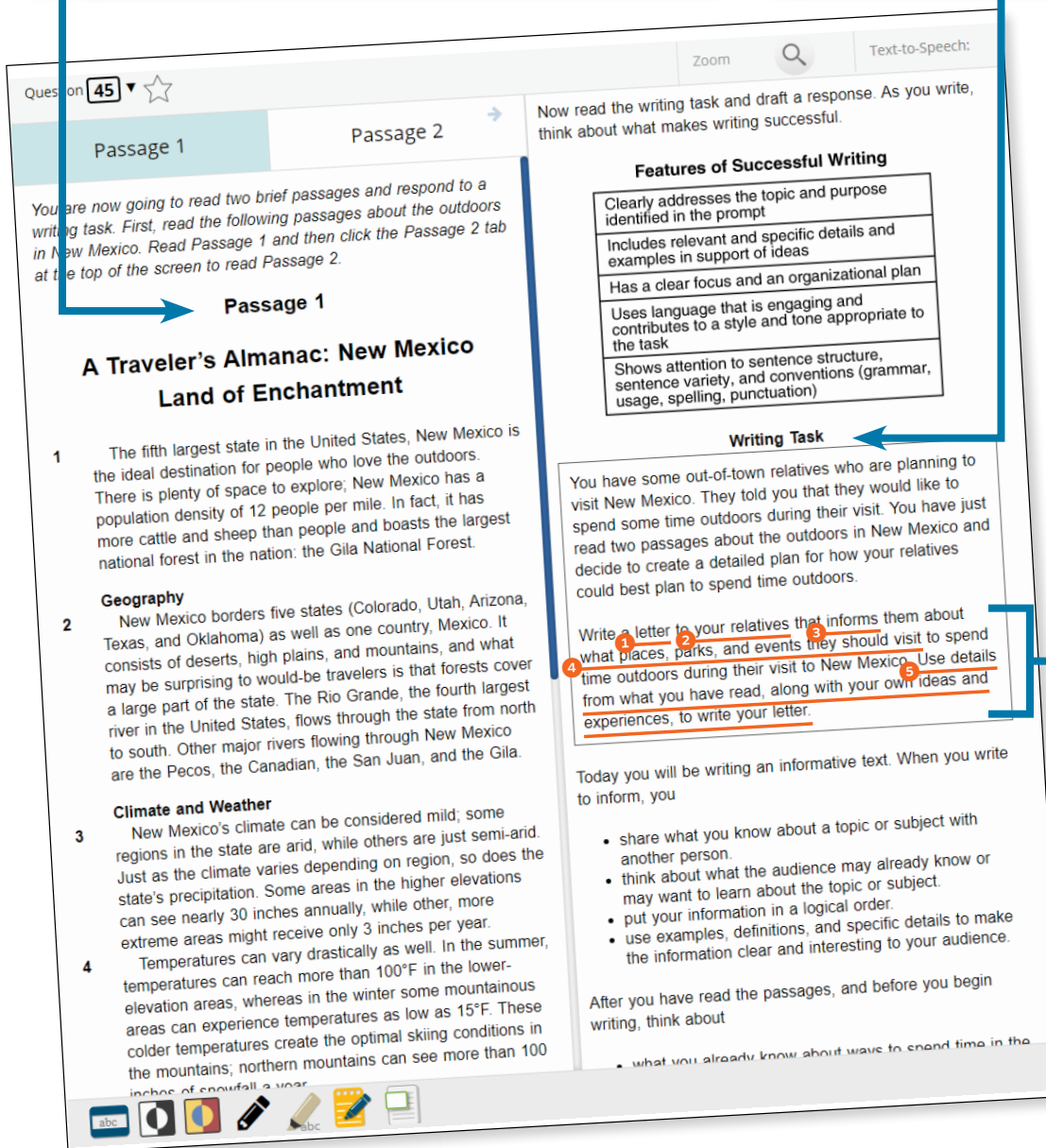
Passages

Students will see 1–3 passages per prompt, which will not exceed a total maximum word count per grade level.

