CBEST WRITING
TIME MANAGEMENT

-N You will be given a test booklet with all three sections – Writing, Reading and Math. You may take all three sections at one sitting, or you can spend four hours on just one or two sections if you like. It is better to take your time and do one section well than to rush and not pass any. You do not need to indicate which sections you took; just hand in the entire booklet. You do not need to stay the full four hours if you finish early.
A passing score on the CBEST is combined score of 123, or 41 in each section. You may get as low as 37 in any given section if you make up the points in another section.

Example: W 37 + R 41 + M 45 = 123

Below 37 in any section is not passing for that section, no matter how well you did in other sections.
YOU WILL WRITE TWO ESSAYS

1. Personal narrative prompt – you will be asked to reflect on something specific from your past. Use first person ("I").

2. Analytical prompt – you will write about some kind of issue, and will often be asked to take a side or state an opinion. Use third person.

If you receive a passing score on only one essay, you will need to take the entire writing test again.
WRITING

SCORING CRITERIA
I. Focus on task

II. Organization

III. Supporting detail

IV. Word choice and usage

V. Grammar and mechanics

VI. Style and tone
An essay is a 4 if it is a well-formed, coherent writing sample that effectively communicates a whole message and addresses the assigned topic while aimed at a specific audience. Additionally, it has the following characteristics:

I. It has an engaging idea established with an original thesis with a central point of view that is focused and well reasoned.

II. Organization of ideas is clear and logically arranged; paragraphs are unified; there are clear transitions between paragraphs and the idea comes to a logical conclusion; meaning is clearly communicated.

III. Generalizations and assertions are well supported with relevant and specific details, reasons and examples.

IV. Word choice is precise; word usage is careful and accurate, demonstrating a command of vocabulary.

V. Sentences have complexity and variety with clear syntax, paragraphs are coherent and only minor mechanical flaws that do not impede meaning occur.

VI. The response completely addresses the topic and uses language and style appropriate for the given audience and purpose.
An essay is a 3 if it is an *adequate* writing sample that generally addresses the topic but may neglect or only vaguely address one of the assigned tasks; it is aimed at a specific audience. Additionally, it has the following characteristics:

I. It has a main idea or a central point of view, the focus is generally maintained and the response is adequately reasoned.

II. Organization of ideas is generally clear and effective; meaning is generally clear.

III. Generalizations are adequately, although unevenly supported.

IV. Word choice is adequate; mistakes exist but do not impede meaning.

V. Some errors in sentence and paragraph structure and/or mechanical conventions, but not serious or frequent enough to distract or confuse reader.

VI. The response may not fully address topic (one of the tasks may be neglected or incompletely addressed) but language and style are appropriate for the given audience and purpose.
An essay is a 2 if it is an *incompletely formed* writing sample that attempts to address the topic and to communicate a message to the assigned audience but is generally incomplete or inappropriate. Additionally, it has the following characteristics:

I. There is a main point, but it loses focus; the reasoning is simplistic.

II. Organization is ineffective; meaning lacks clarity.

III. Generalizations and assertions are only partially supported; the response contains irrelevant, insufficient or unclear details.

IV. Word choice and usage are imprecise and distracting.

V. Errors in sentence and paragraph structure and/or mechanical conventions cause distraction to the reader.

VI. The response incompletely addresses most tasks of the assignment and uses language or style inappropriate to the given audience and purpose.
An essay is a 1 if it is an inadequately formed writing sample that only marginally addresses the topic or does not address it at all, fails to communicate a message or is inappropriate for the specific audience. Additionally, it has the following characteristics:

I. It is generally incoherent, has inadequate focus, fails to state a main idea and contains illogical reasoning.
II. Organization of ideas is ineffective and seriously flawed; meaning is unclear throughout.
III. Generalizations and assertions are not supported or are severely underdeveloped; details are irrelevant and presented in a confusing manner.
IV. Word choice and usage are generally imprecise, with serious and distracting errors.
V. Serious and numerous errors in mechanics, sentence structure, paragraphing and syntax.
VI. The response demonstrates little or no understanding of the assigned tasks and uses language or style inappropriate for the audience and purpose.
GUIDELINES FOR TIMED WRITING
STEPS TO FOLLOW

- Read prompt and underline key words
- Make a **brief** outline
- Write essay
- Proofread and revise
UNDERSTAND THE TOPIC

- Circle words that indicate the topic of the question.
- Circle selectively, highlighting only those that are absolutely needed and being sure not to neglect key words.
- Glance back at these circled words while writing the essay to double-check that you are remaining on topic.
UNDERSTAND THE TASK

- Underline the task. The task will often use directives, usually in the form of imperative (command) verbs.

- First identify and underline the imperative verbs.

