ANSWER KEY: ASSESSING WRITING

[Assessing Writing: 5'31"]

If you need to assess your students' writing skills, there are a number of factors you need to consider. These include considering the test taker and their needs, the kind of information you want to know about their writing skills and the most appropriate ways to elicit and assess these skills so that your test is appropriate and accurately scored.

A. BEFORE YOU WATCH

1a.   What kind of writing do you think most of us do nowadays?

For example: Emails/letters, texts, messages, lists, maybe academic essays if studying.

1b.   Is writing in school and outside school different? Why?

Probably – in school we write because we have to record and show learning but outside school, we write for communicative purpose; expository versus persuasive/narrative writing.

2.   What kind of things do we think about when we are planning and creating a piece of writing?

For example: Who we are writing to, what our message is, how long it needs to be; purpose, audience, structure.

B. WHILE YOU WATCH

Decisions that affect test and task design

3. **What do we think about before we start writing something? Match the two columns.**

   A What?   4 the topic of the text

   B Who?   3 the audience for the text

   C How?   1 the structure of the text

   D Which features of language? 2 the grammar and vocabulary the text requires

4. **Look at the table. Decide if each test feature and focus is a good match (√) or a bad match (X).**

Test focus	Test feature	√ or X
Writing a business letter	Test taker: teenagers	X
Assessing overall ability in writing	A range of tasks	√
Writing a note to a friend	A long essay	X
Writing in informal language	Audience: the boss	X

Scores and score reporting

5. **Who can give the scores to a test?**

   A *Trained/accredited examiners*   B *Experienced teachers*

6a. **Match the description with the marking scale.**

   A. Analytic marking scale   2. Separate scores for different features

   B. Global or holistic marking scale   1. Single overall score awarded

6b. **Which scale would be best for assessing a personal email between teenagers?**

   Probably a global marking scale as it is informal and overall communication is important.

➢ *If you want to know more about the relevance of scales to a task, watch the video on Assessing Speaking.*

7.   What three things are important in test or task design?

The task is *appropriate* for the skill being assessed.

The test is *fair* to the test taker.

The test is accurately *scored*.

C. AFTER YOU WATCH

8.   Read the information about these learners.

> *Learners are a class of 16 year olds studying English in preparation for college education. They are currently at B1 level.*

Which task, A or B, is best? Why?

Task A: Write an essay for your teacher explaining the advantages and disadvantages of travelling. Write 180 words.

OR

Task B: Write a note to friend inviting them to come and visit you at the weekend, describing what you will do and explaining why you would like to see your friend. Write 70 words.

Task A is better for this group of learners because they need English for study purposes and Task A better targets this requirement, i.e. the test task matches their purpose of learning.

9.   What kind of features do you need to assess for these learners? Why?

✓ Accurate language
✓ Cohesion
✓ Task fulfilment
✓ Range of language
✓ Punctuation

All features because they need to produce English in a formal context and it is very important that their language is precise in both meaning and message.

*NB: The above descriptors match the APTIS writing scales.

APPLY >>>>>>>>>>>

THE TASK

10. **Think about a group of your own learners:**

A. What kind of writing do they need to do?

B. Who are they usually writing to?

C. How can you make sure a writing task for them is fair?

RATING

11. **What kind of rating scale do you need?**

Think carefully about the kind of information you or the learners need to know.

To learn more about issues to consider when developing a test of writing, you may access Appendix F in the APTIS General Technical Manual (pp. 56–59)

https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/aptis_general_technical_manual_v-1.0.pdf