ENGLISH II EOC WRITING
STAAR® Preparation and Practice

• 14 Revision and Editing passages and 10 Composition prompts
• 19 Skill Lessons with scaffolded practice
• 3-step approach for efficient remediation

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Dear Students,

The STAAR English II assessment measures your knowledge of the English II standards (TEKS). STAAR tests are not designed to measure many important qualities of character and intelligence—as this cartoon shows. But performing well on the STAAR tests is important, so you want to do all you can to succeed on them. That’s where this workbook comes in!

Qualities Not Measured by STAAR Tests

Persistence  
Curiosity  
Enthusiasm  
COURAGE  
Leadership  
Creativity  
Civic-Minded  
Resourcefulness  
Sense of Wonder  
Big-Picture Thinking  
Compassion  
Reliability  
Motivation  
Humor  
Empathy  
Sense of Beauty  
Humility  
Resilience  
Positivity

What are some other important qualities of character and intelligence missing in STAAR tests?

This workbook was designed to help you prepare for the Writing part of the STAAR English II test by
• teaching the skills to approach and answer different STAAR test questions, and by
• providing practice questions that are similar to those you will answer on the actual test.

But as good as this workbook is, it only helps if you use it. So, please use this workbook!

Practicing Smart Is the Secret to STAAR Success

There is a secret to success on the STAAR tests—practice, practice, and more practice. This is good news because you are in control of how much effort you put into practicing. But not all practice is the same… you need to practice smart.

First, practice with test questions that are very similar to the actual STAAR test. That’s easy because this workbook is full of them! Next, focus on your weaknesses—spend extra time on questions you have trouble with. Think of it like this: if your basketball shot needs improvement, you don’t practice dribbling. Instead, you practice shooting.

Focusing on your weaknesses also means carefully analyzing each test question you get wrong. Why did you get it wrong? Why is another answer correct? You can learn more from test questions you get wrong, so don’t be afraid of making mistakes. If your basketball shot is off, you identify what you are doing wrong (too far left) and correct it with your next shot (aim further right).

When you practice, give each question your full attention. Do not take a break until after you answer the question. Your attention is like a muscle that you can build by using it, one practice test question at a time. Do you believe unfocused, sloppy practice of your basketball shot will help you perform during a big game? No! Your attention is your greatest power. You develop it with practice.

Preparing for the STAAR test can actually be a fun challenge. And when you practice smart, you are building life skills while you prepare for the STAAR test!

Your partners in STAAR success,
The Sirius Education Team
About the STAAR English II EOC Assessment

One Test, Two Parts

The STAAR English II assessment is divided into two parts: reading and writing. Each part counts as 50% of the total English II test score. Each part includes both multiple-choice questions (54% of total) and writing prompts (46% of total).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parts</th>
<th>Number and Types of Questions</th>
<th>% of Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>READING</td>
<td>28 Multiple-Choice Items*</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>2 Short Answers</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRITING</td>
<td>22 Multiple-Choice Items*</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>1 Composition</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When and How Is the Test Administered?

The STAAR English II assessment is given three times each school year: in the fall, the spring, and the summer. Both parts of the English II test are given in one day, and students have five hours to take the test. You are allowed to take breaks, but they count as part of the 5-hour time limit. Breaks include water, bathroom, snack, and physical or mental breaks.

What Content Is Tested?

As with all STAAR tests, each question relates to a specific learning standard from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The TEKS are grouped into six reporting categories, as shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parts</th>
<th>TEKS Reporting Categories Tested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>READING</td>
<td>Literary Texts (Cat. 2) multiple choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Informational Texts (Cat. 3) multiple choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis Across Genres (Cat. 1) multiple choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis Across Genres (Cat. 1) short answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRITING</td>
<td>Revision (Cat. 5) multiple choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Editing (Cat. 6) multiple choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Composition (Cat. 4) essay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How This WRITING Workbook Is Organized

This workbook is divided into three sections that align with the Writing part of the STAAR English II test.

- Section 1: Revision
- Section 2: Editing
- Section 3: Composition

Although Composition is tested first in the actual STAAR test, it is last in this workbook because both the Revision and Editing skills will help you with writing your composition. Also, Revision questions are always the first multiple-choice questions, followed by Editing questions. This sequence mimics the writing process, in which you first focus on the “big” picture organization and development of your ideas and then proofread for punctuation and spelling, etc.

A separate workbook titled *English II EOC Reading: STAAR Preparation and Practice* provides instruction and practice in the Reading part of the STAAR English II test.