Passages will serve as a source of some of the ideas, examples, and details that students can incorporate in their response.

Writing Task

The writing task will present a plausible context for writing and identify the topic, audience, purpose, and form for the student's written response.



The screenshot shows a digital writing assessment interface. At the top, there are navigation options for 'Question 45', 'Zoom', and 'Text-to-Speech'. Below this, there are tabs for 'Passage 1' and 'Passage 2'. The 'Passage 1' tab is active, displaying the text: 'You are now going to read two brief passages and respond to a writing task. First, read the following passages about the outdoors in New Mexico. Read Passage 1 and then click the Passage 2 tab at the top of the screen to read Passage 2.'

Passage 1

A Traveler's Almanac: New Mexico Land of Enchantment

- The fifth largest state in the United States, New Mexico is the ideal destination for people who love the outdoors. There is plenty of space to explore; New Mexico has a population density of 12 people per mile. In fact, it has more cattle and sheep than people and boasts the largest national forest in the nation: the Gila National Forest.
- Geography**
New Mexico borders five states (Colorado, Utah, Arizona, Texas, and Oklahoma) as well as one country, Mexico. It consists of deserts, high plains, and mountains, and what may be surprising to would-be travelers is that forests cover a large part of the state. The Rio Grande, the fourth largest river in the United States, flows through the state from north to south. Other major rivers flowing through New Mexico are the Pecos, the Canadian, the San Juan, and the Gila.
- Climate and Weather**
New Mexico's climate can be considered mild; some regions in the state are arid, while others are just semi-arid. Just as the climate varies depending on region, so does the state's precipitation. Some areas in the higher elevations can see nearly 30 inches annually, while other, more extreme areas might receive only 3 inches per year.
- Temperatures can vary drastically as well. In the summer, temperatures can reach more than 100°F in the lower-elevation areas, whereas in the winter some mountainous areas can experience temperatures as low as 15°F. These colder temperatures create the optimal skiing conditions in the mountains; northern mountains can see more than 100 inches of snowfall a year.

Passage 2

Now read the writing task and draft a response. As you write, think about what makes writing successful.

Features of Successful Writing	
Clearly addresses the topic and purpose identified in the prompt	
Includes relevant and specific details and examples in support of ideas	
Has a clear focus and an organizational plan	
Uses language that is engaging and contributes to a style and tone appropriate to the task	
Shows attention to sentence structure, sentence variety, and conventions (grammar, usage, spelling, punctuation)	

Writing Task

You have some out-of-town relatives who are planning to visit New Mexico. They told you that they would like to spend some time outdoors during their visit. You have just read two passages about the outdoors in New Mexico and decide to create a detailed plan for how your relatives could best plan to spend time outdoors.

Write a letter to your relatives that informs them about what places, parks, and events they should visit to spend time outdoors during their visit to New Mexico. Use details from what you have read, along with your own ideas and experiences, to write your letter.

Today you will be writing an informative text. When you write to inform, you

- share what you know about a topic or subject with another person.
- think about what the audience may already know or may want to learn about the topic or subject.
- put your information in a logical order.
- use examples, definitions, and specific details to make the information clear and interesting to your audience.

After you have read the passages, and before you begin writing, think about

- what you already know about ways to spend time in the

Task Cues

- Form**
Possible forms of writing include (but are not limited to) an essay, letter, article, or speech.
- Audience**
May be familiar (e.g., classmates, teacher, family) or unfamiliar (e.g., members of a school board).
- Purpose**
A word or words to indicate whether the task calls for narrative, informative, or opinion/argument writing.
- Topic**
Identified by NM teachers as suitable for and engaging to students.
- Support Cues**
Identifies the sources of ideas and details the student should draw upon when writing a response.
For their writing to be effective, students must connect with and build upon the passages by integrating their own ideas, observations, and prior knowledge.

