A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a hand holding a yellow pencil, poised to write on a white surface. The background is out of focus, showing more of the hand and the paper.

How to Answer Constructed Response Questions

Writing Practice

Constructed Response Questions:

- **Ask you to apply your knowledge and understanding in a short written answer.**
- **On standardized tests, these short written answers are scored as 0,1,2,3, or 4 points.**
- **A full 4 point response answers all 4 parts of the question, usually two, two-part questions.**

Let's look at some examples:
(We will start out with simple examples.)

- **Question: What are two characteristics of mammals? Give two examples.**
- **Two characteristics of mammals are they are warm-blooded (1 point) and give birth to their young(2 points). Two examples of mammals are humans (3 points) and bears (4 points).**

Another example:

- **Name two kinds of overhead serves in volleyball. Explain the benefits of using each one.**
- *Tip: Identify the four parts of the question.*
- **Answer: Two kinds of overhead serves are the top spin and the floater. Top spin would be used for speed projection and the floater for height.**
- *Tip: Count the four parts of the answer.*

Writing Tips for Your Response:

Prewriting:

- Read the entire prompt.
- Identify and underline key words in the question, such as: *explain, elaborate, illustrate.*
- Restate the prompt in your own words to be sure that you understand it.

Prewriting, continued.

- **Make a list of the items you are supposed to identify in your answer.**
- **Make a list of reasons that will support your answer.**

Writing:

- **Use the question to form your topic sentence. (Use the same terms in the question for the first sentence of your paragraph answer!)**
- **Make sure you include all FOUR parts of the question in your answer. Remember, you get a point for each part you answer correctly!**

Writing, continued:

- **Make sure you EXPLAIN each item with a concrete detail—something specific!**

Another example:

The sky is low

THE sky is low, the clouds are
mean,

A travelling flake of snow

Across a barn or through a
rut

Debates if it will go.

A narrow wind complains all
day

How some one treated him;

Nature, like us, is sometimes
caught

Without her diadem.

– Emily Dickinson

- Question: How does the word "person" give you a clue as to the meaning of personification? Why do you think a writer would want to use personification in a poem? List two examples of personification found in the poem at left.

- *Answer: The word “person” lets me know that personification means that some object in the poem has qualities or actions like a person. (1 point) A poet might use personification to help us feel a relationship to the object. (2 points) “The clouds are mean” (3 points) and “narrow wind complains” (4 points) are both examples of personification.*

- As you see, these are “short answer questions” and are not meant to be answered as an essay.
- Identify the four parts of the question asked, then make sure that your response answers each of the four parts.
- No answer at all gets 0 points!
- Answering 1 part of the question correctly counts as 1 point, 2 parts = 2 points, and so on.



Now you try one alone:

- **Name your two favorite teachers and give a reason why each one is your favorite.**

- Share your answer with a partner near you.
- Check your partner's answer.
 - Does the answer begin with restating the question?
 - Has your partner answered all four parts of the question?
 - Score the answer 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4 according to completeness.

- Is the answer explained with specific details?**
- Give your partner feedback about their response.**
- Tell your partner how they could have scored more points or explained their answer better.**

Another example:


- **Explain the difference between general and specific goals. Give examples of each in your explanation.**

- Share your answer with a partner near you.
- Check your partner's answer.
 - Does the answer begin with restating the question?
 - Has your partner answered all four parts of the question?
 - Score the answer 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4 according to completeness.

- Is the answer explained with specific details?**
- Give your partner feedback about their response.**
- Tell your partner how they could have scored more points or explained their answer better.**

Remember:

- **Never leave the answer on the constructed response questions blank; this will get zero points!**
- **Always attempt to answer the question.**
- **Every part of a correct answer equals 1 point. Try to answer all four parts.**
- **Good luck!**



**think - to exercise the
powers of judgment,
conception, or inference**