

## **California State University English Placement Test (EPT) Holistic Scoring Guide**

**The categories of each score are consistent with the following legend:**

- a) = response to the topic
- b) = understanding and use of the passage
- c) = quality and clarity of thought
- d) = organization, development, and support
- e) = syntax and command of language
- f) = grammar, usage, and mechanics

### **Score of 6: Superior**

**A “6” essay is superior writing, but may have minor flaws. A typical essay at this level is characterized by these features:**

- a) addresses the topic clearly and responds effectively to all aspects of the task
- b) demonstrates a thorough critical understanding of the passage in developing an insightful response
- c) explores the issues thoughtfully and in depth
- d) is coherently organized and developed, with ideas supported by apt reasons and well-chosen examples
- e) has an effective, fluent style marked by syntactic variety and a clear command of language
- f) is generally free from errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics

### **Score of 5: Strong**

**A “5” essay demonstrates clear competence in writing. It may have some errors, but they are not serious enough to distract or confuse the reader. A typical essay at this level is characterized by these features:**

- a) addresses the topic clearly, but may respond to some aspects of the task more effectively than others
- b) demonstrates a sound critical understanding of the passage in developing a well reasoned response
- c) shows some depth and complexity of thought
- d) is well organized and developed, with ideas supported by appropriate reasons and examples
- e) displays some syntactic variety and facility in the use of language
- f) may have a few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics

### **Score of 4: Adequate**

**A “4” essay demonstrates adequate writing. It may have some errors that distract the reader, but they do not significantly obscure meaning. A typical essay at this level is characterized by these features:**

- a) addresses the topic, but may slight some aspects of the task
- b) demonstrates a generally accurate understanding of the passage in developing a sensible response
- c) may treat the topic simplistically or repetitively
- d) is adequately organized and developed, generally supporting ideas with reasons and examples
- e) demonstrates adequate use of syntax and language
- f) may have some errors, but generally demonstrates control of grammar, usage, and mechanics

**Score of 3: Marginal**

**A “3” essay demonstrates developing competence, but is flawed in some significant way(s).**

**A typical essay at this level reveals *one or more* of the following weaknesses:**

- a) distorts or neglects aspects of the task
- b) demonstrates some understanding of the passage, but may misconstrue parts of it or make limited use of it in developing a weak response
- c) lacks focus, or demonstrates confused or simplistic thinking
- d) is poorly organized and developed, presenting generalizations without adequate and appropriate support or presenting details without generalizations
- e) has limited control of syntax and vocabulary
- f) has an accumulation of errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that sometimes interfere with meaning

**Score of 2: Very Weak**

**A “2” essay is seriously flawed. A typical essay at this level reveals *one or more* of the following weaknesses:**

- a) indicates confusion about the topic or neglects important aspects of the task
- b) demonstrates very poor understanding of the main points of the passage, does not use the passage appropriately in developing a response, or may not use the passage at all
- c) lacks focus and coherence, and often fails to communicate its ideas
- d) has very weak organization and development, providing simplistic generalizations without support
- e) has inadequate control of syntax and vocabulary
- f) is marred by numerous errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that frequently interfere with meaning

**Score of 1: Incompetent**

**A “1” essay demonstrates fundamental deficiencies in writing skills. A typical essay at this level reveals *one or more* of the following weaknesses:**

- a) suggests an inability to comprehend the question or to respond meaningfully to the topic
- b) demonstrates little or no ability to understand the passage or to use it in developing a response
- c) is unfocused, illogical, or incoherent
- d) is disorganized and undeveloped, providing little or no relevant support
- e) lacks basic control of syntax and vocabulary
- f) has serious and persistent errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that severely interfere with meaning

Readers should not penalize ESL writers excessively for slight shifts in idiom, problems with articles, confusion over prepositions, and *occasional* misuse of verb tense and verb forms, so long as such features do not obscure meaning.