

SECTION 2

PREPARING FOR THE TEST

This section of the Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment (VCLA) Study Guide provides information to help you prepare to take the VCLA reading and writing subtests. Reading this section will help you understand how to use the test preparation resources available in this guide and will assist you in developing a study plan for the VCLA.

Studying for the Test

Follow the steps outlined below to prepare to take the VCLA. Additional information about each step is provided in the sections that follow.

Step	Description
Read the Test Blueprint	<p>Read the test blueprint to identify the communication and literacy skills tested by the VCLA and to check your familiarity with the knowledge and skill(s) being tested.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the VCLA test blueprint in Section 4 of this guide or on the VCLA Web site at www.va.nesinc.com.
Answer Sample Test Items	<p>Answer the sample test items included in this study guide. This step will help you prepare for the VCLA by familiarizing you with the content and format of sample items that are similar to actual test items included in the VCLA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Section 5 for the sample test items for the Reading Subtest: Reading Comprehension and Analysis. • See Section 6 for the sample test items for the Writing Subtest: Writing Knowledge and Proficiency.
Develop a Study Plan	<p>Develop a study plan to help you acquire the knowledge you will need for the VCLA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the content defined by the test blueprint and addressed in the sample test items. • Plan to study the content defined by all test objectives, but pay particular attention to content with which you are less familiar.

Step	Description
Use Additional Resources	<p>Identify and take advantage of additional resources to help you study for the VCLA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult Section 7 of this study guide for a list of other resources to assist you in preparing for the VCLA. • Review "Test-Taking Tips" in this section of the study guide to develop effective strategies to employ during the VCLA test administration.

Read the Test Blueprint

The first step in preparing for the VCLA is to identify the information the test will cover. The test blueprint for this assessment is the **only** source of this information. You should read through the entire set of test objectives to get a general grasp of the material the test covers. The test blueprint is available on the VCLA Web site at www.va.nesinc.com and in Section 4 of this guide.

Once you have a broad grasp of the test content, read each objective and its descriptive statements carefully to get a more specific idea of the knowledge and skills you will be required to demonstrate on the test. When you have become familiar with the test objectives, make a list of those test objectives about which you feel you know the least. In addition, refer to "Structure of the Test" in Section 1 for information on the number and type of test items covering each subtest. Use this review of the test objectives and test structure to set priorities for your study time.

The structure of the VCLA test blueprint is as follows:

- **Subtests**—The VCLA comprises two separate subtests, the reading subtest and the writing subtest. The subtests represent the main content areas as specified by the Virginia communication and literacy requirements as approved by the Board of Education, June 22, 2005. Together the two subtests indicate the main communication and literacy skills that an entry-level public school teacher in Virginia needs to have.
- **Objectives**—Each subtest of the VCLA is defined by two or more test objectives. Objectives are broad, meaningful statements of the knowledge and skills required for an entry-level teacher in Virginia public schools. The objectives, as a whole, define the content of each subtest.
- **Descriptive statements**—The descriptive statements provide more detailed information about the content of the objective by including examples of the types of communication and literacy skills covered by the objective.

The following excerpt from the VCLA test blueprint illustrates the content and format of the VCLA subtests.

VIRGINIA COMMUNICATION AND LITERACY ASSESSMENT

TEST BLUEPRINT

Reading Comprehension and Analysis
Writing Knowledge and Proficiency

(EXCERPT)

SUBTEST I—READING COMPREHENSION AND ANALYSIS

0005 Apply skills for summarizing, outlining, and visually representing written materials and for interpreting information presented in graphic form.

- Identify an accurate summary, outline, or graphic representation of information presented in written material.
- Interpret information presented in charts, graphs, or tables.
- Select graphic forms (e.g., bar graphs, line graphs, pie charts, tables, timelines, graphic organizers) to present information contained in written material.

(EXCERPT)

SUBTEST II—WRITING KNOWLEDGE AND PROFICIENCY

0006 Understand the influence of purpose and audience in written communication.

- Identify written material consistent with a specific purpose or audience (e.g., a business letter, a speech to a skeptical audience).
- Adapt writing (e.g., in terms of sentence structure or vocabulary) for different purposes or audiences.

Answer the Sample Test Items

After you have become familiar with the test objectives, try to answer the sample test items included in this study guide for the VCLA subtest(s) you are planning to take. Set aside ample time for this exercise. If possible, answer the sample test items in a quiet room that simulates the testing environment. You may wish to note the time it takes you to complete the set of sample items. Recall, however, that each actual VCLA subtest contains approximately 40 multiple-choice items and the writing subtest includes additional short-answer items and writing assignments.

