



Cambridge Assessment
Admissions Testing

Test Information

Selective High School Placement Test

For assessment in 2023 and placement in 2024



This document describes the content of the 2023 New South Wales Selective High School Placement Test (SHSPT) for placement in 2024. The NSW Department of Education and Cambridge University Press and Assessment reserve the right to change and vary the structure and content for other tests.

Test structure

The test consists of four sections and is structured as follows:

	Timing	Number of questions	Response type
Reading	40 mins	30	Multiple choice
Mathematical Reasoning	40 mins	35	Multiple choice
Thinking Skills	40 mins	40	Multiple choice
Writing	30 mins	1	Open response

For Reading, Mathematical Reasoning and Thinking Skills, marks are awarded for correct answers; incorrect responses and unanswered questions score 0. There are no penalties for incorrect answers.

For Writing, each candidate's response is marked independently by two trained examiners. Each examiner awards a score out of 25, with the two scores added together to make a total out of 50.

Section 1: Reading

The Reading section is designed to test a variety of reading skills and includes a diverse range of texts such as extracts from fiction, factual texts, poetry, magazine articles, and traditional tales. Sources include texts from Australia, including from Aboriginal cultures, as well as texts by writers from around the world.

The Reading section is divided into four parts, as shown in the table below. The format may vary slightly from year to year: in both Part 1 and Part 3 there are two possible task types that may be included, which each take a slightly different approach to assessing similar skills.

Candidates are required to answer 30 questions in 40 minutes. All questions are equally weighted and there are no penalties for incorrect answers.

<i>Part</i>	<i>Text type</i>	<i>Question format</i>	<i>Number of questions</i>
Part 1	A narrative or descriptive extract from a work of adolescent fiction or Two short extracts on a related theme, typically one from the past contrasted with a more modern piece.	4-option multiple choice	8
Part 2	A poem	4-option multiple choice	6
Part 3	A factual text with six sentences removed. or A factual text divided into six paragraphs, and a set of seven summary phrases.	Matching	6
Part 4	Four short texts on a related theme	4-option multiple choice	10

Part 1

Part 1 of the Reading section consists of **either** a comprehension task based on a single piece of fiction, **or** a comparison task relating to two texts on a linked theme. Both tasks consist of 8 multiple-choice questions (options A – D).

The first of these, the fiction task, requires candidates to read an extract from a piece of modern fiction, aimed at a younger audience. Candidates will need to read for detail, as well as globally (looking at the text as a whole), and questions may focus on:

- stylistic features
- the meaning of words in context
- implied meaning
- the effect of language features and words/phrases used
- opinions, attitudes and feelings

- exemplification and comparison
- the writer's purpose
- text organisation and text structure
- identifying and understanding the effect of different viewpoints.

The alternative, textual comparison task, is based around two short extracts and asks candidates to compare a piece of quality literature from the past with a piece of modern writing on a related theme.

The texts are typically narrative or descriptive in nature. Question focuses are similar to those for the youth fiction task and will require careful reading of each extract to locate detailed information. Candidates will also need to read globally across both texts, comparing and contrasting the different approaches to the theme taken by each author.

Part 2

The questions in Part 2 are based on a short poem. Questions will not assess knowledge of formal literary terms, but candidates may be asked to understand the effect of stylistic features in the poem, including the use of imagery and metaphor. Questions may also focus on implicit meaning in the poem, an understanding of its organisation and structure, and the writer's purpose.

Part 3

Like Part 1, Part 3 consists of one of two tasks, in this case a 'gap match' task or a 'summary phrases' task. Both tasks are based on a single factual text.

In the Gap match exercise, candidates are presented with a short text from which six sentences have been removed. These sentences are presented alongside the text, with one extra sentence (not from the text); the task is to decide which sentence best fits each gap. The focus here is on understanding textual cohesion – the structure and 'flow' of the text.

