

PRACTICE EXAM 13: OSSLT SIMULATION

(37 QUESTIONS)

Session A

Reading Selection: Real-Life Narrative

Read the following narrative and answer questions 1–6.

> My father kept a jar of buttons on his workbench. Not matching buttons — odd ones, single survivors of lost shirts and worn-out coats, each a different size and colour. As a boy I asked him why he kept them. He shrugged. "You never know," he said, and went back to his work.

> He was a man who threw nothing away. Bent nails were straightened and saved. String was wound into balls. The garage held coffee tins of screws sorted by size, scraps of wood too small to use but too good, in his eyes, to burn. My mother teased him about it. I was, I admit, faintly embarrassed by it.

> It was only after he was gone, and I was the one cleaning out the garage, that I understood. My father had grown up with nothing — truly nothing, the kind of poverty that teaches a person that anything kept might one day save you. The button jar was not clutter. It was a habit worn into him by years I never had to live through. Every saved nail was a small insurance policy against a hunger I had never known because of how hard he had worked.

> I kept the jar. It sits on my own desk now. I have never once needed a button from it. That, I have come to think, is precisely the point.

1. Why did the father keep odd buttons, bent nails, and scraps of wood?

- A. He planned to sell the items for extra money someday
- B. A habit formed by growing up in severe poverty
- C. He enjoyed collecting unusual objects as a hobby
- D. He had been asked to store them for a neighbour

2. As a boy, how did the narrator feel about the father's saving habit?

- A. The narrator admired and copied the habit
- B. The narrator found the habit fascinating
- C. The narrator was faintly embarrassed by it
- D. The narrator did not notice the habit at all

3. What does the narrator realize only after the father is gone?

- A. That the father had hidden money among the saved items
- B. That the saved items were valuable antiques
- C. That the saving habit came from a hard, impoverished past
- D. That the father had wanted the narrator to sell everything

4. The phrase "a small insurance policy against a hunger I had never known" mainly suggests that

- A. the father had purchased insurance for the family
- B. the father's saving protected against a poverty the narrator was spared
- C. the narrator had often gone hungry as a child
- D. the saved items were worth a great deal of money

5. Why does the narrator say the father worked so hard?

- A. So that the narrator would inherit the saved items
 - B. So that the narrator never had to experience the same poverty
 - C. So that he could buy more items to save
 - D. So that he could impress the rest of the family
6. When the narrator says of never needing a button, "That... is precisely the point," they most likely mean that
- A. the button jar was always completely useless
 - B. the father should have thrown the buttons away
 - C. not needing the jar reflects the security the father provided
 - D. the narrator plans to start using the buttons soon

Reading Selection: Information Paragraph

Read the following paragraph and answer questions 7–11.

> The placebo effect is one of the strangest findings in medicine. In study after study, patients given a "fake" treatment — a sugar pill with no active ingredient — sometimes report real improvement, simply because they believe they are being treated. Their pain eases; their symptoms fade. The effect is powerful enough that new medicines must be tested against placebos to prove they work better than belief alone. Scientists are still unravelling how it happens, but it appears the brain, expecting relief, can trigger genuine physical changes — releasing its own pain-relieving chemicals, for instance. The placebo effect does not mean illness is imaginary. Rather, it reveals how deeply the mind and body are connected, in ways medicine is only beginning to understand.

7. What is the placebo effect, according to the paragraph?

- A. A medicine that works better than all others
- B. Real improvement from a treatment with no active ingredient
- C. A method doctors use to diagnose hidden illnesses
- D. A side effect caused by taking too many pills

8. Why must new medicines be tested against placebos?

- A. To make the medicines cheaper to produce
- B. To see which medicine patients prefer to take
- C. To prove they work better than belief alone
- D. To find out how many patients will take them

9. According to the paragraph, how might the placebo effect work?

- A. The brain, expecting relief, triggers real physical changes
- B. The sugar pill slowly releases hidden medicine
- C. Patients only imagine that their symptoms improve
- D. Doctors secretly add real medicine to the pills

10. The paragraph states that the placebo effect does NOT mean that

- A. the mind and body are connected
- B. belief can affect a patient's symptoms
- C. new medicines must be tested carefully
- D. a patient's illness is imaginary

11. What is the author's main purpose in this paragraph?

- A. To persuade readers to take sugar pills instead of medicine
- B. To inform readers about the placebo effect and what it reveals
- C. To warn readers about the dangers of fake treatments
- D. To compare different brands of pain medication

Reading Selection: News Report

Read the following news report and answer questions 12–17.