* The actual STAAR test may have more multiple-choice questions if you take the test in the spring. This is because the test would include additional “field test” items that do not count toward your score.
How to Use This Book for STAAR Success

3-Step Approach to Differentiate Instruction

This interactive workbook is easily adapted for different needs and includes an optional 3-step approach to efficiently prioritize and individualize remediation when preparation time is limited.

STEP 1 Identify Your Needs—Diagnostic Tests for Editing and Revision

Use the Diagnostic Tests for the Editing and Revision categories to identify what you know and what you need to review. Record your results in the Progress Monitoring Chart.

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STEP 2 Focus Remediation—STAAR Instruction and Practice

Use your Diagnostic results to focus TEKS instruction and STAAR practice to meet your unique needs.

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STEP 3 Monitor Your Progress—Post Tests

Use the Editing and Revision Post Tests to monitor progress and to identify additional lessons for review.
Focused Remediation is provided by 14 skill lessons and 14 practice passages with questions based on released STAAR items.

Revision Skills

6 Revision Skill lessons analyze released test items and model a 3-step STAAR Strategy that students learn and then apply in Guided Practice.

Editing Skills

7 Editing Skill lessons provide instruction and practice in the grammar, usage, and punctuation rules and conventions that are tested. The 8th skill lesson gives students a strategy for answering STAAR editing questions.
How to Use This Book for STAAR Success

Revision and Editing Practice
14 passages offer authentic STAAR practice that closely matches released STAAR tests.

Composition Skills and Practice
5 Composition Skill lessons provide step-by-step writing instruction that focuses on the essential components of the persuasive composition. 10 practice prompts provide ample scaffolded practice of the writing skills students have learned.

Analyzing the Prompt

In the STAAR test, the composition prompt has three parts:

1. A question or statement to get you thinking about an important concept.
2. A question or statement clearly related to the quotation: part of the prompt
   that the proctor will use to comment on the student’s writing.
3. A question or statement that asks you to comment on the student’s writing.

Strategy

In the STAAR test, the composition prompt has three parts:

1. A question or statement to get you thinking about an important concept.
2. A question or statement clearly related to the quotation: part of the prompt
   that the proctor will use to comment on the student’s writing.
3. A question or statement that asks you to comment on the student’s writing.

Composition Skill 1

Written Composition: Persuasive

Read the following quotation.

Von Miller, defensive end for the Denver Broncos, was asked in an interview which state was his favorite. He replied, “Texas is my favorite state. It is the birthplace of football.”

1. Is it better to be feared than loved? If you cannot be both.

2. What did you learn in Texas that will help you become a great athlete?

3. What are the main ideas in the paragraph?

4. Which of these sentences could be added to the paragraph to add more details and support?

5. What is the most effective revision to make in sentence 7?

6. What is the main idea in the paragraph?

7. Which of these sentences could be added after sentence 6 to add more details and support?

8. What is the main idea in the paragraph?

9. What is the most effective revision to make in sentence 7?

10. What is the main idea in the paragraph?

11. What is the most effective revision to make in sentence 7?

12. What is the main idea in the paragraph?

13. What is the most effective revision to make in sentence 7?

14. What is the main idea in the paragraph?

15. What is the most effective revision to make in sentence 7?

Pre- and post-writing activities provide step-by-step support
Use the Diagnostic Tests to identify skill lessons you need to review. Use the steps below to monitor your progress. Because some skill lessons cover a broad standard or are assessed in multiple ways, those lessons are referred to more than once in the chart. **Boldfaced skill lessons are connected to Readiness TEKS.**

1. **Diagnostic**  
   Mark a ✓ in the box beside each question that you answered correctly. Find the total correct.

2. **Review**  
   Study the skill lesson and practice associated with each question not checked.

3. **Post Test**  
   Mark a ✓ in the box beside each question that you answered correctly. Find the total correct. Refer back to the skill lesson for additional practice. (The Post Test questions are in the exact same order as those in the Diagnostic Test.)

