

SKILLS Coach
America's Best for Student Success



Write It Out

*Mastering Short and Extended Responses
to Open-Ended Questions*

LEVEL

C



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Table of Contents

To the Student	6
Introduction: Five Rules for Writing Good Answers	7
Selection: <i>Betty the Crow</i> (science)	8
1. Sentences	9
2. Line Length = Answer Length	10
3. Answer the Question	11
4. Mechanics Count	12
5. Support Your Answers	13
6. SLAMS—A Memory Gem	15
7. Scoring Rubric.	16

Part A: Writing Short Answers

Unit 1: Main Idea.	17
Lesson 1: What Makes a Good Answer?	18
Selection: <i>Welcome to the Community</i> (social studies)	18
Tools & Tips.	21
Lesson 2: Revising and Improving a Weak Answer	22
Selection: <i>A Visit to City Hall</i> (social studies).	22
Score Builder.	25
Lesson 3: Responding on Your Own.	26
Selection: <i>Untitled</i> (social studies)	26
Reader's Response! Revise & Edit.	28
Reviewing the Question.	29
Unit 2: Cause and Effect	31
Lesson 4: What Makes a Good Answer?	32
Selection: <i>Big Questions</i> (science)	32
Tools & Tips.	35
Lesson 5: Revising and Improving a Weak Answer	36
Selection: <i>Floppy Bones</i> (science).	36
Score Builder.	39
Lesson 6: Responding on Your Own.	40
Selection: <i>Hidden Rainbows</i> (science)	40
Reader's Response! Revise & Edit.	42
Reviewing the Question.	43

Revising and Improving a Weak Answer

Here is another reading selection. To answer the question that follows, you must find supporting details.

Floppy Bones

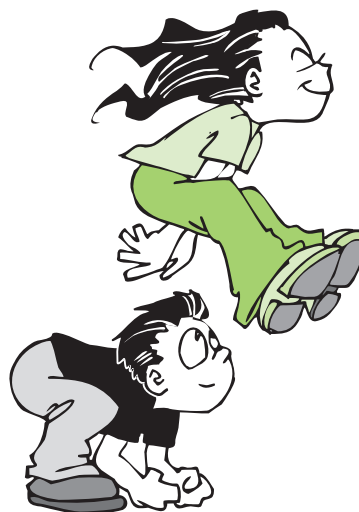
Why are we able to stand up straight? Our bones are strong! Our bones support our muscles. Without bones, we could not walk or run. Bones also protect our hearts and lungs and other organs. It is important to make sure that our bones stay strong and healthy.

Doctors tell us that calcium helps build strong bones. Calcium is a mineral. It is found in different foods. Milk and cheese have a lot of calcium. So do broccoli and other green leafy vegetables. You can even buy special orange juice with extra calcium in it.

If you want to see what happens to bones that do not get enough calcium, try this experiment. Put a clean chicken bone in a bowl. Pour vinegar into the bowl until the bone is covered with vinegar. Check the bone every day. Keep checking it for a week.

At the end of the week, take the bone out of the vinegar. Look at it. You will see that the bone has gotten smaller. Touch the bone. It will feel soft and rubbery.

What happened? The acid in the vinegar took out the calcium in the bone. The bone became weak when it lost its calcium. If we don't get enough calcium in our diets, our bones will get weak, too.



What supporting details about calcium can you find in this paragraph?

This paragraph shows a cause-and-effect relationship.

Read this question.

Why is calcium important for our bones? Support your answer with details from the selection.

Arden's Answer:

Arden wrote an answer to this question, but the answer is not very good.

I drink lots of milk. Cookies taste good with milk. Another drink I like is soda.

Improving Arden's Answer

Arden's answer would not get a good score because it does not answer the question.

- ✓ Arden did not explain why strong bones are important. Instead, Arden writes that she drinks lots of milk. Then she mentions cookies and soda.
- ✓ Arden needs to begin with a sentence that starts to answer the question. She needs to include details from the selection, too. Her answer also needs to be a bit longer. How could Arden improve her answer?

1. Arden needs to pay more attention to the question.

Read the question again. Write a new opening sentence, or topic sentence, for Arden.



The people who score the test look for the following things:

- * A clear and complete statement of cause and effect.
- * Details from the selection that support the answer.
- * Complete, correct, and interesting sentences.

2. Arden does not use many details from the selection to support her answer.
Find more details in *Floppy Bones* that support your topic sentence. Write two new sentences for Arden.

3. Arden says that she drinks lots of milk, but she does not explain how milk helps to make her bones strong and healthy.
Find the missing information in *Floppy Bones*. Write two new sentences about the connection between drinking milk and having strong bones.

4. **Combine all your sentences into one answer.**

HINT!

Make sure your answer meets all the SLAMS tests.

SCORE BUILDER

Test questions can be hard to figure out. Reading selections can have so much information! How do you know where to begin? One way to start is to use the words from the question in your topic sentence. Then add a word like *because* or *so*, and complete your answer. Complete your answer with a detail from the selection. You will be off to a great start! Here is an example.

Why did the bone get soft after sitting in vinegar?

You can write a topic sentence in several ways:

The bone got soft after sitting in vinegar because it lost its calcium.

Or:

The bone got soft after sitting in vinegar because the acid in the vinegar took the calcium away.

Try it! Read this question.

Why are foods like cheese and broccoli good for us?

Write a good beginning sentence here.