> Quiet Custodian Honoured After 30 Years at School

> For three decades, Joseph Mbeki arrived at Lincoln Secondary School before sunrise to unlock the doors, and he was usually the last to leave. Last Friday, the school he served so quietly surprised him with a celebration in the gymnasium, attended by hundreds of current and former students.

> Mbeki, who is retiring this month, was known for far more than keeping the building clean. Students recalled how he remembered every name, kept spare lunches for those who came hungry, and offered a kind word to anyone having a hard day. "He saw us when no one else did," said former student Dana Lewis, now a teacher herself, who returned for the event.

> The school presented Mbeki with a plaque and announced that a courtyard bench would be installed in his honour. Visibly moved, Mbeki said only that he had "just tried to be useful."

> Students and staff say the school will not feel the same without him.

12. What is the main idea of this news report?

- A. A school installed a new bench in its courtyard
- B. A custodian unlocked the school doors before sunrise
- C. Former students returned to the school for an event
- D. A school honoured a custodian after thirty years of service

13. According to the report, Mbeki was known for more than cleaning because he

- A. taught several classes when teachers were absent
- B. organized the school's largest fundraising events
- C. remembered names and helped students in need
- D. designed the courtyard where the bench will go

14. Why does the report include the quotation from Dana Lewis?

- A. To explain how long Mbeki had worked at the school
- B. To describe the plaque the school presented to him
- C. To show the personal impact Mbeki had on students
- D. To list the duties Mbeki performed each day

15. What can the reader infer from Mbeki's saying he had "just tried to be useful"?

- A. He believed his work had not been important
- B. He was humble about the impact he had made
- C. He was uncomfortable around the students
- D. He wished he had done a different kind of job

16. How did the school honour Mbeki?

- A. By naming the gymnasium after him
- B. By giving him a paid extension to his job
- C. By holding a parade through the neighbourhood
- D. By presenting a plaque and announcing a bench in his honour

17. The statement that the school "will not feel the same without him" mainly suggests that

- A. Mbeki's presence meant a great deal to the school community
- B. the school plans to hire several new custodians
- C. the building will become harder to maintain
- D. students will transfer to other schools after he leaves

Reading Selection: Dialogue

Read the following dialogue and answer questions 18–22.

> Dad: You're home early. I thought the tryouts ran until five.

> Sam: They did.

> Dad: ...And?

> Sam: And I left at four. I didn't finish.

> Dad: (carefully) Okay. Do you want to talk about it?

> Sam: There's nothing to talk about. I watched the other kids warming up and I just... I knew. I wasn't going to make it. So why stand there for another hour finding out?

> Dad: Hm. When I was about your age, I quit a race at the halfway mark. Convinced I'd lose. I've wondered for forty years whether I would have.

> Sam: (after a silence) ...That's not subtle, Dad.

> Dad: No. It isn't. (pause) The tryouts are tomorrow too, you know. Second day. They always are.

> Sam: (quietly) ...Are they.

18. Why did Sam leave the tryouts early?

- A. Sam believed they would not make the team
- B. The tryouts had already finished for the day
- C. Sam was injured during the warm-up
- D. Sam's father asked them to come home early

19. What does the father's story about quitting a race mainly suggest to Sam?

- A. That races are not worth finishing if you might lose
- B. That the father was once a talented runner
- C. That Sam should choose a different sport entirely
- D. That quitting early can lead to lasting regret

20. When Sam says "That's not subtle, Dad," Sam recognizes that the father

- A. is changing the subject to avoid the topic
- B. did not actually quit a race himself
- C. has lost interest in the conversation
- D. is using his story to make a point about quitting

21. Why does the father mention that "the tryouts are tomorrow too"?

- A. To remind Sam of a scheduling conflict
- B. To gently suggest Sam could try again
- C. To explain why Sam came home early
- D. To change the subject away from the tryouts

22. What can the reader infer from Sam's final line, "Are they"?

- A. Sam is annoyed and wants to end the conversation
- B. Sam has firmly decided never to return to tryouts

- C. Sam is beginning to consider going back tomorrow
- D. Sam did not hear what the father said

Session B

Writing — Conventions and Sentence Skills (Sentence Combining and Sophistication)

Answer questions 23–35.

23. Which sentence best combines these ideas using an appositive? "Dr. Reyes is a marine biologist. She discovered a new species of coral."

- A. Dr. Reyes, a marine biologist, discovered a new species of coral
- B. Dr. Reyes is a marine biologist and discovered a new coral species
- C. Dr. Reyes, who is a marine biologist, she discovered new coral
- D. Being a marine biologist, a new species of coral Dr. Reyes discovered

24. Which sentence combines the ideas most effectively? "The storm knocked out the power. The students continued the experiment by candlelight."