The alternative Part 3 task, Summary phrases, is also based on a single, factual text. In this case, the text is split into six paragraphs and is presented alongside seven summary phrases. The task is to identify which phrase best summarises the content of each paragraph. There is one extra phrase which does not fit any of the paragraphs. This task assesses understanding of the main idea in each paragraph, as well as global understanding of the text as a whole.

Part 4

Part 4 is based on four shorter extracts from different sources, with different styles and purposes but thematically linked. The texts may be formal or informal in style; sources may include blogs, articles, reviews, reports and personal accounts.

Candidates are required to locate specific information from across the four texts; the task is to read quickly to pick relevant details. Questions may focus on implied meaning, attitude and opinion, purpose, style or register.

Please refer to the sample paper for examples of the tasks described above.

Section 2: Mathematical Reasoning

The Mathematical Reasoning section consists of 35 multiple-choice questions to be completed in 40 minutes. For each question candidates must choose the best answer from 5 options (A-E).

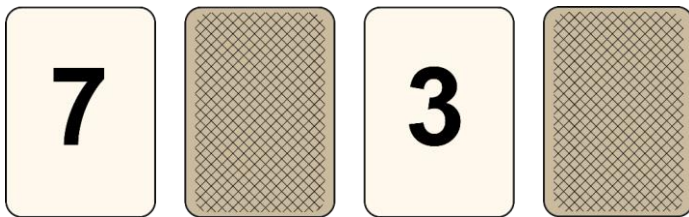
The main focus of this component is the assessment of mathematical reasoning rather than assessment of curriculum content. However, care is taken to ensure that questions do not require candidates to have knowledge of content not covered in the NSW K-10 Syllabus for Stages 1, 2 and the first half of Stage 3 (Years 1-5).

Example SHSPT Mathematical Reasoning items

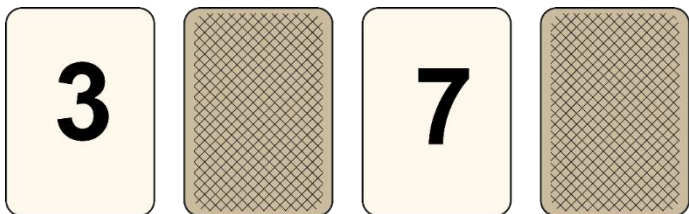
- 1 Sam makes a four-digit number using four number cards.

The first digit is 7, and the third digit is 3.

The second and fourth digits are hidden.



Sam swaps the first and third digits, so that the first digit is now 3, and the third digit is now 7.

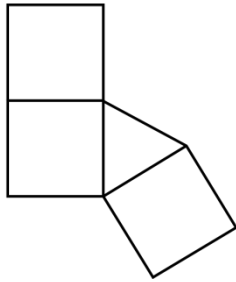


By how much has the number decreased?

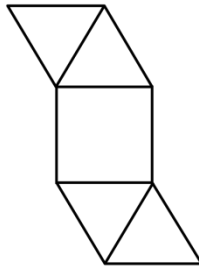
- A 3960
- B 3970
- C 3996
- D 4000
- E 4040

2 Which of these are nets of a square-based pyramid?

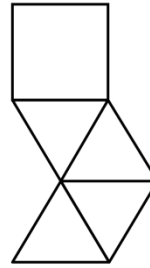
1.



2.



3.



- A drawing 1 only
- B drawing 2 only
- C drawings 1 and 2 only
- D drawings 1 and 3 only
- E drawings 2 and 3 only

3 A rectangle has perimeter 24 cm. The lengths of its sides are whole numbers.

What is the smallest possible area of this rectangle?

- A 11 cm^2
- B 20 cm^2
- C 24 cm^2
- D 36 cm^2
- E 50 cm^2

Section 3: Thinking Skills

The Thinking Skills section consists of 40 multiple choice questions. For each question candidates must choose the best answer from 4 options (A-D).