The following provides additional information related to the writing assessment scoring rubrics.

The rubrics, additional information about the writing prompts, as well as instructional activities related to various features of the writing assessment can be found in the following resource packet: *Supporting New Mexico Students as Writers: Resources for Teachers* (newmexico.onlinehelp.cognia.org/resources-nm-mssa).

Rubrics for Argument, Informative/ Explanatory, and Narrative Writing

Two Scores:

Production of Writing: evaluates development, organization, and language on a 1–4 point scale.

Use of Conventions: evaluates grammar and mechanics on a 1–3 point scale.

Standards

The rubrics were developed to address skills outlined in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Although the writing assessment is passage-based, it only addresses CCSS in Writing and Language, not standards in Reading.

Grade Level

Rubrics are customized by grade band for Grades 3–5 and Grades 6–8.

Production of Writing: NM-MSSA Informative Writing Rubric (Grades 6–8)				
	Score Point 4	Score Point 3	Score Point 2	Score Point 1
The Writing:				
Development/ Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presents ideas that thoroughly address the task. Substantially develops the topic with consistently pertinent facts, definitions, details, examples, and other information from relevant sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presents ideas that generally address the task. Generally develops the topic with mostly pertinent facts, definitions, details, examples, and other information from relevant sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presents ideas that partially address the task. Partially develops the topic with some pertinent facts, definitions, details, examples, and other information from relevant sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presents ideas that minimally address the task. Minimally develops the topic with few pertinent facts, definitions, details, examples, and other information from relevant sources.
Organization/ Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes and consistently maintains an organizational plan focused on a controlling or central idea. Provides a thoroughly clear and engaging introduction and a concluding statement or section that clearly follows from and supports the preceding ideas/information. Consistently demonstrates effective use of transitions to create cohesion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes and generally maintains an organizational plan focused on a controlling or central idea. Provides a generally clear introduction and a concluding statement or section that generally follows from and supports the preceding ideas/information. Generally demonstrates effective use of transitions to create cohesion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts to establish and partially maintains an organizational plan focused on a controlling or central idea. Provides a partially clear introduction and a concluding statement or section that loosely follows from and supports the preceding ideas/information. Sometimes demonstrates effective use of transitions to create cohesion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May attempt to establish but does not maintain an organizational plan focused on a controlling or central idea. May lack an introduction; a concluding statement, if provided, may not follow from or support preceding ideas/information. Rarely demonstrates/does not demonstrate any effective use of transitions to create cohesion.
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently uses precise language to inform or explain the topic. Includes language choices that establish and consistently maintain a style and tone appropriate to the task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often uses precise language to inform or explain the topic. Includes language choices that generally contribute to a style and tone appropriate to the task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes uses precise language to inform or explain the topic. Includes language choices that sometimes contribute to a style and tone appropriate to the task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rarely uses/does not use precise language to inform or explain the topic. Rarely includes/does not include language choices that contribute to a style and tone appropriate to the task and/or includes language that is inappropriate to the task.

Use of Conventions: NM-MSSA Conventions Rubric (Grades 3–8)			
	Score Point 3	Score Point 2	Score Point 1
The Writing:			
Grammar/ Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates general command of standard English grammar and usage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates partial command of standard English grammar and usage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates little command of standard English grammar and usage.
Mechanics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates general command of standard English conventions relative to the length and complexity of the text. May have minor or infrequent errors that do not interfere with meaning or confuse the reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates partial command of standard English conventions relative to the length and complexity of the text. May have errors or patterns of errors that somewhat interfere with meaning or confuse the reader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates little command of standard English conventions relative to the length and complexity of the text. Has errors or patterns of errors that interfere with meaning or confuse the reader.

Other useful resources related to the writing assessment:

Writing Prompt Released Item Documents: newmexico.onlinehelp.cognia.org/resources-nm-mssa

NM-MSSA Practice Tests: newmexico.onlinehelp.cognia.org/practice-tests-nm-mssa