- A. The storm knocked out the power, the students continued by candlelight
- B. The storm knocked out the power the students continued by candlelight
- C. Although the storm knocked out the power, the students continued the experiment by candlelight
- D. The storm knocked out the power because the students continued by candlelight

25. Which sentence varies its opening most effectively while remaining correct?

- A. Determined to finish, the runner pushed through the final kilometre
- B. The runner was determined to finish and pushed through the final kilometre
- C. The runner pushed through the final kilometre and was determined to finish
- D. The runner, determined, pushed and finished the final kilometre too

26. Which sentence best combines the ideas using a relative clause? "The painting hangs in the hall. My grandmother painted it."

- A. The painting hangs in the hall, my grandmother painted it
- B. The painting hangs in the hall and my grandmother painted it too
- C. My grandmother painted the painting it hangs in the hall
- D. The painting that my grandmother painted hangs in the hall

27. Which revision combines the sentences with the best subordination? "The road was icy. The driver slowed to a crawl."

- A. The road was icy, the driver slowed to a crawl
- B. The road was icy and the driver slowed to a crawl
- C. Because the road was icy, the driver slowed to a crawl
- D. The road was icy so therefore the driver slowed to a crawl

28. Which sentence uses an appositive correctly to add information?

- A. Mount Logan, Canada's highest peak, attracts experienced climbers
- B. Mount Logan Canada's highest peak attracts experienced climbers
- C. Mount Logan, Canada's highest peak attracts, experienced climbers
- D. Mount Logan Canada's highest peak, attracts experienced climbers

29. Which sentence combines the ideas into one clear, sophisticated sentence? "The novel was published in 1925. It is still widely read today."

- A. The novel was published in 1925, it is still widely read today
- B. Published in 1925, the novel is still widely read today
- C. The novel published in 1925 and it is still widely read today
- D. The novel was published in 1925 still widely read today

30. Which sentence varies sentence structure while keeping the meaning clear?

- A. After studying for hours, Maya felt ready for the exam
- B. Maya studied for hours and Maya felt ready for the exam
- C. Maya studied for hours, she felt ready for the exam after
- D. Maya felt ready, studying for hours before the exam she did

31. Which sentence best uses subordination to show the relationship between ideas? "She missed the bus. She arrived late to the meeting."

- A. Because she missed the bus, she arrived late to the meeting

- B. She missed the bus, she arrived late to the meeting
- C. She missed the bus although she arrived late to the meeting
- D. She missed the bus, she arrived late to the meeting because

32. Which sentence combines the ideas most smoothly using a participial phrase? "The hikers reached the summit. They were exhausted but proud."

- A. The hikers reached the summit, they were exhausted but proud
- B. Exhausted but proud, the hikers reached the summit
- C. The hikers reached the summit and they were exhausted but proud
- D. The hikers, exhausted but proud they reached the summit

33. Which sentence is the most effective combination? "The library was quiet. The library was the perfect place to study."

- A. The library was quiet, it was the perfect place to study
- B. The library was quiet the library was the perfect place to study
- C. Being quiet, the perfect place to study was the library
- D. The quiet library was the perfect place to study

34. Which sentence uses a relative clause correctly to add detail? "The teacher inspired me most. She taught history."

- A. The teacher inspired me most, she taught history
- B. The teacher taught history who inspired me most

- C. The teacher, taught history, inspired me most
- D. The teacher who taught history inspired me most

35. Which sentence combines the ideas with the clearest, most mature structure? "The festival was rained out. The organizers rescheduled it for the following weekend."

- A. When the festival was rained out, the organizers rescheduled it for the following weekend
- B. The festival was rained out, the organizers rescheduled it for the following weekend
- C. The festival was rained out the organizers rescheduled it the following weekend
- D. The festival was rained out and rescheduled it the organizers for the following weekend

Open-Response Writing Tasks

36. Short Writing Task



Headline: "Students Open Free Pantry to Support Classmates in Need"

Using the headline and image above, write a short news report (one to two paragraphs) about this event. Open with a strong lead that answers the key questions (Who, What, When, Where, and, where it fits, Why and How), include at least one realistic quotation, and keep a factual, third-person tone. You may invent reasonable details as long as they fit the headline and image.

37. Long Open-Response Task

Some people believe that students learn important life lessons from playing competitive sports. Others believe that the focus on winning in competitive sports does more harm than good.

In your opinion, is competitive sport good for students? Write a multi-paragraph response (an opinion piece) in which you state your position clearly and support it with reasons and specific examples. Be sure to organize your response with an introduction, body paragraphs that each develop one reason, and a conclusion.

