INTRODUCTION

Writing is a life skill. As students move from grade to grade, writing skills are critical for academic progress. Students who have difficulty putting their thoughts into writing struggle to succeed in social studies, science, and many areas other than English language arts. Because good writing requires good thinking, the act of writing helps students learn to clarify their thoughts and focus their ideas.

The composition section of the TAKS writing test assesses Objectives 1 and 2. Objective 1 focuses on the quality of the composition’s content, while Objective 2 focuses on how clearly and effectively the student communicates his or her ideas. These objectives are inextricably linked because good writing must be both substantial and mechanically sound.

Objective 1
The student will, within a given context, produce an effective composition for a specific purpose.

The ability to communicate thoughts and ideas through writing helps students become successful, not only in school but throughout their lives. In order to communicate effectively, students must organize and develop ideas in a logical, coherent, and interesting manner that is easy for the reader to follow and understand. Objective 1 tests each student’s ability to produce an organized and well-developed composition in response to a prompt. The prompt is worded so that students have broad latitude in crafting an individual response. Students can use any organizational strategy that allows them to write an effective piece—they can write a story, a description, a philosophical piece, an expository piece—or they can combine approaches. However students choose to respond, it is important that the composition they write is uniquely theirs—that it is authentic and represents their best thinking and writing.

Objective 2
The student will produce a piece of writing that demonstrates a command of the conventions of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure.

To write well, students must be able to apply the conventions of the English language. This means that students must have the following skills. First, when students write a composition, they have the ability to follow the rules of correct capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. Second, they have the ability to write effective sentences and use words and phrases that enhance the reader’s understanding of their ideas. Although students are not expected to produce absolutely error-free writing on the test, they are expected to write as clearly and correctly as possible. The stronger the writing conventions are, the more likely it is that students will be able to produce an effective composition.

TAKS compositions are holistically scored on a scale of 1 (ineffective) to 4 (highly effective). For each score point, the scoring guide presents the rubric as well as four student compositions with explanatory annotations. Using this scoring guide will help you to better understand your students’ writing development and the strengths and weaknesses of your school’s writing program. However, it is important to remember that readers assign scores to compositions based on overall effectiveness. Because these judgments are holistic, compositions at a particular score point generally do not reflect every characteristic listed on the rubric for that score point.
Write a composition about a time when you thought you were right.

The information in the box below will help you remember what you should think about when you write your composition.

REMEMBER—YOU SHOULD

☐ write about a time when you thought you were right

☐ make your writing interesting to the reader

☐ make sure that each sentence you write helps the reader understand your composition

☐ make sure that your ideas are clear and easy for the reader to follow

☐ write about your ideas in detail so that the reader really understands what you are saying

☐ check your work for correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, and sentences

The names of individuals mentioned in the compositions have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the students whose responses appear in this guide.
SCORE POINT 1

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS AN INEFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER’S IDEAS.

**Focus and Coherence**

- Individual paragraphs and/or the composition as a whole are not focused. The writer may shift abruptly from idea to idea, making it difficult for the reader to understand how the ideas included in the composition are related.
- The composition as a whole has little, or no, sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion, if present, may be perfunctory.
- A substantial amount of writing may be extraneous because it does not contribute to the development or quality of the composition. In some cases, the composition overall may be only weakly connected to the prompt.

**Organization**

- The writer’s progression of thought from sentence to sentence and/or paragraph to paragraph is not logical. Sometimes weak progression results from an absence of transitions or from the use of transitions that do not make sense. At other times, the progression of thought is simply not evident, even if appropriate transitions are included.
- An organizational strategy is not evident. The writer may present ideas in a random or haphazard way, making the composition difficult to follow.
- Wordiness and/or repetition may stall the progression of ideas.

**Development of Ideas**

- The writer presents one or more ideas but provides little or no development of those ideas.
- The writer presents one or more ideas and attempts to develop them. However, this development is so general or vague that it prevents the reader from understanding the writer’s ideas.
- The writer presents only a plot summary of a published piece of writing, a movie, or a television show.
- The writer omits information, which creates significant gaps between ideas. These gaps prevent the reader from clearly understanding those ideas.

**Voice**

- The writer does not engage the reader, therefore failing to establish a connection.
- There may be little or no sense of the writer’s individual voice. The composition does not sound authentic or original. The writer is unable to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

**Conventions**

- There is little or no evidence in the composition that the writer can correctly apply the conventions of the English language. Severe and/or frequent errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure may cause the writing to be unclear or difficult to read. These errors weaken the composition by causing an overall lack of fluency.
- The writer may misuse or omit words and phrases and may frequently write awkward sentences. These weaknesses interfere with the effective communication of ideas.
One of the times I was right was when I thought that me & my family were moving to Texas, I heard my dad was visiting Texas because he's never been there. Later my dad return from Texas, I started a rumor on the house saying, were moving to Texas. But my little brother didn't believe me so he heard my parents talking saying that we were going to live in Texas. Now my little brother believed me.