### REVISION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2 Review: Skill Lesson</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>TEKS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Revising a Thesis or Position Statement (p. 6)</td>
<td></td>
<td>E2.15A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Combining Sentences (p. 12)</td>
<td></td>
<td>E2.13C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adding Supporting Details (p. 9)</td>
<td></td>
<td>E2.15A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improving Transitions (p. 15)</td>
<td></td>
<td>E2.15A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Revising for Coherence (p. 18)</td>
<td></td>
<td>E2.15A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improving Clarity (p. 21)</td>
<td></td>
<td>E2.13C</td>
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Total / 6

### EDITING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2 Review: Skill Lesson</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>TEKS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Using Correct Capitalization (p. 53)</td>
<td></td>
<td>E2.18A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Using Commas Correctly (p. 55)</td>
<td></td>
<td>E2.18B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Making Verbs Agree with Subjects (p. 60)</td>
<td></td>
<td>E2.13D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Using Correct Sentence Structure (p. 64)</td>
<td></td>
<td>E2.17C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Using Apostrophes Correctly (p. 67)</td>
<td></td>
<td>E2.18B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Choosing Correct Spellings (p. 62)</td>
<td></td>
<td>E2.19A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Using Verbs Correctly (p. 57)</td>
<td></td>
<td>E2.17A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total / 7
A controlling idea, also called a thesis or position statement, reflects an essay’s topic and the author’s main idea about it. On the STAAR test, you will be asked to revise a thesis or position statement. Typically you will be asked to choose the thesis statement that more strongly and clearly makes the author’s central claim or point. This may include choosing a statement that is more complete or more detailed.

**STAAR Strategy**

The excerpt and item below are from a previous STAAR test. They are based on an essay about social networking. Read the item and work through the steps that follow to learn how to answer questions like this one.

(1) As access to the Internet has increased, more and more people have become daily participants in social networking. (2) In the past, people could separate their online persona from who they are in real life. (3) However, this is not the way things are now. (4) Many teens use social networking as their primary form of public communication. (5) It’s easy to snap a photo, load it on a website, and type out a quick synopsis of where they are and what they’re doing. (6) Because the process is so simple and immediate, it can be tempting to post impulsively. (7) But is that behavior wise? (8) The photo a girl posts of a crazy stunt or that negative remark a boy posts about someone at school might not seem like a big deal now, but it could come back to haunt them later.

Which of the following could replace sentence 3 and better articulate the position Kayla is trying to take in this paper?

A. However, in today’s world, where Internet activity is such a common occurrence, an online persona cannot be separated from real-life activities and views.

B. However, in recent years the line between the two has blurred, making it more important than ever for people to be cognizant of how they present themselves online.

C. Social networking, through such sites as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, is common today among teens, adults, and even the elderly.

D. People could act and talk a certain way online, but in real life they may be totally different.

*STAAR English II, 2015, #1*

1. Read the first part of the item. You can see that you must choose a clearer, more accurate thesis statement as a revision for sentence 3.
2. Re-read the passage and think about the main idea. Study the information in the passage to figure out what the controlling idea of the passage really is. What is the topic, and what is the main idea the author is trying to express about that topic?

The author wants us to think before we post on social media and consider how our posts can affect us in the future. A posted photo can influence hiring, for example, and sharing personal information can help thieves.

3. Read each answer choice. Then, re-read the thesis statement in sentence 3. Ask yourself which answer choice expresses the thesis best.

4. Cross out the answer choices that do not improve the thesis statement in sentence 3. Choose the answer that best states the author’s thesis or position.

A. However, in today’s world, where Internet activity is such a common occurrence, an online persona cannot be separated from real-life activities and views.

B. However, in recent years the line between the two has blurred, making it more important than ever for people to be cognizant of how they present themselves online.

C. Social networking, through such sites as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, is common today among teens, adults, and even the elderly.

D. People could act and talk a certain way online, but in real life they may be totally different.

Guided Practice

Read this excerpt from an essay about rainwater collection. Then answer the question using what you have learned about revising a thesis or position statement.

(1) Rainwater harvesting is the collection of rainwater for gardening and other uses. (2) I recently helped my aunt and uncle set up a rainwater collection system for watering her flower and vegetable gardens. (3) She told me that while our town’s water supply is safe to drink, it naturally contains salts and other minerals that can keep roots from growing. (4) What water is best for plants? (5) Rainwater! (6) It is a valuable resource that shouldn’t be wasted. (7) Using inexpensive hardware and recycling a large plastic barrel made this a low-cost project, too. (8) Now their garden will benefit, and they will use less water from the town.

Which sentence could best replace sentence 7 to better state the thesis?

A. Don’t waste rainwater; collect it in a barrel instead.

B. It is better for growing plants not to use the water that comes out of the tap or faucet, even though that is the easiest method.

