Part Three
The Writing Test
W2: RESPONDING TO SURVEY QUESTIONS
This task requires you to decide between two options and then to explain your choice in writing. The prompt is made up of two parts; first, you are provided with some details about an imaginary situation. The second part of the prompt presents the two choices in the survey.

You will have to thoughtfully evaluate the pros and cons (good points and bad points) of two offered choices and write persuasively about why your choice works best for you. For each reason that you provide, give at least one example that supports your thinking. Be aware that this task assesses your ability to think and express reasoned opinions.

The topic of the opinion survey will be related to something that matters to most people living in Canada. For most people, these will be topics that are easy to understand and relate to their daily lives. It should be fairly easy to imagine yourself in the situation described in the first part of the prompt. In the prompt above, for example, would you rather have more money or better medical services? Remember that it doesn’t matter which choice you write about; what matters is that you explain to the reader why this is the best choice for you.
Task 2: Responding to Survey Questions (30 minutes)

You work in a small company. The company is considering a new health plan. However, it can only use this health plan if everyone on the staff participates. The company has sent out an opinion survey to see what the staff members think about the plan.

Health Plan Survey

Old Plan: You use 1% of your salary to pay for a health plan. The health plan will cover some dental costs and 50% of your prescription medicine costs (i.e., the cost of medicines that a doctor orders for you).

New Plan: You use 3% of your salary to pay for a health plan. The health plan will cover all dental costs, all prescription medication, and many other extra services such as glasses, physiotherapy (i.e., treatment for sports injuries), and so on.

Choose the option that you prefer. Explain the reasons for your choice. Why do you prefer your choice? What problems are there with the other choice? Write 150-200 words.
Responding to the prompt

- Read: As you read the choices, imagine that you actually work at the company described in the first part. This may help you make a choice. Carefully review all the information provided in the prompt to help you prepare an appropriate response.
- Brainstorm and Choose:
- Remember, there is no right choice and there is no wrong choice. You are free to choose the option that would work best for you provided you can explain, in writing, the reasons for your choice. You cannot lose marks for making a wrong choice. You gain marks for giving good reasons for your choice.
- Quickly evaluate the pros and cons for each choice. If you don’t have a preference, choose the one that you feel you can write about most effectively and persuasively.
Writing your response - First Draft:

- Organize and Plan: Plan what you want to write. Which reasons will you include in your response? Why does the other choice not work for you? List your reasons and decide how you want to organize them.
- As you write your response, focus on putting together a convincing argument to support your choice. To be convincing, you need to communicate your ideas clearly and meaningfully.
- Observe the tone of your writing and make sure it is appropriate for workplace communication. Phrases such as “hey, sister” and “how are you doing?” are examples of very informal expressions that are not appropriate in written workplace communication.
- Think about your paragraphing. Unrelated ideas should be in separate paragraphs, but related ideas can be grouped together into one paragraph. Transitions and connectors can be used to good effect within and between paragraphs as well.
- Reword and Rephrase: You may need to use a few key words or phrases from the prompt, but try to find other ways to communicate those ideas when you can.
- Choose vocabulary that effectively communicates exactly what you mean. Weak word choices will not be as useful in communicating precise meaning.
- Watch the Clock: You have a total of 30 minutes, but leave 5 minutes to edit your work at the end.
- Keep track of your word count as you write; you can always delete some things later if you have written too much or add something else if your response is too short.
Editing your response - Final Draft:

- Leave at least 5 minutes at the end to review your work and fix problems with grammar, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, paragraphing, logic, and organization.
- Even native speakers can make careless mistakes. When you edit your work, imagine that you are a rater and look for weak spots that you can improve on.
Sample Response: Responding to Survey Questions

Here is an actual response from a CELPIP-General test taker. Look at the response and the rater’s comments that follow to help you understand how to score well on Task 2.

Note: this test taker selected choice #1

I would like to choose the old plan in which I use only 1% of my salary to pay for this health plan. In this health plan, only some dental costs and 50% of my prescription medicine costs are covered.

The reason is that if all costs are covered, we will not take care of our own health by doing, e.g., exercising, eating sensibly, brushing teeth 3 times a day, sleeping early and thinking positively to achieve a healthy mind. If all the health services are free, we tend to abuse it and overuse it. The result is that we get sick more often and the health care plan cannot maintain its quality of services at the end.

When we have to pay certain fees of the health care, we tend to do our own part to keep ourselves in good shape in order to avoid to pay for doctors’ visits, medicine and hospital stay.

I believe in that the government, the health teams, and also ourselves are all important and responsible in the goal of achieving good health, longevity and harmony in this country.

Word Count: 185 words
How do they analyze your answer?

The rater’s first impression is that this test taker has strong writing skills because he uses high-level vocabulary and good sentence structure, and he clearly communicates his ideas. However, has he responded fully to the prompt and provided enough relevant supporting information?