- Then underline any other essential words that clearly delineate the task.
Common Directives:

- Analyze – Divide the subject into its component parts and present a more in depth look at each part and then explain how each relates to the whole.
- Compare – Develop the similarities between one subject and another.
- Contrast – Explore the difference between two subjects, explaining the importance of the ways they are not alike.
- Define – Establish boundaries for or set limits on a subject. Tell what the subject is by differentiating it from other closely related subjects. Tell what it is not.
Describe – Paint a word picture with sensory details.

Discuss – Literally “talk about” the subject. Be sure to create a thesis that will steer you away from vagueness. Illuminate a specific territory that you can support with details.

Evaluate – Explore the value of the subject. Use relevant criteria to judge the worth of the subject.

Explain – Show or make clear, establish connections, tell why, how or what, depending on the subject.
Identify – Distinguish and list the various parts of the subject.

Illustrate – Explain by example and detail.

Interpret – Share your understanding of the subject. Explain the significance of the idea, event or process in order to explain its meaning.

Summarize – Explain the subject briefly in your own words. Generally this directive is used to prompt you to demonstrate your command of certain facts or ideas.
PRACTICE PROMPTS
PERSONAL PROMPTS
Unexpected challenges in our lives sometimes bring out the best in us. For example, we act heroically or courageously in emergencies, we are charitable when disasters affect our friends, or we are unselfish and patient when misfortune strikes our friends or relatives. Pick an instance in your own life when such a challenge stimulated in you a response that pleased you. Describe the situation, explain how you responded, and tell what you learned about yourself from the experience.
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There are times when one’s principles or beliefs are tested by circumstances. One may be opposed to lying, for instance, but be tempted to lie or actually lie in order to spare another person’s feelings. Describe a situation in which one of your principles or beliefs was tested by circumstances, explain how you handled the situation, and tell why you now think your behavior was or was not correct.
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ANALYTICAL PROMPTS
There is a current trend in the United States toward smaller families. Sociologists attribute the decline in childbearing to many factors, including the dramatic rise of women in the work force, delayed marriage, divorce, and the high cost of raising and educating children. Discuss your view of the smaller family size and how it may affect future American society.
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The minimum wage in America has been the subject of debate for many years. Many people argue we should be careful about sharp increases in the minimum wage because of the resulting inflation (higher labor costs equal higher consumer prices) and layoffs. Others believe the minimum wage is too low to support a family and should be raised to keep up with the cost of living. Write an essay analyzing and evaluating these opposing views on the minimum wage. You may include personal experience, knowledge, or observations.
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SKETCH A PLAN/OUTLINE
There are times when one’s principles or beliefs are tested by circumstances. One may be opposed to lying, for instance, but be tempted to lie or actually lie in order to spare another person’s feelings. Describe a situation in which one of your principles or beliefs was tested by circumstances, explain how you handled the situation, and tell why you now think your behavior was or was not correct.
First write down the directives of the prompt.

- Situation where principles tested
- How I handled the situation
- Why my behavior was not correct
FILL OUT OUTLINE

– Situation where principles tested
  Failing algebra – Mom said to cheat

– How I handled the situation
  Sat next to the smartest kid and copied his tests

– why my behavior was not correct
  Wrong to cheat even though Mom said to
Using the outline, create your introductory, body and concluding paragraphs.

Use pencil and minimize the size of your handwriting. You have very little space.
INTRODUCTION IS IMPORTANT

- You want to give a good first impression of your writing and create a good focus for the essay.

- When writing the introduction, pretend your reader has not read the prompt. Be sure the topic word(s) appear in the introduction and try to completely answer the prompt (bottom line).
Sometimes in life our principles are tested. When I was in ninth grade, I got a “D” on my progress report for algebra. I came home crying because I had never gotten a “D” and could not understand algebra, no matter how hard I tried. My mother told me to cheat. I knew it was wrong to cheat, but I did anyway, telling myself it was acceptable to do so because my mother gave me permission.
Remember to keep glancing back at the question to make sure you stay focused on the task.

Remember to keep glancing back at your outline to make sure you are following your plan.
In a timed writing situation, you may not be able to put in every last detail that relates to the subject. Wisely choose which details are needed in order to accomplish the task and leave extraneous detail out.

Conversely, if you find you are repeating yourself, stop and try to think of additional supporting detail to develop and prove your thesis. You don’t want to waste time or space repeating yourself.
REVISE AND POLISH

- First ask yourself if you have answered the question clearly and completely.

- Add in whatever might be missing.

- Remember that timed writing is not judged on neatness, but on accomplishment of the task. Also, you are given very little space. Write small and squeeze in as much as you can.
Next carefully proofread read sentence-by-sentence, checking for misspelled words or grammatical errors.

Check for subject/verb agreement, consistent tense, word choice, spelling and punctuation.
GRAMMAR TIPS

- Avoid second person (YOU)
- Keep tense consistent
- Proofread from the capital letter to the period with each sentence to make sure sentences are complete and there are no fragments or run-ons