This section assesses generic academic skills which underpin success in a wide range of subjects. It includes questions requiring verbal, spatial and numerical reasoning. All Thinking Skills questions are multiple choice, and no prior knowledge is assumed.

The examples below illustrate the types of question found in this section.

Identifying similarity

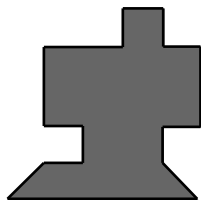
Information or data is typically presented in more than one way (including charts, tables, rotations, reflections, etc.). Candidates must recognise the logical relationships between these and identify any similarity in the data they represent.

- 4 Shown below are the three small pieces of a puzzle.

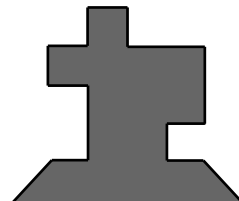


Which one of the following big pieces can be combined with the three small pieces to make a square?

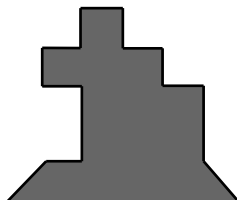
A



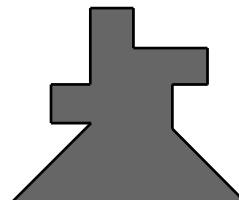
B



C



D



Finding procedures

Some factual information is presented. Candidates must find a procedure which will allow them to answer the question using the limited information given. The procedure will involve more than one step, and there is often more than one way to arrive at the correct solution.

5 Kai, Joe and Alice have 30 marbles each.

They take it in turns to roll a dice.

- If the number rolled is even, then that player has to give the number of marbles shown on the face of the dice to each of the other two players.
- If the number rolled is odd, then that player receives the number of marbles shown on the face of the dice from each of the other two players.

Kai rolls a 5.

Joe rolls a 2.

If the friends end up with 41, 20 and 29 marbles respectively, which number does Alice roll?

- A 1
- B 2
- C 3
- D 4

Evaluating evidence

A simple argument is presented, with one or more reasons offered in support of a conclusion. The argument would be strengthened (or weakened) by the introduction of one of four pieces of additional evidence. Candidates must say which one.

- 6 When Tom told Aida that he was thinking of giving up his hobby of drawing to focus on becoming an engineer, Aida said: “You don’t need to give up a hobby like drawing just because you want to work in engineering. It’s good for you to have hobbies. They help keep you happy and relaxed so you can also study harder.”.

Which one of these statements, if true, most **strengthens** Aida’s argument?

- A Artistic or creative skills are seen as important skills for engineers to have.
- B Tom’s latest school report said that he wasn’t studying hard enough.
- C Tom’s school encourages its students to have at least one hobby.
- D Learning to draw well also often takes hard work and concentration.

Evaluating reasoning

Some factual information is presented, from which two named characters attempt to make valid deductions. Candidates must determine which of the two deductions is valid: which of the claims would have to be true if the information presented were true.

- 7
- At the end of each term, Mr Chen gives scores in reading and writing to each student in his English class. These two scores are then added together to give an overall score in English for the term (for example, a student with scores of 30 in reading and 40 in writing would have an overall score of 70 in English).

Last term, Sara and Mila got the same overall score in English.



Sara: “If our scores in writing were different from each other, then our scores in reading must have been different too.”

Mila: “And if our scores in reading were the same, then our scores in writing must have been the same too.”

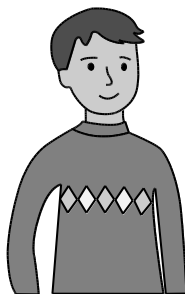
If the information in the box is true, whose reasoning is correct?

- A Sara only
- B Mila only
- C both Sara and Mila
- D neither Sara nor Mila

Identifying mistakes

One or more factual statements are presented, followed by a claim from a named character which includes or implies an invalid deduction from those statements. Candidates must choose from four options the best illustration of why the speaker is wrong.