C. We should do what we can to reduce water use; conserving will lower the family water bill.

D. Collecting the rain that falls on your roof and storing it provides an excellent water supply for growing plants and reduces the demand on your local water supply.
Think About Your Thinking

In the chart below, evaluate each answer choice based on what you have learned about revising thesis and position statements. One evaluation has been completed for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Is Answer Correct?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>This is one point the author makes, but the statement does not include other important points that belong in the essay's thesis statement.</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Independent Practice

You will have the opportunity to practice revising thesis statements in the Revision Practice section.
Six-Man Football in Texas

(1) At the end of Super Bowl 50, Von Miller—a defensive linebacker playing for the champion Denver Broncos—won the Most Valuable Player Award. (2) He was selected because of his fierce and unrelenting efforts that almost singlehandedly saved the game for the Broncos. (3) Where did Von Miller first learn to play football like that? (4) The answer is not surprising. (5) Most teams, like Von Miller’s high school near Dallas, use eleven players on the field. (6) However, small teams in rural areas don’t have all the coaches or equipment that they need to play football correctly.

(7) Six-man football uses six players on a team. (8) The games are played on Friday nights in small, rural communities found generally north of Interstate 10 and west of Interstate 35—a large area about half the size of the state. (9) Each week during football season, these communities, with names like Happy, Spur, and Eden, gather to cheer on players that hope their talents will catch the eye of a college scout, or more modestly, will take their teams to the district or state playoffs.
(10) Six-man football was invented in 1932 by Stephen Epler, a high school coach in Nebraska who wanted to create a game of football that high schools in small farming communities could play. (11) By 1938, the University Interscholastic League of Texas, an organization that encourages academic and athletic contests between high schools, officially added six-man football to its list of competitions. (12) That year, fifty-five schools in Texas participated. (13) The next year, the number doubled and soon reached a high of 160 teams. (14) Over twice as many high schools played six-man football the very next year. (15) As the state became more urban, some six-man teams from rural towns like Oklaunion, Pecan Gap, and Flat disappeared, while the teams in once-rural Katy, Dripping Springs, and Copperas Cove are now fielding large football team rosters.

(16) The rules of six-man football in Texas follow the NCAA rules with some exceptions. (17) For example, the field is smaller—40 by 80 yards, instead of a regular 50- by 100-yard field. (18) A first down is 15 yards, and all players on a team are eligible receivers, except the passer. (19) The point system also is different. (20) A field goal is worth four points, a kicked point after touchdown is worth two points, and a run/pass point after touchdown scores one point. (21) Just like in regular football, the team with the most points at the end of the game wins. (22) Therefore, if any team is ahead at halftime by 45 points, the game is ended.

(23) No other state, besides California and Florida, sends as many high school players up through the ranks to the NFL as Texas. (24) No other state has as many six-man football teams, either. (25) The love of football in Texas is deep and strong, and in small towns like Paint Rock, Fruitvale, and Loraine, Friday nights in the fall mean FOOTBALL, thanks to the six-man football team.
1 What is the most effective revision to make in sentence 4?  

- A He was a product of a Texas high school football program.  
- B Von Miller gave credit to his high school football coach.  
- C “I did not learn in California or Florida, but Texas,” Miller might have said.  
- D Von has one idea, but people might have others, depending on who you ask.

2 Which of the following, if any, could replace sentence 6 to create a more effective controlling idea?  

- F On the other hand, six-man football uses only six players for a game, so the chances of developing another Von Miller are slim.  
- G Significantly, unlike Von Miller’s experience, many teams from small towns in Texas play games with only six men, because the players all want to be Von Miller.  
- H However, in 138 small towns across Texas, younger NFL hopefuls, dreaming of becoming another Von Miller, play games known as six-man football.  
- J Sentence 6 is written correctly in the paper.

STAAR Tip  
A long controlling idea is not always the best option. Instead you want a controlling idea that is clear and makes an argument or claim that can be explained.

3 Which of these sentences could be added after sentence 7 to add more details and support the main idea in the paragraph?  

- A In very small schools, a football player could also be a band member and perform at half time.  
- B Schools must have six players to start the game, although the game can go on with only four or five players on a side.  
- C Now larger high schools and colleges are using the seven-on-seven practice arrangement, probably based on six-man football.  
- D Drive by any town in Texas on a Friday night, and the football stadium is filled with players and fans.
4 The third paragraph (sentences 10–15) has a redundant sentence. Which sentence should be deleted from this paragraph?

(E2.13C)

F Sentence 11
G Sentence 12
H Sentence 13
J Sentence 14

5 What is the most effective revision to make to sentence 20 to make the sentence appropriate for audience and context?

(E2.15A)

A A field goal is worth four points, whereas in regular football it is worth three points; a kicked point after touchdown is worth two points, although it is worth one point in regular games; and finally a run/pass point after touchdown scores one point, whereas in regular football, it scores two points.