Answer Key and Explanations

1. B — The father kept odd items because of "the kind of poverty that teaches a person that anything kept might one day save you" — a habit formed by growing up with nothing. The text states this directly as the cause. The other options misread his motive.

2. C — The narrator admits being "faintly embarrassed by it" as a boy. That was the childhood reaction. Understanding came only later.

3. C — Only after the father was gone did the narrator understand the saving habit "was a habit worn into him" by years of poverty. The realization is about its hard-earned origin. The other options invent details not in the text.

4. B — The phrase means the father's saving guarded against a poverty the narrator never had to face. "A hunger I had never known" points to the spared hardship. It is figurative, not literal insurance or money.

5. B — The narrator notes the hunger was unknown "because of how hard he had worked," so the father worked so the narrator never faced that poverty. Protection was the purpose. The other options misstate it.
6. C — Never needing a button reflects the security the father's work provided — the safety net was never required. That is "precisely the point." The other options reverse the meaning.
7. B — The placebo effect is "real improvement" from "a sugar pill with no active ingredient" because the patient believes in it. That is the definition given. The other options misstate it.
8. C — New medicines are tested against placebos "to prove they work better than belief alone." The comparison isolates the drug's real effect. The other options are not the stated reason.
9. A — The paragraph explains that "the brain, expecting relief, can trigger genuine physical changes." Expectation prompts real bodily responses. The other options contradict the text.
10. D — The paragraph states the effect "does not mean illness is imaginary." That is the explicit denial. The other options are things the paragraph affirms, not denies.
11. B — The paragraph explains the placebo effect and what it reveals about mind and body, so its purpose is to inform. It presents the science neutrally. The persuasive and cautionary readings miss the tone.
12. D — The report centres on a school honouring a custodian "after thirty years of service." That recognition is the main idea. The other options are supporting details.
13. C — Mbeki was known for more than cleaning because he "remembered every name, kept spare lunches... and offered a kind word." Helping students set him apart. The other options are not supported.
14. C — Lewis's quotation — "He saw us when no one else did" — shows the personal impact Mbeki had on students. It conveys his human effect. It does not describe duties or the plaque.

15. B — Saying he "just tried to be useful" shows Mbeki was humble about his real impact. He downplayed decades of meaningful service. The other options misread his modesty.

16. D — The school honoured him "with a plaque and announced that a courtyard bench would be installed in his honour." Those are the stated honours. The other options are not in the report.

17. A — That the school "will not feel the same without him" suggests Mbeki's presence meant a great deal to the community. His absence will be felt. The other options misread the line.

18. A — Sam left because, watching the others, "I knew. I wasn't going to make it." The belief they wouldn't make the team drove the early exit. The other options contradict the text.

19. D — The father's story — quitting a race and wondering for "forty years" — suggests that quitting early can lead to lasting regret. It is a cautionary parallel. The other options miss its point.

20. D — "That's not subtle, Dad" shows Sam recognizes the father is using his story to make a point about quitting. Sam sees the lesson behind it. The other options misread the line.

21. B — The father mentions the second day of tryouts to gently suggest Sam could try again. It is a quiet opening, not a scheduling note. The other options misstate his intent.

22. C — Sam's quiet "Are they" hints at reconsidering going back tomorrow rather than refusing. The softened response signals an opening, not anger or refusal. The understatement implies a shift.

23. A — "Dr. Reyes, a marine biologist, discovered a new species of coral" uses the appositive "a marine biologist" set off by commas. The other options drop the appositive form or add a doubled subject. An appositive renames the noun between commas.

24. C — "Although the storm knocked out the power, the students continued" uses subordination to join the ideas and show contrast. Option A is a comma splice, B a run-on, and D reverses the logic. Subordination combines them correctly.

25. A — "Determined to finish, the runner pushed through the final kilometre" opens with a participial phrase, varying the structure effectively. The other options are plainer or awkward. Leading with the phrase adds maturity while staying correct.

26. D — "The painting that my grandmother painted hangs in the hall" uses the relative clause to combine the ideas smoothly. Option A is a comma splice and the others scramble or pad the sentence. A relative clause attaches to the noun it describes.

27. C — "Because the road was icy, the driver slowed to a crawl" uses subordination to show cause and effect. Option A is a comma splice, B is loose, and D adds a redundant "so therefore." "Because" cleanly subordinates the cause.

28. A — "Mount Logan, Canada's highest peak, attracts experienced climbers" sets off the appositive with commas on both sides. The other options drop or misplace the commas. An appositive is enclosed in paired commas.

