
NSW Selective Writing Prompts

44 practice prompts across every genre the test can set, each with three starter tips. Built for timed, at-home practice, with a tips-off page at the back for exam-real reps.

Narrative · Persuasive · Informative | 44 prompts

Put together by a Sydney parent preparing his own child for the test.

Free to share and print. These are original practice prompts written in the style of the NSW Selective writing test. No official exam papers or sample answers are reproduced.

eurekawrite.com

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How to use these prompts

The real test is one 30-minute typed response, completed under timed conditions, with no outside help. The closer your practice is to that, the more it counts.

1. **Set a 30-minute timer** and pick one prompt. Spend two minutes planning a beginning, middle and end before writing.
2. **Write it in one sitting**, typed if you can (the real test is on a computer, with no spellcheck).
3. **Get an estimated practice score and feedback** against the six dimensions below, then rewrite once, fixing the two things that cost the most.
4. **Rotate purposes and forms.** Do not only practise narratives; the test can ask students to write for different purposes, audiences and text types.

The three tips are training wheels. Use them on the first prompts, then cover them and plan for yourself. The final page lists every prompt with no tips, for exactly that. And aim for roughly **350–450 words**, the range that scored highest across 200+ real essays we analysed.

What a practice score looks at, out of 25:

Set A — Content & shaping	15
Content & Detail	0–5
Structure & Cohesion	0–5
Style, Vocabulary & Register	0–5

Set B — Sentence craft	10
Sentence Variety & Control	0–4
Punctuation	0–3
Spelling	0–3

This six-dimension breakdown is EurekaWrite's teaching model of the official criteria, not the Department's marking rubric. The official test information and sample tasks are on the NSW Education selective high schools page; our full plain-English breakdown is at eurekawrite.com/guides/nsw-selective-writing-marking-criteria.

The fastest way to score a practice piece: paste it into eurekawrite.com. It returns an estimated practice score across all six dimensions in about 30 seconds, quotes the exact lines it is talking about, and shows the sentence-level fixes, free. One thing it rewards: writing that is easy to follow, not just full of big words.

Before you paste anything online: remove your child's full name, school name and any other personal details from the practice writing first.

Stories, recounts, diary entries. Markers reward a clear arc, vivid specific detail, and an ending that lands, not fancy words for their own sake.

Set a 30-minute timer and write one as if it were the real test. Plan for two minutes first: a beginning, a turn, and an ending you are aiming at.

RECOUNT / NARRATIVE / CREATIVE

01

The Day the Power Went Out

Write about an experience when your entire neighbourhood lost power for a day.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Describe how you first noticed the power outage and what you were doing.
- Share the challenges you faced and how you adapted.
- Reflect on what you learned or how you felt about living without electricity.

DIARY ENTRY

02

The Day I Became Invisible

Imagine you wake up one day and discover you've become invisible. Write a diary entry about how your day unfolds.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Explain how you discovered your invisibility and how you felt.
- Share the adventures or mischief you got up to.
- Reflect on whether being invisible was as fun as you expected.

DIARY ENTRY

03

A Day in a Floating City

Imagine that your family has moved to a floating city above the clouds. Write a diary entry about your first day in this extraordinary new home.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Describe the unique environment, architecture, and transportation methods in the floating city.
- Explain your feelings and reactions to living in such a futuristic setting.
- Reflect on how this new life compares with your old life on solid ground.

The Unlucky Lucky Coin

A classmate lends you an old coin that's rumoured to bring "luck with a twist." Every wish comes true, but never quite as expected. Tell the story of one school day holding the coin.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Show the first "lucky" wish and its hilarious or chaotic twist.
- Describe how each wish pushes you toward a bigger problem.
- Decide whether to keep, return, or destroy the coin by the final bell.

The Whisper in the Recycling Bin

During a lunchtime clean-up you hear a faint whisper coming from the paper-recycling bin asking to be "set free."

TRAINING WHEELS

- Describe your decision to investigate, or ignore, the strange voice.
- Explain what you discover hidden among the crumpled worksheets.
- Show how the event changes the way you see ordinary school objects.