B A field goal is worth four points, and the points after touchdowns are variable in number and different from regular football: for kicking, the teams get two points, but for passing or running the teams get one point.

C A field goal is worth four points and a point after touchdown is worth either two points or one point, depending on if the point after is kicked or run/passed into the end zone.

D A field goal is worth four points instead of three, a kicked point after touchdown is worth two points instead of one, and a run/pass point after touchdown scores one point instead of two.

6 Barrett has not used an appropriate transition in sentence 22. Which of these could best replace Therefore and create a more appropriate transition between sentences 21 and 22?

(E2.15A)

F Consequently
G In addition
H However
J No change needs to be made in this sentence.

STAAR Tip
Transitions often signal purpose. Do not use transitions like consequently unless you are showing cause and effect or however unless you are showing a contrast.
Using Commas Correctly

Commas are used to separate or set off parts of sentences. There are many rules for comma use. This lesson covers the rules most often tested by STAAR.

**Commas and Independent Clauses**

Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet) to join two independent clauses.

Ray brought the bats and balls, and Caroline brought gloves and helmets.

However, do NOT use a comma with compound verbs.

Ray brought the bats but forgot the balls.

**Skill Check**

In each sentence below, add a comma where needed to combine the two independent clauses and draw a box around the coordinating conjunction. If a sentence is correct, write “Correct” beside it.

1. Camilla ran the loop around the practice field and Cherice climbed up and down the stairs.

2. Both Dwayne and Donelle saw the mountain lion but Dwayne got a better view of it.

3. Take both ends and loop them around each other in a loose knot.

**Commas with Interrupters**

Use commas to set off nonrestrictive phrases and clauses, and parenthetical expressions. Nonrestrictive and parenthetical elements are those that are not essential to the basic meaning of the sentence.

My brother Sam, who built a chicken coop, plays baseball.

The girl with the red shirt won a free trip to Hawaii.

The new bike paths, as expected, are getting a lot of use.

Also use commas to set off contrasting expressions.

The police, not the fire department, will investigate the incident.
Skill Check

In each sentence below, add commas where needed to set off nonrestrictive phrases and parenthetical expressions. Underline these phrases and expressions. If a sentence is correct, write “Correct” beside it.

4. The Cathedral of Junk three stories of random objects cemented together is an Austin tourist attraction.

5. The smoothies at Green Acres unlike the ones at Smooth Moves do not contain added sugar.

6. The singers who choose appropriate material and rehearse often are more likely to enjoy performing.

Commas with Introductory Elements

Use a comma after an introductory phrase or clause. Words such as after, although, as, because, before, if, since, though, unless, and while often signal introductory elements, and so do participles (words that often end in –ing).

Whenever Robert shook the bag of food, the dog barked.
Disappointed by the results, he didn’t stay to see the finishers.
Waiting for the bus, Jeremy sketched in his notebook.

Skill Check

In each sentence below, add a comma where needed to set off the introductory phrase or clause that should be followed by a comma.

7. While we were making cupcakes Lisa and Manuel finished the signs.

8. Looking up from the screen Ramona gasped when she saw how late it was.

9. As tired as we were after the cleanup we still thought we had made the right decision.

Mixed Practice

Correct each sentence by adding commas where they are needed. If a sentence uses commas correctly, write “Correct” beside it.

1. The team that collects the most trash will win movie tickets and a pizza dinner.

2. Whales and dolphins hear very well so it is not surprising that they communicate through sound.

3. It took only four days not the whole week for us to write the script and find a tent.

4. Listening to the band concert Cody realized he had always wanted to play the trumpet.

5. Terrence had crammed his duffel bag full but he hadn’t packed his shoes or socks yet.

6. The Great Barrier Reef the world’s largest coral reef system is experiencing widespread coral bleaching.
Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question.

When Carmen was asked to write about an animal native to Texas, she chose to write about prairie dogs. Read Carmen’s paper and think about the corrections she should make. When you finish reading, answer the questions that follow.

Texas Prairie Dogs

(1) Texas was once home to millions of prairie dogs. (2) Their communities sprawled across the plains, especially in the western part of Texas, but numbers of prairie dogs have plunged in the State.

(3) Prairie dogs are not actually dogs. (4) They are rodents, related to squirrels, gophers, and rats. (5) Although they look like foot-long squirrels settlers named them prairie dogs because of their doglike barks. (6) Like most other rodents, they eat plants, including grasses, flowering plants, roots, and seeds.