- 8 In the Junior Golf Championship, prizes are given out to the players who finish first, second, and third, and to anyone who gets a hole-in-one.



Sam: “Well, I know that one player scored a hole-in-one this year. So that means that four players will get prizes.”

Which one of the following sentences shows that Sam has made a mistake?

- A Some players might deserve a prize even if they didn’t score a hole-in-one.
- B The hole-in-one might have been scored by a player who finished first, second, or third.
- C Younger players might find it difficult to score a hole-in-one.
- D We do not know the total number of players in the competition.

Logical analysis

A logical challenge is presented which requires candidates to reason about the truth values of a small number of simple statements, or to make deductions from information given.

- 9 If Monti does not sleep well, then he's likely to be tired.

If he is tired, then he will not perform well at the interview.

If he performs well at the interview, then he might be offered the job. Otherwise, he doesn't stand a chance.

If the above statements are correct, which one of the following is **not** possible?

- A Monti didn't sleep well but got the job.
- B Monti slept well but didn't get the job.
- C Monti performed well at interview but did not get offered the job.
- D Monti was tired at the interview but still did well enough to get the job.

Section 4: Writing

General description

The Writing section is designed to test a number of important writing skills. It consists of one task and will be on one of a variety of topics, in a range of forms (e.g., email, report, story, etc.) and with different purposes and audiences.

The test will last 30 minutes, including planning and checking time.

Responses are assessed on:

- Content, form, including structure and organisation, and vocabulary and style.
- Sentences, punctuation and spelling.

Tasks may require candidates to write for a range of purposes including to narrate, explain, describe, inform, advise or persuade, and tasks may combine more than one purpose. For example, an email to a prospective visitor to the area may include information as well as advice. The written form required (e.g., email, diary entry, story, newspaper report) is clearly stated in the task instructions. Topics will be familiar to candidates, so that they can readily draw on familiar content for their writing. Tasks are designed to be engaging and challenging and offer scope to develop an interesting and original piece of writing.

Sample tasks

Chaos on the beach

A shipping container with party accessories has been washed up on a beach. The container has burst open and the contents have gone everywhere. Crowds of people have rushed to the beach to have a look at the balloons, plastic straws, plates, cups and fancy dress costumes, etc.

Write a newspaper report about this incident for the local paper.

In your report, you could:

- explain what has happened
- describe the impact on the beach and the sea
- include comments from different people.

In the future

Imagine the date is July 19th, 2099.

Write a diary entry of someone your own age who is living in the future. Use the sentence below to start your diary:

Dear Diary,

When our house robot woke me up with its loud singing, I remembered that...

In your writing, you could include interesting, futuristic details about:

- technology
- ways to travel
- home and social life

Assessment criteria

Students' responses are assessed using two sets of criteria, **Set A** and **Set B**. Set A criteria focus on content, form, including structure and organisation, and vocabulary and style. Set B focus on sentences, punctuation and spelling.

A maximum of 15 marks can be awarded for Set A criteria and 10 marks for Set B criteria. The allocation of marks places more weight on the Set A criteria, which relate to the overall effectiveness of a response in communicating ideas.

Set A criteria: content, form, organisation and style

Students will be assessed on their ability to write effectively, showing awareness of purpose and audience, by:

- selecting interesting content and relevant details
- using an appropriate form
- organising ideas coherently, using paragraphs and a range of cohesive devices
- using a deliberately chosen style, range of vocabulary and level of formality.

Set B criteria: sentences, punctuation, and spelling

Students will be assessed on their ability to write effectively, showing awareness of purpose and audience, by:

- using a range of sentence lengths, types and structures and correct punctuation
- spelling correctly.

Answers to sample questions

- 1 A
- 2 E
- 3 A
- 4 B
- 5 A
- 6 A
- 7 C
- 8 B
- 9 D