Auto-Homework Drone

"My drone dropped the maths worksheet onto Miss Patel's desk, then performed an unexpected loop-the-loop out the open window." Use or develop this opening.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Describe its unpredictable flight path across town.
- Explain the mix-up it causes when it delivers a different item to the principal.
- Show your frantic decision to retrieve or re-program it before class ends.

The Wrong Door

You are at a science museum on a school excursion when you accidentally open a door marked "Staff Only." You step inside, and it's definitely not a storage room. Write a story that begins with this event.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Describe what you discover behind the door.
- Show how you get involved in a strange situation.
- Decide whether you stay or escape.

Five Minutes to Freeze Time

Your eccentric science teacher hands you a small remote and whispers, “Press this once, you’ll have exactly five minutes where the world stops except for you.” Write a story that begins the moment you press the button.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Explain why you decide to test the device during lunchtime.
- Describe the frozen scene and your actions while the timer ticks down.
- Reveal an unexpected consequence as the world jolts back into motion.

The Photograph at the Back of the Drawer

Write a story with the title 'The Photograph at the Back of the Drawer'.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Decide who found the photograph, and why it had been hidden.
- Use one strong sensory detail to bring the photograph to life.
- Let the discovery change something for your character by the end.

The Lift That Kept Going Down

Continue this story from the opening line: 'The lift kept going down after we'd already pressed the ground-floor button.'

TRAINING WHEELS

- Build the tension slowly, one floor at a time.
- Show your character's fear through actions, not the word 'scared'.
- Decide what is really at the bottom before you start writing.

When Someone You Trusted Let You Down

Tell the story of a moment when someone you trusted let you down, and what you did next.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Pick one specific moment, not a long history.
- Show the trust before you show it breaking.
- End on what changed, not just what happened.

The Last One Out

Write a story with the title 'The Last One Out'.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Decide what your character is the last one out of, and why it matters.
- Use the empty space around them to build the mood.
- Make the ending pay off the title.

Something You Were Never Meant to Find

A character discovers something they were never meant to find. Tell the story of what happens in the next hour.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Keep the whole story inside one hour, so the pace stays tight.
- Show the discovery, then the first decision it forces.
- Raise the stakes once before you resolve it.

The Door at the End of the Hall

Continue this story from the opening line: 'I'd lived in that house for eleven years before I noticed the door at the end of the hall.'

TRAINING WHEELS

- Explain, briefly, how the door went unnoticed for so long.
- Slow right down at the moment the door opens.
- Decide whether your character goes through it, and own that choice.

A Single Bus Journey Home

Write a story set entirely during a single bus journey home.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Use the stops along the way to structure the story.
- Let one small event on the bus carry the whole piece.
- Keep the setting consistent: you never leave the bus.

The Small Lie That Grew

Tell the story of a small lie that grew bigger than expected.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Start with a lie so small it feels harmless.
- Show each step that makes it grow, not just the result.
- Decide whether the truth comes out, and how.

The Day Something Small Changed

Write a diary entry about a day when something small changed the way you thought about a person.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Use the honest, personal voice of a real diary.
- Focus on one small moment, not the whole day.
- Show the change in how you see the person by the end.

Looking Back, What I Got Wrong

Write a reflective piece that begins with the line: 'Looking back, the thing I got wrong was...'

TRAINING WHEELS

- Be specific about what you got wrong, and when.
- Show what you believed at the time versus now.
- Reflect without slipping into a lecture.

Brave or Reckless?

Write a personal piece exploring the question: what's the difference between being brave and being reckless?

TRAINING WHEELS

- Anchor the idea in one real or imagined example.
- Show both sides before you land on your view.
- Use your own voice, not a textbook definition.

A Diary Entry Ten Years From Now

Write a diary entry set ten years from now, on the morning of an ordinary day in the life you hope to be living.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Make the ordinary details specific: breakfast, the commute, the view.
- Let the small details hint at the bigger life.
- Keep the tone everyday, not a grand speech about the future.