The next time I was right was when I made a bet with my cousin about playing soccer. If I win then he owes me his game cheats magazines but if he wins then he can decides anything from me. The we made another proposition he can go first but the goal was my brother. Later we both kick the ball but I pretend to kick it so he can kick it but my brother caught it throw it so I gently kick it between his legs & it made it but I let my cousin keep his game cheats magazines to himself because he needs it.

The last time I was right was when I was when I was playing pick-up-sticks with my friend. I was first I was good at that game. I pick the first stick which was on top without any movement. The it was his turn he was aiming towards the bottom but it was his first time playing this game. Later I got 17 but he got 8 sticks then was 5 left. I pick one up but it move so next it was his turn he got 1 up now he was 9. There was 4 left I tried picking all 4 of them at the same time my friend didn't think I could do but I by using both of my hands.

Score Point 1
In this ineffective composition the writer discusses several times when he was right (moving to Texas, making a bet with his cousin, playing pick-up-sticks) without providing an over-arching thesis statement that links these events together; therefore, the composition is not focused. The writer provides little development of the ideas presented. In addition, frequent errors in conventions interfere with the effective communication of ideas.
I thought I was right one time but I was really. It was about fixing a car in I mess it up in my mom had to pay a lot of money to get it fixed in I never got to fix a car again in I was sad because they said I couldn't fix the car again so I felt like I deserved not to fix a car out the age to be cause if I tried to fix another car I could fix it wrong in the person that was driving could get hurt in never get to do fun stuff again why I was out having fun in they won't not but I thought I was all ways right just when I have a test I all ways think that I was going to get all of the answers right but when I got my grade it was sometimes failing in sometimes passing. So I thought I needed to stop thinking I was all ways right but now I do again in I do not like to do it but it is a problem so again I thought I was right but I was right I told my brother the saddle to put the saddle on a horse in for the step in keep it one time in it was fine but it was not in he got on the horse in it took off in the saddle fell off in he fell with the saddle in basted his head open in he had to go to the doctor

Score Point 1

The writer of this unfocused composition discusses three times when he thought he was right (fixing a car, getting all the answers right on a test, putting a saddle on a horse) without providing a thesis statement that links these times together. Wordiness (I never got to fix a car again and I was sad because they said I couldn't fix the car again) stalls the progression of ideas, and the development is so general and vague that it prevents the reader from understanding the writer's ideas (mess it up, never get to do fun stuff). In addition, frequent errors in conventions, including the misspelling of basic words, interfere with the effective communication of ideas.
I thought I was right when I was playing a game in history class. Girls against boys. I was doing the teacher and she gave us a question like this. What was a herd of buffalo the boy said, "A herd of buffalo is..." I had thought, and I thought finally she said, "If you want to, you can say something that is almost like it. So I said, "A herd of buffalo is a crowd of buffalo being chased by native americans." My teacher thought about it, then she asked the boy what was it, and he said I don't know so she marked another point for the girls and the girls got happy so we won the game. That time, she was thinking I was right but wasn't for sure. The bell rang. I was so happy I had been at lunch everyone was talking about the boys losing and the girls winning all day. The boys kept saying they were going to win but they didn't. So the bell rings, I am going to 2nd period then we were doing math questions, they were very easy while the guys thought they were hard. When they weren't the girls all finished first when the guys were still working on half of the questions while all the girls got to wissen while the boys worked they were very mad the bell rang so I am going to 2nd period
I go in and all of the boys had papers they
we mad cause they had homework for not finishing
this work. in seventh period we were doing math
questions we did two papers in groups everything
the girls did they would say it was wrong so
they were doing everything their way when the
teacher told them we were doing it right
they stared to erase and they look at our
papers then they would get even madlier
about us doing everything right then the
bell rang time to go to eighth period we are
going to eighth period reading we walk in we
go in then our teacher starts explaining she said
we are going work with partners one boy and
one girl and she would be picking our
partners she says to get with your partner
and then my partner is mad at
me from earlier and he hardly
tells me anything so the go
home bells rings i go to my bike
and get all my stuff then my mom
is outside waiting for me she get
into the car and she tells me
how was your day i muttered "horrible"
and she says pardon me what did
you say "very good" I reply.

Score Point 1
The writer focuses on competitive situations that occur between boys and girls in her school. Developing her narrative with specific details as she takes us through her day at school, the writer's voice is evident throughout. However, frequent errors in conventions, such as sentence boundary errors and usage errors, overwhelm the composition's strengths and interfere with the effective communication of ideas, causing this response to be ineffective.
I was talking with one of my friends about the number of Super Bowls that were won by the Cowboys. I thought the number of Super Bowls the Cowboys won was three while my friend thought the number of Super Bowls the Cowboys won was seven. We argued on this fact for a long period of time but we agreed we both might be wrong.

