



ISASP IOWA STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT of
STUDENT PROGRESS

ISASP Writing
Released Writing Prompt,
Sample Student Essays, and
Scoring Notes

Grade 9

ISASP Writing

Released Writing Prompt, Sample Student Essays, and Scoring Notes

This document contains the following information:

- 1) A released ISASP Writing prompt that was previously administered to students in the relevant grade as part of the ISASP Language/Writing test.
- 2) A copy of the scoring rubric that was used to guide scoring.
- 3) Five samples of actual student responses to the prompt that illustrate a range of scores.
- 4) For each writing sample, a set of scoring notes created at the time of scoring that provide articulations around score point decisions.

Released responses can be examined to better understand how well students are demonstrating writing skills with respect to the four traits that are evaluated as part of the ISASP Writing test. Responses can also be used to gain a better understanding of how ISASP is scored and the application of the rubric to the individual response.

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Sample Writing Prompt

The music teacher talked with your class about the benefits of playing a musical instrument. Read the information the teacher shared. Then, write an essay for the local newspaper opinion column in which you explain why learning to play a musical instrument will make people more successful in other areas of their life.

You should use details from the information you are given when you write your explanation. Remember to use your own words. Do not copy. You may also add your own ideas. The Writing Checklist will help you remember important parts of a piece of writing.

Writing Checklist

As you write, remember to:

- Communicate your main ideas clearly.
- Use reasons, details, and examples from the information you are given to develop your writing. You may also add your own ideas.
- Provide clear and logical organization. Include an opening and closing. Use paragraphs and linking words.
- Use precise words and language appropriate for your audience.
- Check your work for correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

The following list of benefits appeared in the monthly journal Music and Health Sciences as part of an article entitled, Play, Listen, and Roll.

Five Reasons to Play an Instrument

Stress Relief

Playing an instrument requires focus and clarity of mind. Some instruments involve breath control which can help regulate heart rate and blood oxygen levels. All instruments demand mental concentration; this pushes distractions to the side.

Discipline

Maintaining a practice schedule teaches you discipline. Learning how to place your fingers to form the perfect chord at the right time also develops behaviors essential to flawless execution.

Coordination

Whether coordinating finger position with foot pedals, matching the beat of your fellow musicians, or regulating your breathing at the same time you turn a page of sheet music, playing an instrument develops advanced coordination skills.

Listening Skills

Some musicians learn to “play by ear” which enables them to mimic their favorite song. Others join a band and must listen to their band members in order to develop the right sound.

Exercise

Music instruction teaches good posture. Some instruments demand more exertion than others and work back, chest, and arm muscles. Drums, in particular, provide an excellent cardio workout.

The following article was published on a high school tutoring web site.

Train Your Brain with Music

Students who play a musical instrument or study other arts earn higher grades in school than do their non-arts-involved peers. Music students do particularly well in mathematics. This is because learning music involves recognizing patterns, which is the basis of math. Musicians also internalize the division of music into measures and beats, which sharpens math skills.

But that's not all! Children who study music for more than one year are better at reading than are students who do not study music. Reading sheet music creates more connections between synapses in the brain. This enhances the brain's ability to process information. As a result, reading and learning from new sources requires less effort for those who study music.

In addition, playing a musical instrument literally increases your brain size and strength. In a German university study, researchers compared groups of non-musicians, amateur musicians, and professional musicians. Results found that the musicians had more activity in the part of their brain responsible for listening (the auditory cortex) than did the non-musicians. Moreover, scientists determined that the actual physical mass of the auditory cortex was larger in the musicians. The results of the study are shown on the chart below.

Musical Skill Level	Auditory Cortex Activity	Auditory Cortex Mass
Professional Musician (Regularly plays musical instrument)	102% higher than baseline	368-983 cubic/mm of grey matter found in Heschel's gyrus region of brain.
Amateur Musician (Able to play musical instrument)	37% higher than baseline	189-798 cubic/mm of grey matter found in Heschel's gyrus region of brain.
Non-Musician (Unable to play musical instrument)	Baseline	172-450 cubic/mm of grey matter found in Heschel's gyrus region of brain.

Will music actually make you smarter? There's no guarantee. However, it can help you move toward the top of your class.

