

Frequently Asked Questions about FCAT Writing+

What is FCAT Writing+?

The writing portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test® (FCAT) combines a writing essay, used since 1994, with multiple-choice items. The test is now known by a relatively new name, FCAT Writing+ (plus). The machine-scored, multiple-choice section of the FCAT Writing+ was first added in 2006 and represents a comprehensive assessment of writing knowledge and skills.

What are the new Achievement Level standards for FCAT Writing+?

Achievement Level standards for FCAT Writing+ and the graduation standard for the class of 2010 and beyond were established by the State Board of Education on January 25, 2007. The Spring 2007 FCAT administration marks the first time FCAT Writing+ performance is reported by Achievement Levels based on scale scores.

FCAT Writing+ Scale Scores					
Grade	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
4	100-239	240-289	290-364	365-426	427-500
8	100-249	250-298	299-355	356-415	416-500
10	100-249	250-299	300-341	342-402	403-500
Grade 10 Passing Score: 300					

When will FCAT Writing+ be required for high school graduation?

The class of 2010 or students who were ninth graders for the first time this school year (2006-07) will be required by law (Section 1008.22 (5), Florida Statute) to earning a passing score of 300 or higher on the FCAT Writing+ in order to graduate from high school. This requirement is in addition to the current requirements of achieving passing FCAT scores in reading and mathematics. Students who do not achieve a passing score for graduation purposes on their first attempt will have multiple retake opportunities, as are provided for FCAT Reading and Mathematics. Students who were in Grade 10 in 2007 and who are repeating Grade 10 in 2008 MUST take FCAT Writing+ again for school accountability purposes, but the graduation requirement does not apply to those students.

2006-07	Achievement Levels and Graduation Requirement Set Grade 9 students notified of Graduation Requirement
2007-08	Grade 10 FCAT Writing+ scores count for graduation
2008-09	Retake opportunities for 11 th Graders
2009-10	Retake opportunities for 12 th Graders
2010	First graduating class with FCAT Writing+ Passing Requirement

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What writing skills do the multiple-choice questions measure?

The multiple-choice portion of FCAT Writing+ measures the Sunshine State Standards benchmarks that address prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. These questions assess the elements of the writing process. To be successful, students must answer questions related to focus, organization, support, and conventions. Multiple-choice questions measuring conventions have three answer choices; items measuring focus, organization, and support have four answer choices. The multiple-choice section of the test includes *writing plans* that measure student knowledge of focus and organization in prewriting; *writing samples* that simulate student-generated draft writing and measure student knowledge of focus, organization, and support; *cloze* selections containing numbered blanks that measure student knowledge of spelling and usage conventions; and *stand-alone* structures that provide a succinct context for measuring student knowledge of the conventions of spelling, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure. The *FCAT Writing+ Test Item Specifications* for Grades 4, 8, and 10 are available electronically at <http://fcap.fldoe.org/fcatis01.asp>.

How are the FCAT Writing+ scale scores determined?

For FCAT Writing+, students receive a total scale score between 100 and 500 that combine the scores for the essay and multiple-choice portions. The achievement level scores are based on the total scale score. Students also receive five sub-scores. The first sub-score is for the essay portion of the FCAT Writing+. It is scored on a scale from one to six, with six being the highest score. To view the scoring rubrics for FCAT Writing+ for Grades 4, 8, and 10, go to <http://fcap.fldoe.org/rubrcpag.asp>. The other four sub-scores are for each writing element assessed: focus, organization, support, and conventions. These four subscores are based on the multiple-choice questions and are the number of points earned (number of correct answers) in each area. The multiple-choice and essay portions of FCAT Writing+ weigh equally into a student's final scale score. The score which each student receives on the essay portion is converted to a scale score, as are the points earned on the multiple choice questions. The overall score is derived as an average of the two (see the example below).

Essay Scale Score	+	Multiple-Choice Scale Score	=	FCAT Writing+ Total Scale Score
Rubric Score: 1 – 6		Content Scores: Number of points earned		
Weight = 50%		Weight = 50%		100 – 500
		Focus Organization Support Conventions		

How is FCAT Writing+ scored?

The multiple-choice portion of FCAT Writing+ is machine scored and the essay portion is hand scored by professional scorers. These professional scorers include test contractor employees, educators who are not currently employed in the Florida public school system, retired teachers, part-time graduate students, and others who meet the necessary requirements. To be selected and eligible to score the FCAT, candidates must have at least a bachelor's degree in a related subject-area field. For hand scoring FCAT Writing+, examples of related subject-area fields include Journalism, Education, English, Literature, and Communications.

