



Frequently asked questions

NAPLAN Writing Test



March 2017

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) will move online from 2017, over a three-year period.

NAPLAN will proceed both on paper and online until NAPLAN Online is rolled out to all schools nationally. States and territories will determine when their schools commence NAPLAN Online.

The Australian Curriculum: English requires students to be taught a variety of forms of writing including narrative, informative and persuasive writing.

In NAPLAN writing tests, students are provided with a writing stimulus or 'prompt' and asked to write a response in a particular text type. Each year, NAPLAN tests students on either narrative writing or persuasive writing.

Do students have the computer skills to do the test online?

The Australian Curriculum sets the expectations for students from Foundation to Year 10, and this includes learning to write by hand and type on keyboards.

Developing computer skills begins in the Foundation Year when students construct texts using software including word processing programs. Students begin to master simple keyboarding functions such as typing letters, scrolling, selecting icons and choosing from drop-down menus.

As students progress through primary school, their computer skills develop further. Students learn to compose stories or information sequences, and edit electronic texts. In time, students develop skills in constructing and editing texts featuring visual, print and audio elements.

ACARA research indicates that online writing is comparable to handwriting in terms of the quality of writing produced by students at each year level. For an overview of research and trials that ACARA has undertaken in preparing for NAPLAN Online visit the [NAP website \(www.nap.edu.au/online-assessment/research-and-development\)](http://www.nap.edu.au/online-assessment/research-and-development).

Will students need to touch-type to complete the NAPLAN writing test online?

The NAPLAN writing test does not assess handwriting or keyboarding skills; it is about assessing students' skills in creating a short, written text.

The writing tasks are appropriate to computer skills for each year level, meaning that students will not be required to touch type in order to complete NAPLAN Online.

Students' keyboarding abilities will vary, just as handwriting abilities do. Students will have sufficient time to complete the writing test, regardless of whether they complete it by hand or on keyboard.

Will students participating in the online assessment have any advantage over students taking part in paper-based assessment?

Students will not be disadvantaged by the mode in which they complete NAPLAN, whether paper or online.

NAPLAN trialling data show no significant difference in the quality of writing produced by students online, compared with students who complete the test using pencil and paper. The same marking guide will be used to assess all student writing, regardless of whether the test is completed online or on paper.

Will Year 3 students complete NAPLAN writing tests online?

In 2017, Year 3 students at schools participating in NAPLAN Online will complete tests online for numeracy, reading and conventions of language (spelling, grammar and punctuation), but they will complete the writing test using pencil and paper. No Year 3 students will complete an online writing test in 2017.



Further research is being carried out to determine the impact, if any, of Year 3 students undertaking the NAPLAN writing assessment online.

Years 5, 7 and 9 students participating in NAPLAN Online will undertake all NAPLAN tests, including writing, online.

Will students be able to draft ideas if they are doing the writing test online?

Yes. Throughout the test, students will be able to draft their responses and ideas, either online in a space that will be disregarded, or on a separate piece of paper.

Can students study for the online writing test?

NAPLAN assesses skills in literacy and numeracy that are developed over time through the school curriculum. Teachers can ensure that students are familiar with the test format and provide appropriate support and guidance. If you have any questions about your child's preparation for NAPLAN, you should talk to your child's teacher.

ACARA has developed a [public demonstration site](#) of the NAPLAN Online assessment platform so that schools, students and the community can become familiar with the question types and format of the online tests. The site contains example questions for all test domains and year levels, and allows students to become familiar with the writing panel and editing tools that will be available to them in the writing test.

Will children who use computers all the time get better results when they do their NAPLAN tests online?

While access to computers at home or at school varies, students' performance during the online test is likely to depend on how familiar they are with the device they are using for the online test, rather than



how often they use a computer. Ensuring students are familiar with using devices, typing on them and navigating through programs is a part of a student's learning and a requirement of the Australian Curriculum.

How many different types of writing prompts are there? Are they the same as for paper-based NAPLAN?

Students participating in NAPLAN, whether paper or online, will be tested on the same writing text type (either narrative writing or persuasive writing).

NAPLAN paper will include a writing prompt for Years 3 and 5, and a different writing prompt for Years 7 and 9.

NAPLAN Online will include randomised comparable writing prompts to ensure test security.

Will schools need to buy new computers specifically for NAPLAN Online?

Schools invest in information and communication technologies (ICT), including computers and other devices, as part of their teaching and learning programs, and according to the Australian Curriculum requirements for ICT. The same technologies and devices can be used by schools for NAPLAN Online. For more information, visit the [technical requirements page](#) on the NAP website.

Will students be able to use standard editing tools?

Standard editing tools will be available during the NAPLAN Online writing assessment, so students will be able to copy, cut, paste and move text. Spelling and grammar checks (auto-correct) will be disabled



on the NAPLAN testing platform, as these elements of students' writing will be marked in the assessment.

Will the voice-to-text tools be an option in the writing test for students who use these tools on a daily basis?

Currently, voice-to-text tools are not an option in the writing test. The test assesses technical aspects of writing, including spelling and grammar, as well as contextual aspects. A scribe may be allowed to assist students with a disability to complete the writing test. Learn more about using a scribe in the National protocols for test administration at: <http://nap.edu.au/naplan/school-support/national-protocols-for-test-administration>.

How will automated essay scoring work for the writing test?

Automated essay scoring (AES) marks writing tests using the same NAPLAN marking guide used by human markers. The AES system is trained using more than 1,000 NAPLAN writing tests scored by human markers. The AES system can mark thousands of essays consistently, reliably and quickly, enabling faster turnaround of results so that teachers and schools can respond more quickly to students' needs.

ACARA's research has found that AES is effective in the NAPLAN context. In 2017, all NAPLAN Online writing tests will be double-marked by both the AES system and a human marker, with any discrepancies resolved by another human marker. Learn more about AES in ACARA's [AES fact sheet \(http://www.nap.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/aes-fact-sheet.pdf\)](http://www.nap.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/aes-fact-sheet.pdf).

For more information, visit www.nap.edu.au or email naplanonline@acara.edu.au.

