

Ohio's State Tests: How can a student earn a zero on a writing question?

Students receive between zero and 10 points on questions that require a written response (e.g., writing item). Understanding the reasons why a student could receive a zero can help educators support students in providing responses that will earn them points. When a response receives a zero, it is not considered an “earned” zero. Rather, the response is considered “not scorable” and does not necessarily mean the response was blank. To assist educators when a student’s response is not scorable, the reason is provided in reports, and a corresponding code is provided in data files. The possible reasons which can be assigned to a response, along with the data file codes are listed below.

Blank (BR) – This code is assigned when a student interacts with the item but fails to provide any response. This can also be assigned when a response is composed entirely of blank characters such a space and carriage return.

Unreadable (UR) – This code is assigned when a student response is unreadable. For example, an online response is unreadable if it only contains repeated/random keystrokes (e.g., “yyyyyyyyyy”; “av:aeoiahvb;e”; “hhrrttuuvv”). A paper response may be unreadable if it simply contains random letters or drawings or is indecipherable for other reasons.

Repetitive Text (RT) – This code is assigned when a student response is substantially comprised of repeated text copied over and over. For example, a response such as, “I don’t know. I don’t know. I don’t know.” would be assigned this code.

Not Enough Data (ND) – There is wide variance in the length of an acceptable response to a written response question. Some students can provide a succinct response and earn full credit, while others write a lot but only earn a few points. If a student response contains fewer than 11 words, the response is deemed inadequate to be scored and is assigned this code.

Not Enough Original Text (NO) – This code is assigned when there is a significant amount of text copied directly from the prompt and/or reading passage, with little to no original writing from the student. Copying limited text from the prompt is allowable but, as a rule, at least 30 percent of a response needs to be original student writing to demonstrate understanding and earn points.

Off-Topic (TR) – This code is assigned when a student response addresses a subject that is unrelated to the prompt. This code is only applied to the Purpose, Focus, and Organization

(PFO) and Evidence and Elaboration (EE) dimensions. The Conventions (C) dimension is still scored according to the rubric.

Foreign Language (FR) – This code is assigned when the student response is written in a language other than English.

Two additional codes may be seen on reports for Readiness and Teacher-Authored Tests. These codes are generated by the scoring engine when it cannot assign a score.

Non-Specific – This code is assigned when the scoring engine identifies that the response requires a code but cannot determine which specific code it requires.

Non-Scorable Language – This code is assigned when the scoring engine identifies that the response contains primarily atypical or unusual words and is unable to assign a score.

In operational state testing, responses with these codes are sent to a human scorer for final scoring. In readiness and authored assessments, the student’s teacher serves as the “human scorer” and determines if the response requires a code or if it is scorable. The teacher then assigns a specific code or a score.