My friend then got out his cell phone and got on the internet. He then searched for the number of Super Bowls won by the Cowboys and found that they had won seven Super Bowls.

Score Point 1

In this ineffective composition the writer recalls a time when he thought he was right about the number of Super Bowls that were won by the Cowboys. The composition is focused and organized, and a sense of the writer's voice is evident; in addition, the writer demonstrates a good command of conventions. However, the lack of development of the ideas prevents the response from being somewhat effective.
SCORE POINT 2

EACH COMPOSITION AT THIS SCORE POINT IS A SOMewhat EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF THE WRITER’S IDEAS.

Focus and Coherence

☐ Individual paragraphs and/or the composition as a whole are somewhat focused. The writer may shift quickly from idea to idea, but the reader has no difficulty understanding how the ideas included in the composition are related.

☐ The composition as a whole has some sense of completeness. The writer includes an introduction and conclusion, but they may be superficial.

☐ Some of the writing may be extraneous because it does not contribute to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

☐ The writer’s progression of thought from sentence to sentence and/or paragraph to paragraph may not always be smooth or completely logical. Sometimes the writer needs to strengthen the progression by including more meaningful transitions; at other times the writer simply needs to establish a clearer link between ideas.

☐ The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses do not enable the writer to present ideas effectively.

☐ Some wordiness and/or repetition may be evident, but these weaknesses do not completely stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

☐ The writer attempts to develop the composition by listing ideas or briefly explaining them. In both of these cases, the development remains superficial, limiting the reader’s understanding and appreciation of the writer’s ideas.

☐ The writer presents one or more ideas and attempts to develop them. However, there is little evidence of depth of thinking because this development may be somewhat general, inconsistent, or contrived.

☐ The writer may omit small pieces of information that create minor gaps between ideas. However, these gaps do not prevent the reader from understanding those ideas.

Voice

☐ There may be moments when the writer engages the reader but fails to sustain the connection.

☐ Individual paragraphs or sections of the composition may sound authentic or original, but the writer has difficulty expressing his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

☐ Errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure throughout the composition may indicate a limited control of conventions. Although these errors do not cause the writing to be unclear, they weaken the overall fluency of the composition.

☐ The writer may include some simple or inaccurate words and phrases and may write some awkward sentences. These weaknesses limit the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.
This story is about a time when I thought I was right. I was positive my answer was right. I double checked my answer. Plus I was pretty good at this kind of work. Another reason why I thought my answer was right is I tried my best. After I finished and turned in my paper, the teacher corrected it. I went home with no worries because I was positive my answer was right. The next day I got my paper back. I looked at it. When I was going through it I saw that my answer that I was positive it would be right was wrong. I was shocked. I was positive that my answer was right. But it was wrong. I looked over it a couple times. Then I found my mistake. I corrected my paper and turned it in. The teacher corrected it. My answer was correct this time. I was happy that I found my mistake. Now that I found my mistake it brought my grades up. Now that I brought my grades up I was able to play basketball. Now that I was able to play basket ball I was having fun. Now that I brought my grades up I was having fun playing basketball. That was a time when I thought I was right.

Score Point 2
In this somewhat effective response, the writer focuses on a time when an answer on a school assignment was believed to be correct, but it was not. The progression of the paper is slowed by repetition (I was positive my answer was right; I thought my answer was right). There is some sense of the writer’s voice, and the conventions for the most part are appropriate. However, the overall development remains superficial (Now that I found my mistake it brought my grade up. Now that I brought my grades up I was able to play basketball).
When have you thought you were right? Well probably a lot of times. I know I thought I was right a lot of times, but ended up not being right some of the times.

When I was ten about to turn eleven, I had an itching red mark under my eye. It would hurt. I wouldn't stop itching. It then started to spread on one side of my face. Then all over my face. I thought it was some type of rash. We went to the emergency room, but all they said was that it was sunscreen. The next day it got worse.

I went to the doctor. They put me in the hospital. A few days later, a skin dermatologist came and looked at it, and said it was skin thromatosis in the face and gave me some cream for it and let us out of the hospital. Next time I will know that's not a rash.

My brother had said my mom left her cell phone at home so there was noise in calling. But I didn't listen to him and called her anyway. When I heard the ringtone, I knew I should have listened to my brother. He might be right sometimes, but I guess he was right that time and I should have listened to him. I apologized and he forgave me. So next time I will try to listen to what he says.

My mom and me were in the store, and she asked me if we needed milk, and I said yes. She got it, and we got other groceries. When we got home and were putting up groceries, she saw we had almost a gallon of milk. I said, "It looks like we ate no milk." So now she makes a list of what we need at the house.