**Grade 9 Informative/Explanatory Rubric**

	Prompt Task	Development of Explanation	Organization	Language Use
5	Provides a thoughtful context for the explanation. Topic(s) and purpose of explanation are clear from the start. Successfully uses ample relevant evidence from provided texts to support the explanation.	Explains topic(s) completely. Effectively uses ample specific and relevant facts, definitions, details, examples, and/or other appropriate information in the explanation.	Has a clear, well-developed introduction. Provides a logical concluding statement or section. Organizes ideas effectively, using clear and appropriate paragraphing within a coherent whole. Consistently uses effective and varied transition words, phrases, and clauses within and between major sections of text to enhance coherence.	Uses precise and varied word choice. Employs topic-specific vocabulary successfully. Effectively varies sentence length and complexity. Establishes and maintains an objective tone and a formal style appropriate for the designated audience and purpose throughout the explanation.
4	Topic(s) and purpose of explanation are clear. Appropriately uses some evidence from provided texts to support the explanation.	Explains topic(s) adequately. Explanation includes some specific and relevant facts, definitions, details, examples, and/or other appropriate information.	Has a clear, somewhat-developed introduction. Provides a clear concluding statement or section. Organizes ideas adequately, using appropriate paragraphing. Consistently uses simple and/or repetitive transitions within and between sections of text.	Uses mostly specific and somewhat varied word choice. Occasionally employs topic-specific vocabulary successfully. Demonstrates adequate control of sentences with some variety in length and structure. Establishes an objective tone and a formal style appropriate for the designated audience and purpose and maintains them through most of the explanation.
3	Topic(s) and purpose of explanation are apparent within the response as a whole. Evidence from provided texts is used but is limited, overused, or misrepresented.	Explains topic(s) to a limited extent or the explanation is developed unevenly. Explanation includes few or only general facts, details, and examples. Some information may be repetitious or may not be clearly relevant.	Provides a basic introduction and basic concluding statement or section. Groups related ideas together but the relationship among ideas may at times be unclear or parts of the explanation may seem out of place. Sometimes uses transitions within and/or between sections of text.	Uses general word choice. Attempts to employ topic-specific vocabulary may be unsuccessful. Demonstrates a little variety in sentence structure, although there may be a few long, uncontrolled sentences. Demonstrates some understanding of an objective tone and a formal style appropriate for the designated audience and purpose but fails to maintain them throughout the explanation.

**Grade 9 Informative/Explanatory Rubric**

	Prompt Task	Development of Explanation	Organization	Language Use
2	Topic(s) and purpose of explanation are unclear or otherwise confusing. Attempts to use evidence from provided texts are unsuccessful (text sections are lifted exactly, misunderstood, or not relevant to the explanation they are used in support of).	Explains topic(s) by providing some information but explanation is minimal and/or superficial, and parts may be repetitious or not relevant.	Has minimal evidence of an introduction and/or a concluding statement or section. Groups a few related ideas together within the response but overall demonstrates weak paragraphing skills. Use of transitions is not controlled and may cause confusion.	Uses simple and/or repetitive word choice. Uses repetitive sentence structure and/or long, uncontrolled sentences. Demonstrates limited understanding of an objective tone and/or a formal style appropriate for designated audience and purpose; tone or style is somewhat distracting.
1	Topic(s) and purpose of explanation are never indicated. No attempt is made to use evidence from provided texts to support the explanation.	Development of topic(s) lacks explanation of ideas, only repeats ideas, or most ideas are not relevant. May demonstrate a lack of understanding of the purpose of explanatory writing.	Lacks an introduction and a concluding statement or section. Demonstrates no understanding of paragraphing (or response may be too short to assess). Transitions are not used.	Uses awkward, incorrect, and/or confusing word choice and sentence structure. Fails to achieve an objective tone and/or a formal style appropriate for the designated audience and purpose; tone or style is distracting.

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Sample Essay 1

I think that it could work but it could take along time to show that it was working. I mean I have been in muisc my whole life and it hasn't help that much. I have been in band scince 5th grade and I honstly think my math and reading and english has gone down. But then agian it could work for some other people alot they could go from a person who was just barely passing to someone who was getting striat A's.