COHERENCE/Meaning: The ideas here are well organized, since each topic has its own paragraph and the order of the ideas is logical. The response is meaningful, with very occasional expression of deeper ideas (see the last sentence).

Lexical Range: This response uses a well-rounded vocabulary. Words and phrases like “eating sensibly,” “abuse,” “overuse,” and “quality of service” allow the writer to express precise and accurate meaning. However, occasionally the test taker makes a poor word choice or uses an expression inappropriately.

Readability/Comprehensibility: This test taker has good command of grammar and sentence structure, making it easy for the reader to understand most of the ideas. For the most part, effective language structure helps with readability. There are some small grammar mistakes, but they generally do not interfere with meaning.
TASK FULFILLMENT: The test taker has responded to all parts of the task, but there definitely could be more relevant information. If you compare the task to the response carefully, you will see that the writer is somewhat off topic. He has been asked to write about which plan he likes and why, which he responds to in the very short first paragraph. However, the rest of his response talks about why individuals (not his family or even people in his company) should pay health care costs.

The last paragraph makes no reference to the company he works for or the choice he has to make; it talks about something else altogether, which is a weak way to conclude his response. The writer needed to spend more time explaining why the old plan is better suited to the needs of himself and his family, and less time talking about health care as it relates to everyone.

This test taker will score well in the first three categories, but he will lose marks in the last category because he lost his focus and did not fully respond to the task.
Let’s Practice More!!!

W2: Responding to Survey Questions
Read the following information.

City Development Survey

You live in a small town of 10,000 people. A large green area in the center of town is undeveloped. The city has sent out an opinion survey to see what residents would like to have built in that area.
Choose the option that you prefer. Explain the reasons for your choice. Why do you prefer your choice? What problems are there with the other choice? Write about 150-200 words.

- **Option A:** Shopping Complex: This shopping mall would include restaurants, a large supermarket, and a movie theatre.

- **Option B:** Recreational Park: This park would include a sports complex, a large green area and a small petting zoo.

You are given 30 minutes for this.
Study tip

- Read the prompt carefully and with complete attention.
- Before you begin your response, make sure that you understand what you need to focus on to fulfill the task requirements.
- When you have finished your response, read the prompt again and check to see that you have effectively fulfilled each part of the task.
- Remember: THE MORE WISELY YOU USE YOUR TIME, THE HIGHER YOUR SCORE WILL BE.
Strategies for Success

Before the test

Learn: Learn about the stages of the writing process. One system is Brainstorm/Organize and Plan/Write the First Draft/Edit/Write the Final Draft.

Practice: Practice each part of the writing process, especially brainstorming, planning, drafting, and editing. You can do this by finding a list of writing topics online or in a textbook. Spend some time each day working on one topic until you are comfortable with all the stages of the writing process.

Read: Read daily. This will help build your vocabulary as well as expose you to a wide variety of writing styles and all types of sentence structures.

Write persuasively: Write daily. Keeping a journal is helpful, but you need to focus on learning to express your opinions persuasively in writing.

Build your vocabulary: Read something every day—newspapers, magazines, books, or internet sources. Try to read well-written articles that use strong, descriptive words and phrases. Consider keeping a vocabulary notebook to help you review and increase your vocabulary.

Work on your sentence structure: Reading and listening will help you with this. Pay attention to the different types of sentences that you hear and see, and focus on using a variety of sentence types in your writing practice sessions.

Connect your ideas: When you are reading, notice how people connect ideas and facts by using phrases such as, “The first reason is...,” “Another suggestion is...,” or “Finally, I want to stress how important it is to...” Try to understand when it is appropriate to use different expressions correctly, and practice using them in your writing practice.
During the test

Understand the prompt: Read the prompt carefully and try to understand it completely. Make sure you know each thing you need to do and stay focused on those tasks.

Make a decision: Don’t use up too much time thinking of a situation (Task 1) or making a choice (Task 2)—this will take away from your planning and writing time.

Manage your time: Use the first 5 minutes to plan your work and leave 5 to 7 minutes at the end to revise your work and make it better. The rest of the time (18 to 20 minutes) is dedicated writing time.

Make notes: Use the pencil and paper provided to brainstorm and organize your ideas, so that you know what you want to write and what order you will present your ideas in. Stay on topic.

Use varied vocabulary: Do not depend too much on the words and phrases provided in the prompt. Whenever possible, find other ways to express things: this shows that you understand the task and possess a wide range of vocabulary.

Finish on time: Watch the clock and make sure you have enough time to complete your work.

Count your words: Check your word count and make sure you are within the required range and that you have responded to all the task requirements.

Edit and Improve your work: When you are reviewing your work, try to read it with “fresh eyes” as if you were the rater. Consider these questions and do what you can to make your work better.

- How easy is it to understand the ideas? Are they well organized?
- Have you used a variety of sentence types? How good is the sentence structure?
- Have you used strong, descriptive words and phrases?
- What about grammar, spelling, punctuation, and formatting?
- Have you responded directly to the prompt?
Good Luck!!! 😊