

Constructed Response: What Is It And How Can I Use It?

The *Constructed Response* feature is designed to allow students to briefly respond to prompts that cannot sustain essay-length writing. These types of questions are often found on classroom tests, in which they are usually known as essay questions. They provide teachers with the ability to do quick checks for understanding and work well in any content area. They are particularly well-suited to mathematics, which does not lend itself as well to longer essays. Please note that, like the longer essays, these responses are not scored for content.

The scoring for constructed responses is completely different from that for argumentative, informative/explanatory, and narrative essays, since constructed responses are intended for 250 words or fewer. For such short responses, there is not enough information to accurately score for all six traits. Thus constructed responses are scored on focus, development of ideas, and organization with a three-point holistic rubric. Conventions are not specifically scored, but errors that interrupt the flow of reading or impede the understanding of the reader influence the score.

Teachers are encouraged to teach students how a constructed response specifically differs from a longer essay: the development of ideas quickly exposes understanding of the topic; the response is tightly organized; and it has a single focus. Text evidence, if included, is brief, usually limited to a general reference or a quotation. Because it is so short, disorganization and lack of focus are even more apparent in this type of response.

Teachers may create their own constructed response prompts, just as they can for longer essays. constructed response is one of the types of essays on the drop-down menu that also includes narrative, informative/explanatory, and argumentative. These shorter essays should still be complete ones. Scoring incomplete essays using the constructed response model will not yield a valid score.

On reports, constructed response scores appear separately due to the difference in scoring. If you haven't tried constructed response, we encourage you to do so. It is a great enhancement to your writing toolbox.