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Sample Essay 1 – Scoring Notes

Trait	Score	Scoring Notes
Prompt Task	1	The topic and purpose of an explanation for why learning to play a musical instrument would make people more successful in other areas of life is never indicated. No use is made of evidence from the provided texts.
Development	1	The topic is not developed with relevant ideas, but consists of the writer’s opinions on the topic, demonstrating a lack of understand of the purpose of explanatory writing.
Organization	2	The response has minimal evidence of an introduction (<i>I think it could work</i>) and demonstrates the use of some transitional phrases (<i>I mean; But the agian</i>)
Language Use	2	Word choice is simple. Sentence structures are mostly controlled but repetitive (<i>I think it could work . . . I mean I have been in music my whole life and it hasn’t help that much. I have been in band scince 5th grade But then agian it could work</i>), but mostly correct. The writer demonstrates limited understanding of an objective tone (<i>. . . they could go from a person who was just barely passing to someone who was getting striat A’s</i>).

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Sample Essay 2

Playing musical instruments can some times make you smarter and more successful. There are many reasons why playing different instruments can help you be successful. It has been shown in study's that it helps you with coordination of you fingers, legs, ears for matching beats, and many more. It is also good with stress relief and discipline. It can be very stress relieving just sitting outside or even in your room playing your instrument. Playing can also have some discipline you need to keep on playing and make sure you don't mess up and if you do fix it.

I personally do not have or play an instrument. Some of my class mates have some and play. They really like to play but it is just not for everyone. I have a lot going on and I don't have time to play or really want to play. I think that some of the studies are kinda off just because looking at our school it doesn't really represent them here.

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Sample Essay 2 – Scoring Notes

Trait	Score	Scoring Notes
Prompt Task	2	The response repeats the words of the prompt about success (<i>There are many reasons why playing different instruments can help you be successful</i>), but does not provide any related support, leaving the purpose of the writing unclear. Some details are taken from the provided texts about the immediate benefits of playing an instrument (<i>coordination, stress relief, discipline</i>), and the writer’s own experience, but these are not relevant to an explanation of more success in other areas of life.
Development	2	The topic is explained by adding a little to information from the source texts (<i>it can be very stress relieving just sitting outside or even in your room playing your instrument</i>) as well as information about the writer’s personal experience, but both aspects are developed very superficially (<i>Some of my class mates have some and play. They really like to play but it is just not for everyone</i>).
Organization	3	The response has a basic introduction, but a conclusion is less evident. Related ideas are grouped together, but the relationship between the two groups is not well established, and one simple transition is used within a group (<i>also</i>).
Language Use	3	Words choice is general (<i>class mates, represent</i>). Sentences are controlled and show a little variety in length and structure. The response shows some understanding of an objective tone (<i>It has been shown in study’s that it helps you with coordination of you fingers, leg, ears for matching beats, and many more</i>), although that tone is not maintained at the end of the response (<i>I think that some of the studies are kinda off</i>).

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Sample Essay 3

Music is a good decision to make. It can help increase grade levels, help blood levels stay steady, and can even help the student do better in math and reading. It's all because of music.

Yes, music can increase the student grades in math and reading. The reason is because of patterns. Music requires patterns and so does mathematics. Almost everyone who is in band will be higher in the class for mathematics. No, it won't actually make you smarter but it can definitely help on those classes.

Now, let's say a student isn't in band. He/she is more likely to have lower grades and even have worse blood levels, decrease in concentration, and be less disciplined. Kids who are in band will be the better student and be able to manage time better than kids who don't. Which will definitely set them up for the world more than the other kids.

There are two types of band player there are the ones who have to listen to other people to get the tune right, there are also the ones who play, "By ear." Which means they mimic their favorite song to play. They both have different characteristics but both are equally as challenging to learn how to play.

Time management is key in the real world and band sets the student up perfectly for it. The student has to learn how to get their work done but also be able to go to band lessons and be able to play their instrument for practice during free time.

It's also a very good exercise for the player. It can help their posture and can work out their chest, back and arms. The drums get a good cardio workout going.

It's crazy how much good it does for the student and how much they can learn for doing band. It also sets them up for life and other time management activities that they may need to come across. It's a very good stress reliever and can really discipline the student to work on stuff that they need to.