I have learned never to think I was right. Now I make sure I'm right before I speak or think.

Score Point 2
The writer of this somewhat effective response describes three occasions when he believed he was right (I thought it was some type of rash; I wasn’t listening to him and called her anyway; My mom and me were in the store and she asked me if we needed milk, and I said yes). This approach weakens the focus and coherence of the composition because the writer shifts quickly from paragraph to paragraph without providing a thesis statement that connects these events to each other as well as to the prompt. Although the writer attempts to develop each paragraph, only the section about the rash exhibits somewhat effective development.
"I think we're supposed to turn here!" Then go all the way straight to get to Washington," I said.

It started when my mom, dad, brother and me were going to Washington for the most amazing vacation that we have ever had before. My brother was laughing, talking about the weirdest things just to get his mind off of time.

On our way to Washington we saw some of the most amazing animals such as pretty spotted cows, some of the most beautiful horses anybody has ever seen, and some hairy sheep, and of course we did see some poor dead deer on the side of the road.

After a while on the road things seemed to be getting strange. The weather went to cool, nice, and fresh to blazing hot. It also looked like it to we started seeing camels, snakes, spiders, scorpions, cactuses etc.

Finally we called for help after being in the extremely hot
temperatures with no food or water. When we got back to the hotel we borrowed a map and turned out that the directions I gave my mom and dad were wrong. Boy was I in trouble.

Score Point 2

In this somewhat effective response, the writer uses a narrative strategy to describe an occasion when he believed he was right about the directions for driving to Washington (I think we’re supposed to turn here). The writer provides some details about the scenery and how it changes in order to convey the gradual realization that the directions must have been faulty. (On our way to Washington we saw some of the most amazing animals such as pretty spotted cows; After a while on the road things seemed to be getting strange). Although the student demonstrates adequate control of conventions, the superficial development limits the reader’s understanding and appreciation of the writer’s ideas.
"The wrong Tardies"

Paw, that was the sound of my door slam shut. My parents had told me that "I have a lot of tardies in my classes." My parents told me "If you do not stop all these tardies we have to pay a fine $185 dollars." Do you know I can buy two pairs of shoes" she replied. "I do not have so many tardies. I have like eleven but they are all excused tardies" I told her. "I talked to the consoular about a lot of problems I had. My mother replied "If you know you don't have so many tardies you should go talk to the consoular."

The next morning I went to school and I went straight to the consoular's office. Then I told "Mr. Delgado I have eleven unexcused tardies, and all of them are from you when I came to talk to you about my problems." He replied "you have how many tardies." "Eleven tardies that are unexcused" I told him. "Why do you have so many tardies" he asked me. I replied the passes that you gave me were counted unexcused." Then he told me "go back to class and here's a pass to
Two days passed and nothing, then a week later Mr. Delgado called me in his office.

In his office he told me "I am going to get rid of all your unexcused tardies." I asked him "Does this mean I do not have any tardies not even one." I told him "Thank you for all the tardies.

That day when I got home my mother asked me "Were you right?" I replied "I was right."

After he took out all my tardies I did not have one ever again.

"THE END"

Score Point 2

This narrative focuses on a misunderstanding about tardies. Despite some awkward sentences, the writer is able to use dialogue to move the story forward, and a sense of voice is evident. However, the development remains superficial, limiting the reader's understanding and appreciation of the writer's ideas.
SCORE POINT 3

Each composition at this score point is a generally effective presentation of the writer’s ideas.

Focus and Coherence

☐ Individual paragraphs and the composition as a whole are, for the most part, focused. The writer generally shows the clear relationship between ideas, making few sudden shifts from one idea to the next.

☐ The composition as a whole has a sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion add some depth to the composition.

☐ Most of the writing contributes to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

☐ The writer’s progression of thought from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph is generally smooth and controlled. For the most part, transitions are meaningful, and the links between ideas are logical.

☐ The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses are generally effective.

☐ Wordiness and/or repetition, if present, are minor problems that do not stall the progression of ideas.

Development of Ideas

☐ The writer attempts to develop all the ideas included in the composition. Although some ideas may be developed more thoroughly and specifically than others, the development overall reflects some depth of thought, enabling the reader to generally understand and appreciate the writer’s ideas.

☐ The writer’s presentation of some ideas may be thoughtful. There may be little evidence that the writer has been willing to take compositional risks when developing the topic.

Voice

☐ The writer engages the reader and sustains that connection throughout most of the composition.

☐ For the most part, the composition sounds authentic and original. The writer is generally able to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

☐ The writer generally demonstrates a good command of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. Although the writer may make minor errors, they create few disruptions in the fluency of the composition.