(7) Prairie dog colonies are huge underground complexes of connected tunnels and burrows with several entrances. (8) You can spot them because of the raised mound at each entrance. (9) The colonies include different rooms for sleeping, caring for young, and storing food. (10) Texas prairie dog communities, sometimes called towns, include hundreds of prairie dogs and are highly organized. (11) They usually cover less than a square mile, but one Texas prairie dog town covered 25,000 square miles. (12) Around four hundred million prairie dogs may have lived in that town.
(13) Although prairie dogs consume much of the vegetation in an area, they do make positive contributions to their environments. (14) The rodents’ droppings fertilize the soil, and they’re tunnels add air and keep the earth from packing down. (15) Rainwater runs into the tunnels, where it adds to the ground water instead of caused erosion.

(16) One reason numbers of prairie dogs have plunged in Texas is that people hunt them. (17) Ranchers and farmers kill them because the rodents eat crops and grasses. (18) In addition, people hunt them for sport. (19) In the panhandle, hunters from near and far pay guides to take them on prairie dog hunts.

(20) Hunters cannot take these alert animals by surprise, though. (21) Lookouts who watch for predators, are stationed at the burrow entrances, and when a human or predatory animal approaches their colony, these lookouts make warning calls. (22) According to some researchers, prairie dogs can even describe the hunters to one another. (23) Using different calls, they can tell the colony whether a human is tall, short, thin, or broad. (24) They can also tell what color clothing the human is wearing, how fast he or she are moving, and whether he or she has a gun.

(25) While some people are hunting prairie dogs, however, others are protecting them. (26) Today, many prairie dogs live in protected colonies such as Prairie Dog Town in Lubbock, Texas. (27) There, visitors can observe these fascinating animals up close as they live, work, and communicate.
1 What change, if any, should be made in sentence 2? (E2.18A)

A Change *communities* to *communities*
B Change *State* to *state*
C Delete the comma after *Texas*
D No change should be made in this sentence.

2 What is the correct way to write sentence 5? (E2.17C)

F Although they look like foot-long squirrels. Settlers named them prairie dogs because of their doglike barks.
G Although they look like foot-long squirrels, settlers named them prairie dogs because of their doglike barks.
H Although they look like foot-long squirrels, settlers named them prairie dogs. Because of their doglike barks.
J Although they look like foot-long squirrels settlers named them prairie dogs because of their doglike barks.

3 What change needs to be made in sentence 14? (E2.18B)

A Change *rodents'* to *rodent's*
B Change *they’re* to *their*
C Change *keep* to *keeping*
D Insert a comma after *tunnels*

**STAAR Tip**
*They’re* is a contraction for *they are.*
4 What change needs to be made in sentence 15? (E2.17A)

F Delete the comma after tunnels
G Change tunnels to tunels
H Insert a comma after runs
J Change caused to causing

5 What change needs to be made in sentence 21? (E2.18B)

A Insert a comma after lookouts
B Change who to whom
C Change approaches to approaches
D Change make to makes

STAAR Tip
When deciding between who and whom, replace the word with they or them. If it would be correct to say they, use who; otherwise, use whom.

6 What change, if any, needs to be made in sentence 24? (E2.13D)

F Change can also to could also
G Delete the comma after wearing
H Change are moving to is moving
J No change needs to be made in this sentence.
In an essay, the **position statement**, or position, states the topic and the writer’s main idea about the topic. It should directly respond to the question or direction in the prompt. It should also clearly tell your reader your central belief, idea, or response in the essay. For the STAAR test, this means stating a position that can be supported and argued.

**STAAR Strategy**

Your position statement should respond to the prompt directly and give an opinion that can be argued with reasons and examples. Read this prompt from the 2015 STAAR test.

**WRITTEN COMPOSITION: Persuasive**

Read the following quotation.

> Idealistic people are those who pursue great ideas in the hope of changing the world. Because their plans are often quite ambitious, these people can have difficulty accomplishing smaller, concrete goals. In contrast, practical people concentrate on workable ideas and goals. Their approach is likely to lend itself to tangible solutions, even if these people fail to envision grand ideas.

—Winston Churchill

Which approach is more valuable in life: an idealistic one or a practical one?

Think carefully about this question.

Write an essay stating your opinion on whether it’s better to dream big or to be realistic.

STAAR English II, 2015

Here is a working thesis for the prompt.

Idealistic people are better at pursuing big goals, while practical people are better at completing smaller tasks.

This position statement does stay on topic. However, there is no clear claim. The writer summarizes the quotation instead of stating an opinion in response to the prompt. Here is a revision of the position.