What a Book Taught Me About Someone Real

Write a short reflective article on what your favourite book taught you about a person you know in real life.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Connect one idea from the book to one real person.
- Use a specific scene from the book, not a summary.
- End on what you understand now that you didn't before.

Letters, speeches, opinion pieces, advertisements. Take a clear position, back each reason with a concrete example, and keep the reader following you the whole way.

Before writing, decide your one-line position and your three strongest reasons. A persuasive piece is only as good as its most specific example.

PERSUASIVE WRITING

22

Support Our Local Animal Shelter

Your local animal shelter is running out of supplies and needs donations. Write an email to your community persuading them to help.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Explain why the animal shelter is important and who it helps.
- List the types of donations needed (e.g., food, blankets, money).
- Share ideas for how the community can get involved, like hosting a fundraiser.

ADVERTISEMENT / PERSUASIVE

23

Meet the SuperSipper!

A brand-new water bottle, called the SuperSipper, claims to keep drinks cool for hours and comes with fun designs for kids. You have been asked to create an advertisement for a local community newsletter, convincing students and families to buy it.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Describe the key features of the SuperSipper (long-lasting chill, leak-proof seal, colourful styles).
- Explain how it benefits busy students, sports players, or families on the go.
- Persuade readers to purchase by including special offers (e.g., discount, free personalisation) and where to find it.

SPEECH / PRESENTATION

24

Reimagining the School Canteen

You're a student representative assigned to create a new canteen menu that is both healthy and appealing. Write a speech to deliver at the next assembly, detailing your vision and narrating a day where students enjoy these new meals.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Open with a short fictional story: "It's lunchtime, and everyone's excited to try the new fresh fruit smoothies and veggie wraps..."
- Highlight reasons these changes benefit student health, academic focus, and overall morale.
- Conclude by inviting feedback and pledging to incorporate student ideas, making the canteen a place everyone loves.

A New Adventure Park

The city council is planning to build an adventure park and is asking for ideas. Write a proposal recommending what the park should include.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Suggest activities and attractions that would make the park exciting.
- Explain how these features would benefit families and young people.
- Describe how to make the park environmentally friendly and safe.

Should Students Choose Their Own Subjects?

Should primary school students be allowed to choose half of their own subjects? Write a piece arguing your view.

TRAINING WHEELS

- State your position clearly in the first paragraph.
- Give two or three reasons, each with a specific example.
- Answer the strongest objection to your view.

Should Competitive Sports Days Stay?

Your school is deciding whether to remove competitive sports days. Write a letter to the principal arguing your position.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Use a respectful, formal tone for the principal.
- Lead with your strongest argument.
- Offer a practical compromise if it helps your case.

Should Children Be Paid for Chores?

Some people say children should be paid for doing chores at home. Write a piece for the school newsletter giving your view.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Pick a side, even if you can see both.
- Back each reason with a concrete example.
- Keep the newsletter audience (students and parents) in mind.

Should AI Be Allowed for Homework?

Write an opinion piece for a youth website arguing whether AI tools should be allowed for homework.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Define what you mean by 'allowed', all of it or some of it?
- Use a real example of helpful versus harmful use.
- Finish with a clear recommendation.

Save the Weekend Library

Your local council is considering closing the public library on weekends to save money. Write a letter persuading them to reconsider.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Acknowledge the council's money problem, then answer it.
- Show who weekend closing would hurt, with a specific example.
- Offer an alternative the council could accept.

Should Everyone Learn an Instrument?

Should every student be required to learn a musical instrument? Write a piece arguing your view.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Decide whether 'required' is the part you agree or disagree with.
- Use evidence a reader can picture, not just 'studies show'.
- Address the cost or time objection.

Articles, reports, advice sheets, reviews, discussions. Pick the right form for the audience, organise it clearly, and make every point easy to follow.