☐ The words, phrases, and sentence structures the writer uses are generally appropriate and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.
"Oh, No!" I thought my heart pounding, as I was on the bus. "I forgot the paper plates I needed for science." I needed them or else I would obtain a zero and possibly fail the six weeks. A horrible head-ache came to me when we arrived at school. I sprinted towards the band hall and immediately called my mom's cell phone. She said, "I'll bring them around eleven." As each period passed by I became more and more anxious. 1st period, 2nd period, 3rd period. With panic in my mind I thought it was hopeless as I walked into science class. 4th period here at last, I asked Mrs. O'Malley if I could go to the office to call my mom and she replied, "They're all ready here." Surprised I asked, "Can I go get them?" "You better before you're tardy." With fear of being tardy, I dashed as fast as I could dodging every one as fast as lightning. I made it back before you could say, "Super-California-expedited-decisive." I was also just in time making it in right before the bell rang. I spoke to Mrs. O'Malley and
The writer of this generally effective composition describes forgetting a homework assignment for science class. The progression of thought is smooth and controlled. Specific details (heart pounding; horrible headache; with panic in my mind; Embarrassed and exhausted, I sank into my chair) allow the reader to understand the emotions the writer is going through as the events unfold. Precise word choice (sprinted, dashed, dodging) contributes to the development as well as to the sense of the writer's voice. A good command of conventions contributes to the effectiveness of this composition.
I stuck my face to the window, waiting anxiously, "They said they're just around the corner," my grandma said. I saw my neighbors walking their dogs, and the kids playing by a tree, when I glanced up and there they were! I jumped up and screamed ran out the door and gave my parents the biggest hug I could. I was only six then.

I was waiting nine months for the arrival and it was finally here! A new baby sister! I loved her so much so sweet and in jail, she was so little, about an arm-length long. I'd been playing with her since the day she got home from the hospital. I'd been praying to have a sister, two years now! Finally, I had one! Her name was Crystal Simone. My mom even bought me a shirt that said "officially big sis!"

I thought I was right about kids, they play, laugh, their sweet, little things. I was so wrong in so many ways. Over the next three months she started to cry and stink. Two specialties in one! I still loved her like I always have. I helped my mom out tons too, like picking out her clothes, play with her, the worst was putting all the dirty diapers in the trash, the garbage can stunk like
forever! The one thing that was really annoying was when you were trying to sleep and you suddenly heard watery! I would be so tired in the mornings.

I was so wrong about sisters, you have to be ready for them, and take good care of them, or they'll be crying all night. Remember to add to that shopping list for ear plugs! Also get ready to not have as much stuff at Christmas as you normally do. They may not be incident but once you look at that big toothless smile or hear her say "sissy" for the first time, it's worth all the trouble.

I love her so much, but now I am a big sister of four. I have much more experience, and my parents have a built in babysitter! Now, I am twice the age when Crystal was born, and twice a bigger heart for all the more sisters!

Score Point 3
In this generally effective composition, the writer reflects back on the reality of the arrival of a new baby sister. She begins by describing her positive expectations about new babies. As the response progresses, the writer gives us specific details about the reality of a new baby in the house (she started to cry and stink, two specialties in one). In the conclusion the writer reflects on how the experience of becoming a big sister of four has changed her (a bigger heart for all the more sisters). Minor errors in conventions create few disruptions in the fluency of this response.
There are quite a few times when I thought I was right. One was when I thought we had to run a QB keeper to win a football game. There were a couple of reasons for it. In the end, I turned out having thought correctly. Here is how it happened.

With about one and half minutes left in a football game, I threw a long TD pass to Jack. It tied the game 20-20. We needed to go for the two-point conversion. In my head I thought a QB keeper, right around the corner. I just knew that it would succeed.

We had to run a keeper for several reasons. For one, Jack was extremely tired from his long touchdown catch and run. Another cause was the fact that we couldn't kick field-goals. Running a pass play was out of the question because they had defended the pass very well. It eventually boiled down to be the only option.

The decision was an excellent one. Although I almost didn't make it across the goalline, the two points still went up on the board. Then, our defense held them on offense with two sacks. We got the
back and just kneeled the ball so the
clock would run out. After the victory
ceremonial, we left Port Aransas, and headed
to Pizza Hut in Corpus Christi.

Before we snapped the ball on that
ever lost play, I second-guessed my choice.
I thought to myself, why did I do this.
As soon as I crossed that pylon though,
I knew for sure that we had done it.
Today, I'm still delighted with the thought
that won us that game.

Score Point 3

In this focused narrative the writer describes the reasoning behind his decision to call the
"19 Keeper" play to win a football game. The progression of thought is generally smooth
and controlled; in addition, specific details about the game and moments of reflection
about the decision provide some depth of thought. Appropriate control of conventions
and a sense of the writer's voice contribute to this generally effective composition.
Time when I thought I was right

Have you ever had those days when you feel like it's a Monday when it's really a Wednesday, and your more than sure it is a Wednesday? Well, I have those days a lot, and my mom or my friends are always correcting me, even when I think I'm right, I'm wrong!