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Sample Essay 3 – Scoring Notes

Trait	Score	Scoring Notes
Prompt Task	3	The topic and purpose of the explanation is apparent in the response (<i>It can help increas grade levels, helps blood levels stay steady, and can even help the student do better in math and reading</i>). Evidence from the source materials is provided, but it is sometimes misrepresented (<i>Now, let’s say a student isn’t in band. He/she is more likely to have lower grandes [grades] and even have worse blood levels, decrease in concentration, and and be less disciplined</i>).
Development	3	The response explains the topic to a limited extent, relying on the provided texts to support the topic with some general details (<i>Time management is key in the real world and band sets the student up perfectly for it. The student has to . . . be able to go to band lessons and be able to play their instrument for practice [in] there free time</i>). One idea is developed repetitively (<i>Almost everyone who is in band will be higher in the class for mathematics...Now, let’s say a student isn’t in band. He/she is more likely to have lower gradnes and even have worse blood levels</i>).
Organization	3	A basic introduction and conclusion are provided, and related ideas are grouped together in short paragraphs. A few words are used to link sentences (<i>Yes, No, Now</i>), but transitions are lacking.
Language Use	3	Word choice is general (<i>set them up for life, mimic, challenging</i>). Sentence structures are mostly controlled and often similar but do show a little variety (<i>Kids who are in band will be the better student and be able to mange time better then kids who don’t. Which will definitely set them up for life more then the other kids</i>). As a whole, the writing shows understanding of an appropriate formal style, but it is not maintained throughout (<i>get a good cardio work out going, sets them up for life, work on stuff that they need to</i>).

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Sample Essay 4

Importance of Music.

What is the importance of playing an instrument? Students who play instruments are more likely to have better math skills, reading skills, listening skills, discipline, and stress relief. Playing an instrument takes a lot of hard work and dedication. Playing an instrument will make you more successful in many areas of your life.

A student who plays an instrument is often likely to have better math skills. Of course, not always but, for the majority it is true. A student who learns new music can help you recognize patterns. Math bases are all about patterns. Along with music come notes. Students have to learn the difference between full, quarter, and half notes and rests. You can end up multiplying or dividing in some band situations. It is scientifically proven that instrument players are more likely to be more successful than students who do not play.

Reading music causes a person to have to use more of their brain strength to solve it out. Students who read music are one year better than those students who are not. Reading music increases your size in brain and strength. Playing an instrument and reading music at the same time takes a lot of coordination. In some cases you have to blow just the right amount of air, and at the perfect pace as well. It gives your brain the ability to process information quicker than others.

Many students who play an instrument learn to play ear by ear or, must listen to other band members to be able to play on time and correctly. It forces you to focus so you know when to come in after a long rest. A lot of players use instruments to be stress free. Playing an instrument requires a clean mind and focusing. To be able to perform your best while playing, you have to be able to just focus on the music sheet, your fingering, and breathing. Nothing else matters at that point. You are already trying to multi-task with three other things and adding what mom is cooking for dinner will not help. Instruments need mental concentration and helps someone with anxiety forget all of their problems and not have to worry about them for a bit.

Instrument playing is as important as any sport. It can also require physical dedication as well. Players must have good back posture, and

hand posture at the best angle you can. Good posture improves your playing a lot. Warm ups are also needed in band. There are breathing warm ups done before class such as scales at different tempos or rhythms. It can help your brain memorize things in different situations. If marching band is in season physical warm ups are necessary as well. A student should do exercise to avoid rolling an ankle or back bone. Exercise is very important.

Playing an instrument can be hard work. It takes a lot of time and patience. As you can see it can advance you in many different departments in school academically. It expands you brain strength and size. It improves your learning skills, coordination, memorization, stress, and discipline. I reccomend to play an instrument if you want to have improve your life style while having fun and learning something new.

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Sample Essay 4 – Scoring Notes

Trait	Score	Scoring Notes
Prompt Task	4	The topic and purpose are clear (<i>It improves your learning skills, coordination, memorization, stress, and discipline</i>), and the response appropriately uses some evidence from the provided texts to support the explanation (<i>To be able to preform your best while playing, you have to be able to just focus on the music sheet, your fingering, and breathing. . . . Instruments need mental concentration</i>).
Development	4	The topic is adequately explained with some specific details to explain ideas (<i>Instrument playing is as important as any sport. . . . If marching band is in season physical warm ups are necessary as well. A student should do exercise to avoid rolling an ankle or back bone</i>).
Organization	4	The response has a clear and somewhat developed introduction and conclusion. Ideas are organized with appropriate paragraphing, and a few transitional phrases are present (<i>Of course, In some cases, As you can see</i>).
Language Use	3	Word choice lacks precision (<i>Of course, not always, but, for the majority it is true</i>), and attempts to employ topic-specific language are unsuccessful (<i>you have blow just the right amount of air, learn to play ear by ear</i>). Sentence length is varied, and structures show a little variety (<i>It is scientifically proven than instrument players are more likeley to be more successful than students who do not play</i>), but many sentences are not controlled. The response demonstrates understanding of an objective tone and formal style, but fails to maintain it because of its many flat declarative statements.