Sample test items for the VCLA reading subtest are contained in Section 5 of this study guide. Sample test items for the VCLA writing subtest are contained in Section 6 of this study guide. In each section, an answer key reports the correct response for each sample multiple-choice item along with a brief rationale for the correct response. A sample of a strong response is provided for each sample short-answer item and writing assignment.

Use Additional Resources

Consider additional resources you may use in studying the content defined by the test objectives in the VCLA test blueprint. The most appropriate resources may well be your basic language arts textbooks. You may wish to consult your class notes and other assignments; appropriate textbooks; and publications from local, state, and national professional organizations.

There are many books available on study skills that you may wish to review. Some people find it helpful to study with other people who will be taking the same test. If you are comfortable with this approach, consider forming or joining a study group for people who are preparing to take the VCLA.

Section 7 of this study guide contains a short list of preparation resources for the VCLA.

Test-Taking Tips

Many factors are important when preparing for the VCLA test administration. This section provides suggestions for preparing for the experience of the test administration, as well as strategies that may contribute to your success and confidence during the test session.

Tip	Description
Start Early	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to your assigned test site no later than the scheduled reporting time. • Make sure to leave plenty of time to have a good meal or snack beforehand; and arrive on time so that you are relaxed and ready to begin the test when instructed to do so.
Dress Comfortably	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear layers of clothing that you can easily remove or add on (for example, a sweater or sweatshirt). This will allow you to make personal adjustments for fluctuations in room or body temperature. • Wear soft-soled shoes to avoid disturbing other candidates when you leave your seat.
ID Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You must bring to the test center one piece of current, government-issued identification (such as a driver's license) printed in English, in the name in which you registered, bearing your photograph and signature. (To learn more, click on "The Day of the Test" then "Review the complete Identification Policy" on the VCLA Web site at www.va.nesinc.com.)
Follow Directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the beginning of the test and throughout, follow all directions carefully. • Please see the "Prepare" section of the VCLA Web site for more information.
Tutorial Preview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates can access a tutorial preview on the VCLA Web site. The tutorial preview provides sample screens from the on-screen tutorial which candidates will receive at the computer-based testing center. The tutorial demonstrates how to navigate through the test, how to indicate answers, and how to use the features of a computer-based test.

Tip	Description
Pace Your Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each test session is four hours long. The test schedule is designed to allow sufficient time for most candidates to complete the test. • Before starting the test, review the number of test items and set a pace for answering them. • You may find that you need less time than the four hours provided, but be prepared to stay for the entire time. • Do not make any other commitments for this time period that may cause you to work more quickly than you should. • Do not spend a lot of time on a test item that you cannot answer promptly; skip that item and move on. If you skip a test item, flag it for review so that you can return to it later.
Read Carefully	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the directions and the test items carefully. • Read all response options. • Remember that the multiple-choice test items call for the "best answer." Do not choose the first response option that seems reasonable; read and evaluate all choices to find the best answer. • Read the test items carefully to understand what they ask. • Do not skim the test items in an effort to save time; you may misread key words and select the wrong answer or spend more time than needed on a test item. • Read the test items carefully. The test items are designed to be straightforward, not tricky.
Choose Wisely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As you read through the multiple-choice item response options, try to find the best answer. If you cannot quickly determine the best answer, try to eliminate as many of the options as possible. Then, select from the remaining answer choices. • Your score on each subtest will be based on the number of multiple-choice items you have answered correctly, and, for the writing subtest, in combination with your scores on the short-answer items and writing assignments. • There is no penalty for incorrect multiple-choice item answers; therefore, it is better to select an answer than not to respond at all.

Tip	Description
Check Your Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use any remaining time at the end of the test session to check your work.• Go back to the test items that gave you difficulty and verify your work on them.
Follow the Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the Rules of Test Participation posted on the VCLA Web site at www.va.nesinc.com.• Cell phones, personal digital assistants, and all other types of electronic information or communication devices are strictly prohibited in the testing facility.• Candidates are not permitted to take any test materials or handwritten or printed notes from the testing room, or to disassemble, copy, or reproduce the test materials in whole or in part, by hand or with the use of any electronic, or other type of, device of any nature.• Violation of these rules, or those stated in the Rules of Test Participation in the VCLA registration bulletin, may result in the voiding of your test results.