That's how it all started. The date was January 11th, and it was a Friday. I had woken up thinking that it was a Monday morning, because it sure felt like one!

I was super sleepy and didn't want to wake up. I felt like as if I hadn't slept in days. Then I thought to myself as I was laying down: "Not another week of school!"

As my mom walked in my room to make sure I was already getting ready for school, I asked her, "Mom can I not go to school today?" "She asked me, "Why don't you want to go to school today?" "I replied, "Because it's a Monday morning and I am really tired!" "She told me," Carol you must be in your own world, because today is not Monday!" "I asked, "Then what day is it today?" "She told me, "Today is Friday, January 11th!" "I told her," No mom today is Monday, January 11th." "She told me," Carol today is Friday, yesterday was Thursday, remember you stayed for the basketball game yesterday?" "I told her," No I don't remember, and today is Monday mom, I knew what you're telling you." "She told me," Carol go to the calendar in the kitchen and check what day it is today!"
So I jumped out of bed to go check. As I walked toward the kitchen, I asked my mom, "Mom how much do you want to bet that today is Monday?" She told me, "If today is Monday, you won't have to go to school, but if today is Friday, you're going to have to go to school!" I replied, "Okay, it's a deal!" The next thing you know, I'm getting ready to go to school, because it was a Friday. I told my mom I don't like making deals with you, because you're always right. She just looked at me and laughed. I told her I'm sorry I argued with you mom, it's just that I was more than sure that it was Monday. She said it's okay we all have those days every once in a while.

Ever since then, I never wanted to make deals or bets with my mom, unless I knew for a fact that I was right. I also learned my lesson to always check the date before arguing with anyone.

Score Point 3

The writer of this generally effective response focuses on a time when she thought she was right about which day of the week it was. The progression of thought is generally smooth and controlled. The writer's use of dialogue between the mother and daughter for the most part helps to move the narrative along and provides development. In addition, a sense of the writer's voice contributes to the effectiveness of this response. Although the writer makes minor conventions errors, they create few disruptions in the fluency of the composition.
SCORE POINT 4

Each composition at this score point is a highly effective presentation of the writer's ideas.

Focus and Coherence

☐ Individual paragraphs and the composition as a whole are focused. This sustained focus enables the reader to understand and appreciate how the ideas included in the composition are related.

☐ The composition as a whole has a sense of completeness. The introduction and conclusion are meaningful because they add depth to the composition.

☐ Most, if not all, of the writing contributes to the development or quality of the composition as a whole.

Organization

☐ The writer's progression of thought from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph is smooth and controlled. The writer's use of meaningful transitions and the logical movement from idea to idea strengthen this progression.

☐ The organizational strategy or strategies the writer chooses enhance the writer's ability to present ideas clearly and effectively.

Development of Ideas

☐ The writer's thorough and specific development of each idea creates depth of thought in the composition, enabling the reader to truly understand and appreciate the writer's ideas.

☐ The writer's presentation of ideas is thoughtful or insightful. The writer may approach the topic from an unusual perspective, use his/her unique experiences or view of the world as a basis for writing, or make interesting connections between ideas. In all these cases, the writer's willingness to take compositional risks enhances the quality of the content.

Voice

☐ The writer engages the reader and sustains this connection throughout the composition.

☐ The composition sounds authentic and original. The writer is able to express his/her individuality or unique perspective.

Conventions

☐ The overall strength of the conventions contributes to the effectiveness of the composition. The writer demonstrates a consistent command of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, usage, and sentence structure. When the writer attempts to communicate complex ideas through sophisticated forms of expression, he/she may make minor errors as a result of these compositional risks. These types of errors do not detract from the overall fluency of the composition.

☐ The words, phrases, and sentence structures the writer uses enhance the overall effectiveness of the communication of ideas.
Alien Pets

There have been many times when I thought I was right, but was actually wrong. When I was three years old, I thought my house pets were really aliens who were plotting to take over the Earth. It took my parents two years to convince me otherwise.

This strange belief happened when my father bought our family's first pets, two goldfish. It shocked me that they never had to come out of the water to eat or sleep. Instead of eating chicken nuggets and alphabet soup, the fish ate strange flakes that my dad often sprinkled into the water, and the whole three months that my family owned the fish, the fish never talked to me. I pondered deeply about these strange behaviors, and an idea popped into my brain. These were not fish, these were aliens!