The ability to dream big is the most important quality a person needs to live a remarkable life and help others.

This position is more specific. It makes a claim, or argument, in response to the prompt.
Guided Practice

Read this prompt.

Read the following quotation.

To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.

—Winston Churchill

Some people fear change while some embrace it. Think carefully about this statement.

Write an essay stating your opinion on whether it’s best to change or to stay the same.

Improving a Position Statement  Now read each position statement below and think about how it could be improved to respond better to the prompt, be more detailed, or both.

Write a revised position on the lines below each position statement.

1. Position: It is often necessary to change, whether you like it or not.

2. Position: It is important to always be improving your life.

3. Position: Things change, but my favorite people stay the same.
Read the following quotation.

Failure is another great stepping stone to greatness.

—Oprah Winfrey

Think carefully about the following question.

Can someone experience success without failure?

Write an essay explaining your opinion on the relationship between success and failure.

Be sure to —
- clearly state your thesis
- organize and develop your ideas effectively
- choose your words carefully
- edit your writing for grammar, mechanics, and spelling

Brainstorm Ideas

Write down any thoughts and ideas you have in response to the prompt. Don’t worry about writing complete sentences. And don’t judge your ideas—yet. After you think of a few ideas, read through them and look for one that answers the prompt, makes an argument or claim, and is an idea you think you can develop into a full essay.
Organizing Your Ideas and Examples

Use this chart to organize and develop ideas and examples for your essay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTRODUCTION</th>
<th>Paragraph 1</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis:</td>
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<tr>
<th>BODY</th>
<th>Paragraph 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Controlling Idea:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Example:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Explanation:</td>
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| TRANSITION |
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<th>BODY</th>
<th>Paragraph 3 (optional)</th>
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<td>Controlling Idea:</td>
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<td>Example:</td>
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<td>Explanation:</td>
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| TRANSITION |
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<tr>
<th>BODY</th>
<th>Paragraph 4 (optional)</th>
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<td>Example:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explanation:</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCLUSION</th>
<th>Final Paragraph</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restate Thesis:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Write your essay in the box below. Do not add lines inside the box or write outside the box.

Check to make sure your essay has
☐ a clear thesis statement
☐ in each body paragraph, a controlling idea that supports the thesis
☐ in each body paragraph, examples and evidence supporting the paragraph's controlling idea
☐ transitions between your ideas
☐ a concluding paragraph or thought
Using Commas Correctly

Commas are used to separate or set off parts of sentences. There are many rules for comma use. This lesson covers the rules most often tested by STAAR.

Commas and Independent Clauses
Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet) to join two independent clauses.

\[ \text{Ray brought the bats and balls, and Caroline brought gloves and helmets.} \]

However, do NOT use a comma with compound verbs.

\[ \text{Ray brought the bats but forgot the balls.} \]

Skill Check
In each sentence below, add a comma where needed to combine the two independent clauses and draw a box around the coordinating conjunction. If a sentence is correct, write “Correct” beside it.

1. Camilla ran the loop around the practice field and Cherice climbed up and down the stairs.
   Correct.

2. Both Dwayne and Donelle saw the mountain lion but Dwayne got a better view of it.

3. Take both ends and loop them around each other in a loose knot.

Commas with Interrupters
Use commas to set off nonrestrictive phrases and clauses, and parenthetical expressions. Nonrestrictive and parenthetical elements are those that are not essential to the basic meaning of the sentence.

\[ \text{My brother Sam, who built a chicken coop, plays baseball.} \]

These introductory phrases add information to each sentence.

Whenever Robert shook the bag of food, the dog barked.
Disappointed by the results, he didn’t stay to see the finishers.
Waiting for the bus, Jeremy sketched in his notebook.

Skill Check
In each sentence below, add a comma where needed to set off the introductory phrase or clause that should be followed by a comma.

7. While we were making cupcakes, Lisa and Manuel finished the signs.

8. Looking up from the screen, Ramona gasped when she saw how late it was.

9. As tired as we were after the cleanup, we still thought we had made the right decision.

Mixed Practice
Correct each sentence by adding commas where they are needed. If a sentence uses commas correctly, write “Correct” beside it.

1. The team that collects the most trash will win movie tickets and a pizza dinner. Correct.

2. Whales and dolphins hear very well, so it is not surprising that they communicate through sound.

3. It took only four days, not the whole week, for us to write the script and find a tent.

4. Listening to the band concert, Cody realized he had always wanted to play the trumpet.

5. Terrence had crammed his duffel bag full, but he hadn’t packed his shoes or socks yet.

6. The Great Barrier Reef, the world's largest coral reef system, is experiencing widespread coral bleaching.

Correct.
4. What change needs to be made in sentence 15?

