

Year 6 Selective Test Guide

Is Your Child Ready for the Selective Test? A Practical Guide for Year 6 Families.

About the Selective High School Placement Test

The NSW Selective High School Placement Test is a competitive examination that determines placement in selective high schools across New South Wales. It is sat by Year 6 students, typically in March, and results are used to allocate Year 7 places. The English component — which includes writing and reading — is a critical differentiator for high-performing students.

Selective Test — English Components Overview

- ✓ Writing: One extended writing task (narrative or persuasive) completed under timed conditions.
- ✓ Reading: A comprehension section assessing literal, inferential and evaluative understanding.
- ✓ Thinking Skills: Questions that assess logical reasoning, pattern recognition and verbal reasoning.
- ✓ Students are assessed on vocabulary, text structure, ideas, persuasive devices and language conventions.
- ✓ The test rewards students who write with sophistication, precision and originality.

Writing Assessment Criteria

Selective writing is assessed across multiple dimensions. Examiners look for evidence of:

Criterion	What Top-Band Responses Demonstrate
Audience Awareness	Sustained engagement of the reader; writing feels crafted for effect, not just completed for task.
Text Structure	Clear, deliberate structure appropriate to genre; introduction, body and conclusion are distinct and purposeful.
Ideas & Content	Originality, depth and elaboration — not generic observations but surprising, specific, compelling ideas.
Vocabulary	Precise, varied and sophisticated word choice; evidence of an active, academic vocabulary.
Sentence Craft	Variety of sentence types used for rhythm, emphasis and effect; control over complex structures.
Cohesion	Logical flow within and across paragraphs; smooth transitions; ideas connect purposefully.
Persuasive Technique	Rhetorical devices, modality, counterargument and rebuttal used with control and intention.
Conventions	Accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling — including complex words attempted confidently.

Essay Writing Checklist

Use this checklist to evaluate your child's essays during home practice:

Introduction

- Opens with a hook — a rhetorical question, bold statement or vivid image.
- Defines key terms relevant to the prompt.
- States a clear, formal, debatable thesis.
- Previews the main arguments without listing them robotically.

Body Paragraphs

- Each paragraph follows TEEL: Topic sentence, Evidence, Elaboration, Link.
- Topic sentence clearly states the argument for that paragraph.
- Evidence is specific (statistics, examples, expert references — real or plausible).
- Elaboration explains how the evidence supports the thesis.
- Link sentence connects back to the thesis and transitions to the next paragraph.

Counterargument

- Acknowledges the opposing view fairly and accurately.
- Rebuts it using logic, evidence or a limitation of the opposing argument.
- Does not undermine the student's own position.

Conclusion

- Restates the thesis in different words — does not copy the introduction.
- Synthesises the key arguments (does not list them again).
- Ends with a memorable, resonant final statement.

Language & Conventions

- Formal academic tone maintained throughout — no contractions or colloquialisms.
- At least 4–5 sophisticated vocabulary choices per essay.
- Varied sentence structures — not all short and simple.
- Accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling throughout.

Critical Reading Benchmarks

For selective placement, strong reading comprehension goes beyond literal understanding. Year 6 students should be able to:

Literal Comprehension

- Identify specific information stated in the text.
- Locate supporting details for a main idea.
- Sequence events and identify cause and effect.

Inferential Comprehension

- Read between the lines — identify what is implied but not stated.
- Infer character motivation, mood and relationships from textual clues.
- Identify the subtext of dialogue and descriptive language.

Evaluative Comprehension

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the author's language choices.
- Identify and explain the author's purpose, audience and perspective.
- Compare and contrast how two texts treat the same idea or theme.
- Assess the credibility and bias of persuasive texts.

Vocabulary in Context

- Determine the meaning of unfamiliar words using context.
- Identify connotations and how word choice creates tone.
- Explain the effect of figurative language on the reader.

Scholarship Readiness Indicators

Students who are scholarship-ready typically demonstrate:

- ✓ Write sophisticated, multi-paragraph essays with a compelling thesis and structural control.
- ✓ Employ advanced rhetorical techniques and counterargument fluently in persuasive writing.
- ✓ Produce extended narratives with originality, imagery and voice.
- ✓ Comprehend and analyse complex literary and non-literary texts at a Year 8+ level.
- ✓ Command a rich academic vocabulary and deploy it precisely under pressure.
- ✓ Plan and execute high-quality writing in 30–40 minutes with minimal revision needed.

Exam Preparation Strategies

1. Write Under Timed Conditions Weekly

Regular 30–40 minute timed essay practice is the single most effective exam preparation strategy. Use past prompts and review structure together afterward.

2. Build a Sophisticated Vocabulary Bank

Maintain a vocabulary journal with 5 new Tier 2/3 words per week. Require their use in the next timed essay.

3. Read Complex Texts & Discuss Critically

Read quality journalism, essays and literature. Ask: 'What is the author's argument? What techniques are used? Do you agree?'

4. Practise Planning — Don't Skip It

Five minutes of structured planning before writing produces significantly stronger essays. Make it a non-negotiable habit.

5. Analyse High-Band Sample Essays

Read and annotate strong essays together. Ask: 'What makes this selective-level? What vocabulary choices stand out?'

6. Practise Unseen Comprehension Passages

Weekly unseen passage practice builds reading speed, inference and evaluative response skills essential for the test.

7. Focus on the Counterargument

Many students omit counterargument entirely. It is a mark differentiator. Practise acknowledging and rebutting opposing views.

Book a Free Academic Assessment — Valued at \$150

Selective Readiness Review | Essay & Comprehension Analysis | Personalised Learning Plan