After the fish were gone, we adopted a cat, and then a week later, my family adopted a puppy. These pets also demonstrated unhumanlike behaviors, though they were different than the fish. The pets had short hair that covered their whole bodies. They also ate a strange food, as well as leftovers from dinner. The dog and the cat also responded to a name, for the dog was called Freddie, and the cat was named Princess. I got used to having the animals around, and I realized that these aliens were harmless. That is, until the cat cloned herself.
My family and I didn't really notice the small clones until we found Princess on our doorstep with five little fuzzy balls attacking her tummy. My mom called these little monsters "kittens." Whenever Freddie walked by to sniff these "kittens," Princess would descend upon him with rage and claws. This baffled me, because I thought all of the aliens would try to take over the Earth together. Oh, no, I thought. That means more than one race was trying to take over the Earth! We are doomed! I went into a state of panic that lasted until I turned five years old. I thought the aliens would have taken over the world by now. I asked my mother when the aliens were supposed to take over, and when I saw her puzzled face, I had to explain what I observed. She just laughed and told me that there have not actually been any signs of life in space yet, and told me our pets were normal Earthlings, with no intention of taking over.

Although no one actually believed me, there has been no proof that aliens do not exist and may very well already be plotting their take over in the safety of their pet disguises. Watch out, anyone could be an alien and may be watching you right this second.

Score Point 4

In this highly effective response, the writer reveals a unique perspective by focusing on the belief that the family pets are actually aliens who have been sent to take over the earth. The writer uses specific examples involving the pets to thoroughly develop this belief (the fish ate strange flakes, the dog and the cat responded to a name, the cat cloned herself). Effective word choice (pondered, descend, baffled, doomed) and a consistent command of conventions contribute to the effectiveness of this composition.
I had always loved the forest since I was little. I like the aroma of the piney trees. I like the way the air passes by hitting my face like a low category hurricane. The trees moving back and sawdust as the wind hits them. They make a hissing sound, almost sounding like music to my ears. The woods make me feel full of life and energetic with its green bright colors just sticking out showing its majestic features. The wood land is great for anything weather it includes hiking, camping, or just to see its natural beauty. Don't you just love the forest? I still do, even after something happened to me in the woods.

"Mom, let's go already," I told my mom as I put the supplies into the car. "Okay, in a minute," she answered back. I got in the car, and waited for my mom. She was still inside packing up for the trip to my uncle's ranch. My brother, my uncle Pat, and my dad were already in the car waiting for my mom. "Okay, I'm ready now," my mom said as she got in the car. My dad turned the key, I could hear the motor making rumbles sounds. Then he accelerated, and we were off to my uncle's ranch. I knew it would take two hours to get there, so I brought some extra supplies in case I got bored. On the way, I played some video games on the car while listening to music from my ipod.

When we got near my uncle's ranch, we called him from the cell phone to give us the directions, on how to get to his house. Somehow the cell phone wasn't working. I thought maybe because the trees were interfering with the signal. "Now where do we go," my mom said.

"I think I know the way," I said. I had come here many times.

After many hours of exhaustion looking for my uncle's ranch, we got
tired. It was already getting dark, like about 6 or 7 o'clock. I told them my uncle's ranch was near a lake, so if we found the lake we could find my uncle's ranch. We all agreed to find the lake. We searched for various hours until we found someone living near. I knocked on the door, waiting for someone to answer. This elderly man came out, "Yes, can I help you?"

"Yeah, by any chance have you seen a lake near by?" I said.

"Well, of course, there is one not far from here," he answered. "If you want I'll take you there."

"Please do, we've been looking for it for hours," I said back.

Everyone followed the elderly man towards the lake. When we got there we thanked him for his help, then he left. "Okay, now that we are here, where do we go?" my brother said.

"I think it was this way," I pointed.

So everyone followed me out the woods. "There it is," my brother screamed! Far away, everyone ran to go inside. My uncle had been there waiting for us all day. After we told him what happened, we cooked some food. We slept there in the cabin my uncle had. That night I thought how I got my family out of the woods. I was right about the way to the ranch. I just followed my instincts, that's what got us to the right place.

The next day we left tired. We found the car and went back home. I still like the forest, but it can be confusing sometimes.

Score Point 4
The student uses a combination of reflective writing (I had always loved the forest; I like the aroma of the piney trees) and a narrative strategy to describe an occasion when he thought he knew the directions to his uncle's ranch. The student develops the response by describing a forest, the drive into the forest, the frustration of becoming lost, and ultimately the relief felt upon arriving at the ranch. The student effectively uses dialogue to move the narrative forward. Descriptive word choice (hissing, majestic, rumbling) and a good command of conventions contribute to the effectiveness of the response.
"Mr. Lin," I asked, "you were moving too fast, and I was unable to get that last answer. Could we go back?"