Read the task twice and underline the required form and audience. Answering in the wrong form costs marks even when the writing is strong.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

32

Alien Sightings Spark Panic in Town

Reports have emerged about strange lights and unidentified flying objects in the night sky over your town. Write a newspaper article reporting this event.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Explain what happened and where the sightings occurred.
- Include quotes from witnesses about what they saw.
- Discuss what experts are saying about these strange events.

ADVICE SHEET

33

How to Survive Your First Day at a New School

Write an advice sheet for students who are nervous about starting at a new school.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Offer tips on how to make friends and settle into a new environment.
- Suggest strategies to overcome nerves and make the first day easier.
- Share your own experiences to make the advice relatable and encouraging.

ADVICE SHEET

34

How to Prepare for Your First Camping Trip

Going on a camping trip can be exciting, but some students might not know what to expect. Write an advice sheet to help beginners prepare for their first camping experience.

TRAINING WHEELS

- List essential items to pack.
- Give tips on staying safe and comfortable outdoors.
- Suggest fun activities to enjoy during the trip.

Our School Library

Your teacher has asked you to write an information report about the school library for a newsletter aimed at new students.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Describe the layout of the library (e.g., sections for fiction, non-fiction, reference materials).
- Explain how students borrow books and the benefits of regular reading.
- Include details on any special services (e.g., study areas, reading clubs, computer access) and library rules.

Interview with an Extraterrestrial Guest

A highly advanced alien ambassador from a distant planet has landed in your hometown for a cultural exchange. You've been asked to conduct an interview for your school's online magazine. Write your interview article.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Describe how this alien made contact and what surprises it about Earth.
- Ask about its home planet, including the inhabitants' daily life, technology, and beliefs.
- Find out how the ambassador views human society, and any advice it has for achieving peace or progress here on Earth.

A World Without Robots

For years, robots have been handling daily tasks, from cleaning houses to doing homework. Suddenly, every robot around the globe stops working. Your teacher has asked you to write a piece explaining how society reacts and adapts to this event.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Describe the immediate challenges people face when robots stop functioning.
- Reflect on any unexpected benefits or positive outcomes that emerge.
- Explain how individuals and the community might adapt in daily life, discussing how people feel about taking on tasks themselves again.

Sweet Scoop: Is It Worth the Hype?

A brand-new ice cream café, called Sweet Scoop, has just opened in your neighbourhood. You visited last weekend, and your teacher has asked you to write a review for your school newspaper.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Describe the range of flavours, atmosphere, and overall theme of the café.
- Evaluate the strengths (e.g., taste, friendly staff, price) and weaknesses (e.g., long queues, limited seating).
- Recommend who might enjoy this place and whether it's worth trying.

Discovering Our School Garden

Your school garden is a hidden gem filled with various plants, flowers, and vegetables. Write an information report for the school newsletter that details the garden's layout, the types of plants grown, and how it benefits the school community.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Describe the garden's features (e.g., flower beds, vegetable patches, seating areas).
- Explain the benefits of the garden for both the environment and learning (e.g., hands-on science, outdoor classes).
- Include quotes from teachers or students about why the garden is valuable.

Surviving the First Week of High School

Write an advice sheet for a Year 6 student about how to handle the first week of high school.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Group your advice under clear headings or steps.
- Make each tip specific and doable, not 'just be confident'.
- Use a warm, direct voice that speaks to the reader.

How a New Student Can Settle In

Write a short article for the school newsletter explaining how a new student can settle in.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Open by telling the reader what the article will help with.
- Give practical, ordered steps.
- Keep the tone informative, not a personal story.

How to Study for a Test

Write an email to a younger cousin explaining how to study for a test they're worried about.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Use a friendly email opening and sign-off.
- Break studying into a few clear, manageable steps.
- Reassure them while still being specific.

A Community Event That Surprised Everyone

Write a news report about a community event that went unexpectedly well. You may invent the event.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Lead with the key facts: what, where, when, who.
- Include a quote from someone who was there.
- Keep it factual and balanced, not an opinion piece.

Introducing a Guest Speaker on Kindness

Write a speech for your school assembly introducing a guest speaker on the topic of kindness. You may invent the speaker.

