SMART

Writing Assessment Guide

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga
Ministry of Education

Introduction

SMART supports reliable progress and achievement information to identify next learning steps and assist reporting to parents | whānau. Assessments are designed to be calm, routine, and familiar to support meaningful, comparable results, particularly for learners who experience anxiety, fatigue, or sensory overload.

SMART delivers low-stakes writing assessments for Years 3–10, aligned with the strengthened New Zealand Curriculum.

Writing assessments in SMART are made up of short answer items and one extended piece of writing. The extended piece of writing is in response to a writing prompt.

SMART will assess the three purposes for writing – writing to persuade, inform and entertain. In 2026 all students will be provided with persuade writing prompts.

Each student is automatically matched to the appropriate writing assessment based on their year level and curriculum pathway. Teachers do not need to select or assign assessments.

Delivery Formats for Writing Assessments

Writing assessments can be delivered online (digital) or paper based.

Schools will decide the assessment format for a whole class or for individual students (e.g., accessibility needs), with a mix of formats being possible within a single class.

- **Online**: Students will log in via device and complete the assessment. A broader range of item types is possible, due to the nature of digital assessment.
- **Paper-based**: Teachers will print question papers and answer sheets. Students will write their responses on answer sheets, which are later scanned and uploaded. You can adjust the space between the lines on the extended writing answer page by changing the size of the font before printing. Some schools may prefer to mark the assessments themselves and enter the results into SMART.

Paper-based does not require an assessment session code, as assessment delivery is entirely manual and does not involve the use of SMART. Paper and digital versions will differ slightly. Paper-based item types include multiple choice, short answer, and extended response (extended writing). Some questions may be worded differently on paper, but comparability is maintained.

Extended Writing

Writing assessments include an extended writing composition task. On paper answer sheets, dedicated space is provided for this. Closed questions may appear at the end.

If a student's response has insufficient content (generally 100 words or less) or is illegible, the SMART AI will flag it for teacher review and marking.

Timing

Within a school, teachers are responsible for managing timing of assessments, including extra time allowances or rest breaks. This should include the opportunity to split the testing times if required e.g. complete the closed and open tasks at different times, or start at one time, save and then complete at a subsequent time to ensure students are given the time to show best what they can do.

SMART assessments are not timed by the tool, but times are provided as a guide to help teachers prepare for and deliver the assessments.

For Writing the suggested timings are:

- **Year 3**: Approximately 15 minutes for closed questions, and 30 minutes for the extended writing task
- **Years 4 to 6**: Approximately 15 minutes for closed questions, and 30-40 minutes for the extended writing task
- **Years 7 and 8**: Approximately 15-20 minutes for closed questions, and 40-50 minutes for the extended writing task
- **Years 9 and 10**: Approximately 20 minutes for closed questions, and 50-60 minutes for the extended writing task

For online assessment sessions, it is recommended that teachers use the *Pause* function during breaks. Be aware, though, If the teacher pauses the test and doesn't return to it within the same day, the system will 'postpone' any students who have not submitted a finished assessment.

These students can join a new session on another day and continue their assessment. The teacher will need to generate a new session code, but the students' codes remain the same.

Equipment

For writing assessments, the following table outlines what is permitted and not permitted within the SMART assessment and inside of the settings.

	Permitted	Not Permitted
SMART (online)	Stationery tools – ruler, notepad, pen/pencil, eraser General Keyboard Shortcuts Assistive technology (PNP) approved for the student	Dictionary Thesaurus
Room (online)	Assistive technology equipment approved for the student	
Room (paper based)	Stationary tools – ruler, notepad, pen/pencil, eraser	Dictionary Thesaurus

Key points for successful Writing Assessments:

1. Preparation

If you are intending to use devices, ensure students complete the familiarisation tool using their usual devices.

Decide paper or digital format.

For online: Create the Assessment Session Code and generate and print student codes. Assessment Session codes need to be created prior to the beginning of the assessment and can be created at any time before the assessment in the five-week window.

For paper: Print question papers (reusable where appropriate) and individual answer sheets. These should be stored securely prior to the assessment.

Organise accessibility support as needed.

2. Delivering a Writing Session

Teachers or administrators will create a dedicated assessment session for writing. Share the session code and individual student codes with students.

Assessments are not timed by SMART, so teachers and schools are able to manage timing and breaks themselves.

For online delivery; consider using the Pause function after closed questions and before the extended writing task if a break is planned. Teachers can monitor live progress on the session dashboard, then finalise the session once all students have submitted.

For Paper-Based Delivery; distribute question papers and named answer sheets. No session code is required. After completion, scan and upload answer sheets for integration with online results.

For closed question sections:

Explain to the students (using age-appropriate language):

- When they answer the questions for writing composition and writing processes sections, students should think about what they have learned in writing lessons.
- For some questions, they will need to read carefully to spot and correct any mistakes. For other questions they will need to choose a way to improve some writing.
- Refer to the table above when explaining how much time they will have.
- They should answer as many questions as they can in the time given.
- If they find a question too hard they should go on to the next one. On the online assessment students can 'Flag' the item, so they know to go back to it before completing.
- The opportunity they had to work on the familiarisation site will help.

For extended writing:

Introduce the task by covering the following points using age-appropriate language:

- Read through the prompt in full.
- Remind students that the prompt tells them about the purpose of the writing and gives them some suggestions for what to include. They should use their own ideas when they write.
- Draw students' attention to the planning sheet. Tell them that the plan is for their own use and will not be marked.
- Refer to the timings listed above when telling students approximately how much time they will have.
- For younger students, teachers may wish to separate this into planning time and writing time.

Teachers should use their discretion to ensure that most students have enough time. Time may be extended where appropriate.

Using teacher discretion and the above timings as a guide only, ask the students to stop writing when sufficient time has been provided.

Note:

All students should be given a lined sheet of paper to be used for planning. Students doing the paper test will be given an answer sheet with their unique QR code.

3. Post-Assessment

All results (online or scanned paper) appear together in marking and reporting. Flagged writing responses will require teacher review and possibly teacher marking.

4. Marking Writing Assessments

Before you begin marking, ensure you have access to the student responses. Access the relevant rubric for the assessment: Writing to Inform, Writing to Entertain (Narrative), or Writing to Persuade. These rubrics are available within SMART or can be printed. Read the writing prompt for the assessment, then read the rubric carefully and familiarise yourself with its five elements.

Manually marking a writing assessment

Read the student's writing all the way through. Refer to the rubric one element at a time. Reread the text closely and identify the descriptor that best matches the evidence in the writing. Enter the best-fit score for each element using the sliders.

Base your judgement only on the evidence in this piece of writing, not on the student's overall ability.

Reviewing auto-marked scripts or moderating scores

Carry out a quick review of the writing using the rubric and the suggested score. Perform a deeper review only if the suggested score does not match the evidence in the student's response.

Do not adjust the sliders if you accept the suggested score. Adjust the sliders if you see clear evidence that justifies a different score. Record your reasoning for any change in the feedback/notes box. Finally, check the overall score.

After marking each student's writing, click "Submit" and "Next" to move on to the next student, or click "Save" so that scores can be reviewed by a colleague.

Using SMART results to contribute to Reporting to Parents and Whānau

SMART results provide one piece of evidence to inform teachers' decisions about students' progress and achievement for twice-yearly reporting to parents and whānau.

Using the SMART writing score alongside other information enables informed decisions when reporting with student progress descriptors: emerging, developing, consolidating, proficient, or exceeding.