"Certainly," the math teacher replied. "You know that if I'm ever going too fast on our homework, let me know," he said, while looking at the answer sheet. I stared at my homework confused. I had received a different answer than that, and didn't understand how. Mr. Lin noticed my puzzlement. "Did you get a different answer than this," he asked.

"Yes, and I think that mine is right," I replied. "Could you work the problem out?" I asked. He nodded and wrote the problem on the board. It was a simple order of operations problem, that looked very easy to solve. The problem was three to the third power plus four, multiply by five. He began to solve. Three to the third power equaled twenty-seven, then he added the four, and multiplied it by five. The answer he received was one hundred fifty-five. This was the answer I had.

The math teacher sighed in puzzlement. "I must have made a mistake," he said. He went over the problem and made sure that everything was correct. It was. "Doug was this your answer," he asked.

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"Then it seems that you're right," he said, erasing the problem off the board. I felt a surge of triumph rise in the pit of my stomach. For that moment I felt superior to the whole class, but suddenly it ended.

"Mr. Lin, that answer isn't correct," a student beside me claimed. "You didn't follow the order of operations when you solved it," she said. "Multiplying comes before addition."

"Oh, it seems you are right," he replied. "I must have suddenly left that out," he said with a fake smile. "If I do this following the order, the answer
should be forty-seven. It appears that the answer sheet was right after all," he said. "Doug, sorry for the misunderstanding, but your answer is wrong," he told me. Mark said, "It is incorrect and let's begin today's lesson.

No longer feeling superior, I sank in my seat. Not only had I gotten the answer wrong, but I also accused the teacher of being wrong too. I sank lower. I was even proven wrong. Yet as I sank lower and lower, I felt a surge of hope as well. I had learned something new. From now on, I told myself, I will always check my work for mistakes before thinking I am right. At this, I straightened up and began to listen carefully to the lesson.

Score Point 4

In this highly effective response, the writer clearly and concisely takes the reader through the chain of events that occurred when he believed his math answer was correct and the teacher's answer was wrong. The student engages the reader with descriptive language throughout the response (I felt a surge of triumph rise in the pit of my stomach; No longer feeling superior, I sank in my seat). The overall depth of development enables the reader to easily understand and appreciate the writer's unique perspective. In addition, the strength of the conventions enhances the effectiveness of the communication of ideas.
There is always a point in every kid’s life where they think they are right and their parents are wrong. Well, when I was at that point, I broke my arm because no matter how much more wiser my parents are than me, I thought they didn’t know anything. This is the story of how I broke my arm because I just had to be right.

That summer, my mom decided to put me in this summer school kind of thing. It wasn’t a summer school that I had to go to because I failed. It was more like a daycare in school form. We had been learning lots of stuff, but the best was that I was learning how to roller blade. When I got home that day, I asked my mom if I could go skate in the garage. “No honey, there is too much junk in there,” I was furious because to me, there wasn’t that much junk in there. In fact, there wasn’t that much valuable stuff in there either.

Well the next day, my brother had a friend over and I wanted to show him how good I was at roller blading. I didn’t care what my mom said because I just wanted to look cool in front of the older kid. So I went to the garage and started going around in circles, but there was a big pile of clothes that I had to walk over. Well, my mom was just about to go feed a friend’s dog because she was out of town when I decided to become a daredevil and jump over the clothes. As I said before it was a big pile and when I landed I had barely made it across and there was a sock stuck in my wheel. I stumbled and flipped...
onto the ground. I was trying to call my mom, but I felt like I couldn't breathe. Finally, I was able to call out loud enough and when she heard me, she was able to help me to the car.

We raced to the emergency room and I was in so much pain that I made it look like I was dying. When we got there, we had to wait a little and then they led me to a room and gave me one of those green gowns that let strange breezes come in through the wrong places. I layed down when a doctor came in, took some blood, and then gave me the mighty night shot. I quickly fell asleep and when I woke up, I had a cast on. To my surprise, I saw my godfather, who later I found out was a doctor. He said, "Are you awake?" As I looked at him, my eyes wouldn't stay open. "No," I said drowsily as I fell back to sleep.

I learned two lessons out of this adventure. One is that my parents are smarter than me, and I should listen to them. And two is that I'm never rollerblading again. If you've enjoyed this story, you must be a sick person that gets pleasure out of the pain and suffering of little boys... I'm just kidding, who wouldn't like this story?

Score Point 4
Employing a narrative strategy, the writer of this engaging response thoroughly develops a story about a rollerblading accident that resulted from the student thinking he knew more than his parents about safety (I didn't care what my mom said because I just wanted to look cool in front of the older kid.) All of the details provided (there was a sock stuck in my wheel, I panicked and flipped onto the ground, one of those green gowns that let strange breezes come in through the wrong places) contribute to the development of the story and allow the reader to picture the events as they occurred. In addition, the overall strength of the conventions contributes to this highly effective composition.