TRAINING WHEELS

- Open in a way that gets a hall full of students to listen.
- Tell the audience who the speaker is and why they matter.
- Hand over to the speaker with a strong closing line.

Tips off: the exam-real set

Same 44 prompts, no starter tips. Once your child has warmed up, work from this page: pick one, set the timer, plan it yourself. This is what the real test looks like, a prompt and a blank page.

Narrative & Creative

01 RECOUNT / NARRATIVE / CREATIVE

The Day the Power Went Out

02 DIARY ENTRY

The Day I Became Invisible

03 DIARY ENTRY

A Day in a Floating City

04 RECOUNT / NARRATIVE / CREATIVE

The Unlucky Lucky Coin

05 RECOUNT / NARRATIVE / CREATIVE

The Whisper in the Recycling Bin

06 RECOUNT / NARRATIVE / CREATIVE

Auto-Homework Drone

07 RECOUNT / NARRATIVE / CREATIVE

The Wrong Door

08 RECOUNT / NARRATIVE / CREATIVE

Five Minutes to Freeze Time

09 NARRATIVE

The Photograph at the Back of the Drawer

10 NARRATIVE

The Lift That Kept Going Down

11 NARRATIVE

When Someone You Trusted Let You Down

12 NARRATIVE

The Last One Out

13 NARRATIVE

Something You Were Never Meant to Find

14 NARRATIVE

The Door at the End of the Hall

15 NARRATIVE

A Single Bus Journey Home

16 NARRATIVE

The Small Lie That Grew

17 DIARY ENTRY

The Day Something Small Changed

18 REFLECTIVE

Looking Back, What I Got Wrong

19 REFLECTIVE / PERSONAL

Brave or Reckless?

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21 REFLECTIVE ARTICLE

What a Book Taught Me About Someone Real

Persuasive

22 PERSUASIVE WRITING

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23 ADVERTISEMENT / PERSUASIVE

Meet the SuperSipper!

24 SPEECH / PRESENTATION

Reimagining the School Canteen

25 EMAIL PROPOSAL

A New Adventure Park

26 PERSUASIVE WRITING

Should Students Choose Their Own Subjects?

27 PERSUASIVE LETTER

Should Competitive Sports Days Stay?

28 PERSUASIVE WRITING

Should Children Be Paid for Chores?

29 OPINION PIECE

Should AI Be Allowed for Homework?

30 PERSUASIVE LETTER

Save the Weekend Library

31 PERSUASIVE WRITING

Should Everyone Learn an Instrument?

Informative & Discursive

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33 ADVICE SHEET

How to Survive Your First Day at a New School

34 ADVICE SHEET

How to Prepare for Your First Camping Trip

35 INFORMATION ARTICLE

Our School Library

36 NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

Interview with an Extraterrestrial Guest

37 DISCURSIVE / DISCUSSION

A World Without Robots

38 REVIEW / PERSONAL RESPONSE

Sweet Scoop: Is It Worth the Hype?

39 INFORMATION ARTICLE

Discovering Our School Garden

40 ADVICE SHEET

Surviving the First Week of High School

41 INFORMATION ARTICLE

How a New Student Can Settle In

42 EMAIL

How to Study for a Test

43 NEWS REPORT

A Community Event That Surprised Everyone

44 SPEECH

Introducing a Guest Speaker on Kindness

Practise any of these and see the score

A prompt is only half the practice loop. The real improvement comes from seeing where a response is clear, where it loses control, and what to fix in the rewrite.

Paste any piece your child writes into eurekawrite.com for a free estimated score across the same six dimensions, with the exact lines quoted and sentence-level fixes shown. No sign-up needed to try it.

Before the rewrite, ask five questions

- Did the response answer the exact prompt, in the form it asked for?
- Can a first-time reader follow it easily, start to finish?
- Are there specific details and examples, not just general statements?
- Do sentence, punctuation or spelling slips distract from the meaning?
- What are the top two fixes to make before writing it again?

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