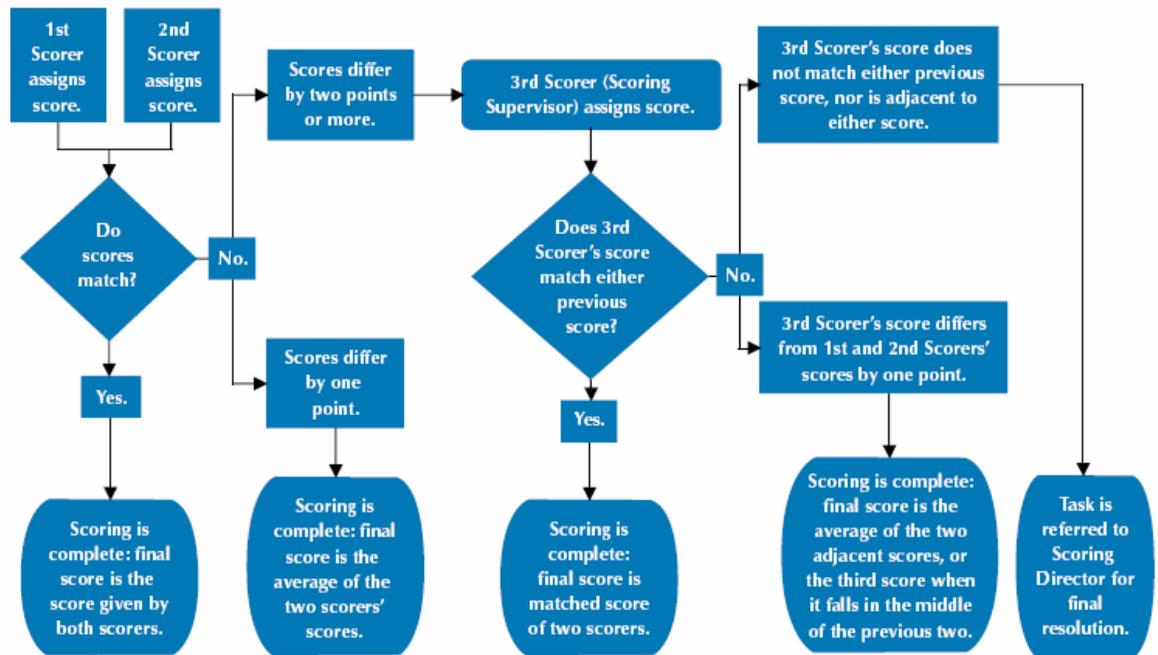
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How are scorers trained to hand score the FCAT Writing+ essay?

The training involves developing an understanding of the scoring system and standards established by Florida educators. Scorers are trained during a thorough, multi-day training program. During this time, they are presented with model papers scored by Florida teachers. They read and practice scoring many papers under the supervision and instruction of an experienced scoring director and a Florida Department of Education content-area expert. Before they can score an actual student's FCAT, prospective scorers must first pass a qualifying examination. The qualifying examination is given at the end of the training program and includes papers previously scored by Florida educators. If prospective scorers do not pass, they must repeat the training. Those who cannot pass the exam after re-training are not accepted as scorers.

What quality assurance measures are in place for the hand scoring of FCAT Writing+ essays?

Each student's response is read and scored independently by at least two professional scorers. The student's essay score is the average of the two scores. If the scorers' two scores are not identical or adjacent, a third or fourth scorer, if needed, assigns a score without knowing the previous scores. The following flow chart outlines the hand scoring process for FCAT Writing+ essays:



The reliability and validity of the scores assigned by readers is also monitored at least daily throughout scoring and typically more often. If scorers cannot maintain scoring accuracy, they are dismissed. For information about additional quality assurance measures for the hand scoring process, consult the *FCAT Handbook—A Resource for Educators* (<http://fcatt.fldoe.org/handbk/fcathandbook.asp>).



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How does FCAT Writing+ factor into a school's grade?

In the school grades calculation, schools earn one point for each percent of students who meet high standards by scoring a 3.5 or higher on the essay portion of the writing assessment. At this point, Writing+ scale scores do not factor into a school's grade. However, we anticipate that the State Board of Education will consider the inclusion of these scores in the calculation of school grades in future years.

FCAT Writing+