29. B — "Published in 1925, the novel is still widely read today" opens with a participial phrase, combining the ideas concisely. Option A is a comma splice and the others are loose or ungrammatical. The phrase varies the structure smoothly.

30. A — "After studying for hours, Maya felt ready for the exam" varies the opening with an introductory phrase while staying clear. The other options repeat the subject, splice clauses, or scramble word order. The varied opening reads cleanly.

31. A — "Because she missed the bus, she arrived late to the meeting" uses subordination to show the cause-effect link. Option B is a comma splice, C reverses the logic, and D misplaces "because." "Because" correctly subordinates the cause.

32. B — "Exhausted but proud, the hikers reached the summit" opens with a participial phrase, combining the ideas smoothly. Option A is a comma splice and the others are loose or garbled. The phrase modifies the hikers cleanly.

33. D — "The quiet library was the perfect place to study" combines the ideas into one concise sentence by folding "quiet" into the noun phrase. Option A is a comma splice, B a run-on, and C awkward. The compression is the most effective combination.

34. D — "The teacher who taught history inspired me most" uses the relative clause "who taught history" to combine the ideas. The other options splice clauses or misplace the clause. A relative clause follows the noun it modifies.

35. A — "When the festival was rained out, the organizers rescheduled it for the following weekend" uses subordination for a clear, mature structure. Option B is a comma splice, C a run-on, and D scrambled. The subordinate clause links the events cleanly.

Open-Response Writing Tasks — Model Responses and Scoring Notes

36. Short Writing Task — News Report (Model Response)

> Students at Maplewood Secondary School have opened a free pantry in the main hallway, offering non-perishable food and toiletries to any classmate who needs them. The cabinet, stocked and maintained entirely by students, operates on a simple principle posted on a handwritten sign: "Take what you need, leave what you can."

> The pantry was launched by the school's student wellness committee after members noticed that some classmates came to school hungry or short on basic supplies. "We wanted help to be there without anyone having to ask for it," said committee member Hana Reyes. The pantry has been restocked several times in its first week, and organizers say donations from students and staff have kept it full.

Scoring notes (rubric-aligned): A strong response leads with the 5 Ws (who: Maplewood students/wellness committee; what: opened a free pantry; when: recently/first week; where: school hallway; why: support classmates in need), keeps a neutral third-person tone, and includes at least one realistic quotation. Mid-level responses cover the basic facts but may omit a W, slip into first-person or opinion, or lack a quotation. Low-level responses read as a personal story, drift from the headline, or contain frequent conventions errors that interfere with meaning. Reward journalistic structure and factual tone over length.

37. Long Open-Response Task — Opinion Piece (Model Response)

> Competitive sport is good for students, as long as it is kept in healthy balance. While critics worry that the focus on winning does harm, competitive sport teaches resilience, builds teamwork, and improves physical and mental health in ways that benefit students far beyond the playing field.

> The strongest reason is that competitive sport teaches resilience. Losing a game, missing a shot, or being benched are disappointments, but learning to recover from them builds the ability to handle setbacks in life. For example, a student who loses a close match and returns to practise harder learns that failure is not final — a lesson that helps when they face a hard exam or a rejection later on. Few classroom experiences teach this as directly as competition does.

> A second reason is that team sports build cooperation and friendship. Players must rely on one another, communicate under pressure, and put the team's goal ahead of personal glory. A student on a basketball team learns to pass instead of forcing a shot, discovering that the group succeeds when individuals work together. These social skills carry into school projects, workplaces, and friendships.

> Some argue that the focus on winning creates too much pressure and can damage students' confidence. This is a real concern, and overly intense competition can indeed be harmful. The solution, however, is not to remove competition but to coach it well — emphasizing effort, fair play, and improvement alongside winning. When handled this way, the pressure of competition becomes a healthy challenge rather than a burden.

> For these reasons, competitive sport is good for students when it is balanced and well coached. The resilience, teamwork, and health it builds outweigh the risks, and the lessons it teaches stay with students long after the final whistle.

Scoring notes (rubric-aligned): A strong response takes a clear, consistent position, develops two or three reasons each in its own paragraph using the Reason–Explanation–Example pattern, acknowledges and rebuts the opposing view, and restates the position in fresh words at the close. Conventions are controlled, with varied sentences. Mid-level responses give a position and reasons but may under-develop them (listing rather than explaining), show weaker organization, or contain conventions errors that occasionally distract. Low-level responses fail to take a clear position, drift off the prompt, or contain frequent errors that interfere with meaning. Reward depth of development and clear organization over length. (The model takes the "good for students" side for illustration; an equally well-developed response arguing the opposite would score just as highly.)