- **F** Delete the comma after *tunnels*  
- **G** Change *tunnels* to *tunels*  
- **H** Insert a comma after *runs*  
- **J** Change *caused* to *causing*  

(E2.17A)

4. **F** A comma is needed to separate the nonrestrictive clause from the independent clause in this sentence.  
   **G** *Tunnels* is spelled correctly.  
   **H** A comma is not appropriate here.  
   **J** Correct. *Causing* is the correct form of the verb.

5. What change needs to be made in sentence 21?

- **A** Insert a comma after *lookouts*  
- **B** Change *who* to *whom*  
- **C** Change *approaches* to *approaches*  
- **D** Change *make* to *makes*  

(E2.18R)

5. **A** Correct. A comma is needed here to separate the nonrestrictive clause that follows from the rest of the sentence.  
   **B** *Who* is the subject of this clause.  
   **C** Following the letters *ch*, the singular present tense is formed by adding -es.  
   **D** Because *lookouts* is plural, *make* is the correct form of the verb.

6. What change, if any, needs to be made in sentence 24?

- **F** Change *can also* to *could also*  
- **G** Delete the comma after *wearing*  
- **H** Change *are moving* to *is moving*  
- **J** No change needs to be made in this sentence.  

(E2.13D)

6. **F** *Can also* is the correct form of the verb.  
   **G** The comma separates a list in a series.  
   **H** Correct. The subject is *he or she*, singular, so the verb should be *is* and not *are*.  
   **J** There is a verb error within the sentence.
Example of a 1–2 point essay:

Failure is like a plant seed. It won’t grow without water. I learned all about failure when I couldn’t do stuff in gymnastics. My coach kept telling me to try, but that just annoyed me.

Failure gives you good stuff though. You have to learn to be tough when you fail all the time. I kept falling on my head doing back walkovers. I cried some, but then I got back up and tried again. I think being bad at gymnastics made me patient.

If I didn’t work so hard at gymnastics, I wouldn’t appreciate it when I learned a new move. Oprah is really successful, for example, but she grew up poor. She had to work hard to earn her own show. Like I work in gymnastics. She has lots of houses now. She is the most successful person I can think of.

I finally did a back walkover. Once I got it down, it was no big deal. They are easy to do now, but I sure was frustrated when I was learning them.

Rationale: The opening sentences give the impression that the essay is about fostering failure. The purpose of the personal anecdote is unclear, and there is no thesis in the first paragraph. The main ideas of the supporting paragraphs are unclear. The author’s tone is loose and conversational. Oprah is used as an example, but the point of the example is not apparent. The conclusion offers no connection between success and failure. Word choice and tone give this essay a rambling feeling that lacks purpose.

Example of a 3–4 point essay:

Try, try again. My gymnastics coach used to say this during every lesson, and her words annoyed me. However, I came to understand that the only way I would do a back walkover was to practice, which meant falling hundreds of times first. Failure and success are like a seed and a plant. Failure is the start on the path to success, and you can’t have one without the other.

Failure builds the kind of character that makes people successful. Anyone who has aimed for a goal and missed knows how hard it is to get up and try again. Doing that work to try again makes people resilient, patient, and humble. These are valuable traits to have in life.

Success means more when you have to work hard for it. Some people get lucky and experience success without having to fail first, but this kind of success won’t last. As soon as that person tries something new, they will have to learn to handle failure. Oprah Winfrey, for example, grew up poor. She had to work hard to earn her own show. If success had been handed to her, she might not have had the character to make it last.

In the four months I spent learning to do a back walkover, my mind and body grew stronger. I celebrated when I mastered that move, but was the easy part. The many failed tries before I succeeded are what made me a better person.

Rationale: This essay begins with a personal anecdote that sets up the thesis. The thesis presents a clear argument that directly addresses the prompt. The main ideas of both supporting paragraphs directly support the thesis. The author uses logic and an example as evidence. The conclusion returns to the personal anecdote in order to illustrate the thesis and take the argument a step beyond the initial claim.
1: Revision
- Diagnostic Test
- Skill Instruction
- Practice
- Post Test

2: Editing
- Diagnostic Test
- Skill Instruction
- Practice
- Post Test

3: Composition
- Skill Instruction
- Practice

Includes one Skill lesson and one Practice set for each tested section.

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