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Sample Essay 5

Almost everyone has played an instrument when they were younger. They either stuck with it or passed it by never looking back. The people that stuck with playing an instrument are set up for life, and the one's who stopped or never played are missing out of one of the best ways to make them more successful in life. Playing an instrument requires alot of practice and hard work, but playing an instrument can also benefit you in so many ways. Musicians do well in school, are able to release stress and are able to do the basic skills/excerises in life.

Each day musicans are doing better in the areas of reading and mathematics. People think that playing an instrument is a waste of time, but in the end it makes up for it in their education. Musicans have to listen and learn their sheet music in order to get better at the songs and having the right tunes. What they may not know is that by doing this they have to recognizing patterns which is what you do in mathematics. In math their are aglorithims that are used where you have to find the patterns and figure out the problem. Looking over sheet music helps musicans create more connections with the brain which is a great reading skill. People who play an instrument are able to enhance their ability to proccess information.

Playing music helps you with reduce stress levels. While non-musicians see a person blowing into a tuba or trombon, the musician sees it as concentrating on their breath and heart beat levels. Playing an instrument means you have only one thing to focus on, which is the instrument that you play. Musicians are able to step away from their chaotic life and put all of their focus into their music. They dont worry about the future or what has gone wrong before they focus on the now. The moment where it is their time to shine and have nothing else luring around in their minds. Musicians aren't as stressed as non-musicians because they have their instrument and their music.

Muscians are able to gain the basic skills and excercises that others dont get the chance to do. Playing an instrument helps you gain good listening skills. Listeing over and over again to their instrument or music they are able to play any song by ear because they have the tunes stuck in their head. They are able to start playing a song they might not know how to play but once they start playing it's like they knew how to play it before.

Playing an instrument also helps you work on good posture since playing a instrument requires you to sit up straight on the edge of your chair. Sitting up straight can reduce back pain, and help you move around more.

Learning how to play an instrument is a great tool/skill to have. Playing an instrument can set you up for success in many areas whether its a better education, helping reduce stress or the basic skills in life. People should really consider playing an instrument because yes it will be alot of practice and hard work but in the end it will be worth it.

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Sample Essay 5 – Scoring Notes

Trait	Score	Scoring Notes
Prompt Task	5	The response provides thoughtful context for the explanation (<i>Almost everyone has played an instrument when they were younger. They either stuck with it or passed it by never looking back. The people that stuck with playing an instrument are set up for life, and the one's who stopped or never played are missing out of one of the best ways to make them more successful in life</i>), and the topic and purpose are clear from the start. Ample evidence from provided texts concerning math and reading skills, breathing and focus, listening skills, and posture is provided in support of the explanation.
Development	5	Ideas are developed with effective use of specific information to explain and support the topic and purpose (<i>In math their areaglorithims that are used where you have to find the patterns and figure out the problem. Looking over sheet music helps musicans create more connections with the brain which is a great reading skill. People who play an instrument are able to enhance their ability to proccess information</i>).
Organization	5	The introduction is well-developed and the concluding section is logical (<i>Playing an instrument can set you up for success in many areas whether its a better education, helping reduce stress or the basic skills in life</i>), and ideas are effectively organized with appropriate paragraphing in a coherent whole. The response effectively uses clauses to enhance coherence within the text (<i>While non-musicians see a person blowing into a tuba or a trombon, the musician sees it as concentrating on their breath and heart beat levels. Playing an instrument means you have only one thing to focus on, which is the instrument that you play</i>).
Language Use	5	The response uses precise and varied word choice (<i>step away from their chaotic life, it's like they knew how to play it before</i>). Sentences are effectively varied in length and complexity. A style appropriate for the designated audience is established and maintained throughout the explanation (<i>People should really consider playing an instrument because yes it will be a lot of practice and hard work but in the end it will be worth it</i>).