

# Assessment Content at Grade 12

All three purposes for writing—narrative, informative, and persuasive—were assessed at grade 12, with the greatest proportion of tasks measuring persuasive writing and the fewest tasks measuring narrative writing. The 2007 twelfth-grade writing assessment included 20 writing tasks (5 narrative, 7 informative, and 8 persuasive). A copy of the planning brochure given to twelfth-graders is presented below.

**Grade 12 Student Brochure on Planning and Reviewing Writing**

### Ideas for Planning Your Writing

To plan and organize your writing, you could do one or more of the following:

-  **Brainstorm**  
List lots of ideas related to your topic; then choose which ones you want to use.
-  **Imagine**  
Imagine talking about your topic with someone to sort out your ideas.
-  **Draw**  
Draw a picture or a diagram of your topic or your ideas.
-  **Web**  
Organize your thoughts by drawing lines between ideas to connect them.
-  **Outline**  
Organize your ideas into main points and subpoints.

### Ideas for Reviewing Your Writing

To review what you have written, you could think about the following:

-  **Purpose**  
Have I said what I want to say about the topic?
-  **Development**  
Do I need to develop my ideas by adding details or do I need to take out some details?
-  **Organization**  
Are the sections of my writing clearly connected and in the right order?
-  **Clarity**  
Will my audience understand what I wrote?
-  **Correctness**  
Have I checked for correctness in  
- grammar?  
- punctuation?  
- spelling?

## Writing Achievement Levels at Grade 12

The following achievement-level descriptions for grade 12 writing are applied to first drafts that students are expected to generate within the limited time constraints in a large-scale assessment environment, and not to final or polished student writing. The cut score depicting the lowest score representative of that level is noted in parentheses.

**Basic** (122): Twelfth-grade students performing at the *Basic* level should be able to produce an effective response within the time allowed that shows an understanding of both the writing task they have been assigned and the audience they are expected to address. Their writing should show some analytical, evaluative, or creative thinking. It should include details that support and develop the central idea of the piece, and it should be clearly organized, making use of techniques such as a consistency in topic or theme, sequencing, and a clear introduction and conclusion. The grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization in these students' work should be accurate enough to communicate to a reader; there may be some errors, but these should not get in the way of meaning.

**Proficient** (178): Twelfth-grade students performing at the *Proficient* level should be able to produce an effective and fully developed response within the time allowed that uses analytical, evaluative, or creative thinking. Their writing should be organized effectively, and it should show that these students have a clear understanding of the writing task they have been assigned. It should be coherent, making use of techniques such as a consistent theme, sequencing, and a clear introduction and conclusion, and

it should include details and elaboration that support and develop the main idea of the piece. The writing should show that these students are able to use precise language and variety in sentence structure to engage the audience they are expected to address. Writing by 12th-grade students performing at the *Proficient* level should contain few errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence structure. These writers should demonstrate a command of these elements and may use them for stylistic effect in their work.

**Advanced** (230): Twelfth-grade students performing at the *Advanced* level should be able to produce a mature and sophisticated response within the time allowed that uses analytical, evaluative, or creative thinking. Their writing should be fully developed, incorporating details and elaboration that support and extend the main idea of the piece. It should show that these students can use literary strategies— anecdotes and repetition, for example—to develop their ideas. At the same time, the writing should be well crafted, organized, and coherent, and it should incorporate techniques such as consistency in topic or theme, sequencing, and a clear introduction and conclusion. It should show that these writers can engage the audience they are expected to address through rich and compelling language, precise word choice, and variety in sentence structure. Writing by 12th-grade students performing at the *Advanced* level should contain few errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence structure. These writers should demonstrate a sophisticated command of these elements and may use them for stylistic effect in their work.



## Persuasive Writing at Grade 12

Persuasive writing is focused on the reader because it is intended to influence people to think about a particular topic or issue in a certain way. For the task below, students were required to make an argument about whether big inventions, such as computers, are more important in their daily lives than inventions like pencils. The advantage of the task is that it gave students the opportunity to present views on something about which they are likely to know a good deal and may have clear opinions, given their own use of new technologies.

Sixty percent of twelfth-graders received a rating of “Sufficient” or higher on their responses to this writing task.

### Percentage of twelfth-grade students at each rating level in 2007

Excellent	Skillful	Sufficient	Uneven	Insufficient	Unsatisfactory
5	21	34	27	9	3

NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 Writing Assessment.

## Sample of Twelfth-Grade Persuasive Writing Task

The twentieth century has given us inventions that have changed our lives in many ways. Big inventions, like television, computers, or microwave ovens, have had such a great impact on our culture that they seem to overshadow the small ones, like ballpoint pens, headphones, or calculators.

Write an essay in which you choose whether the “big” inventions or the “small” ones play a more important role in your daily life and provide reasons to support your position. You may use the examples of inventions given above or come up with some of your own. Give as many examples as you feel necessary to support your position.

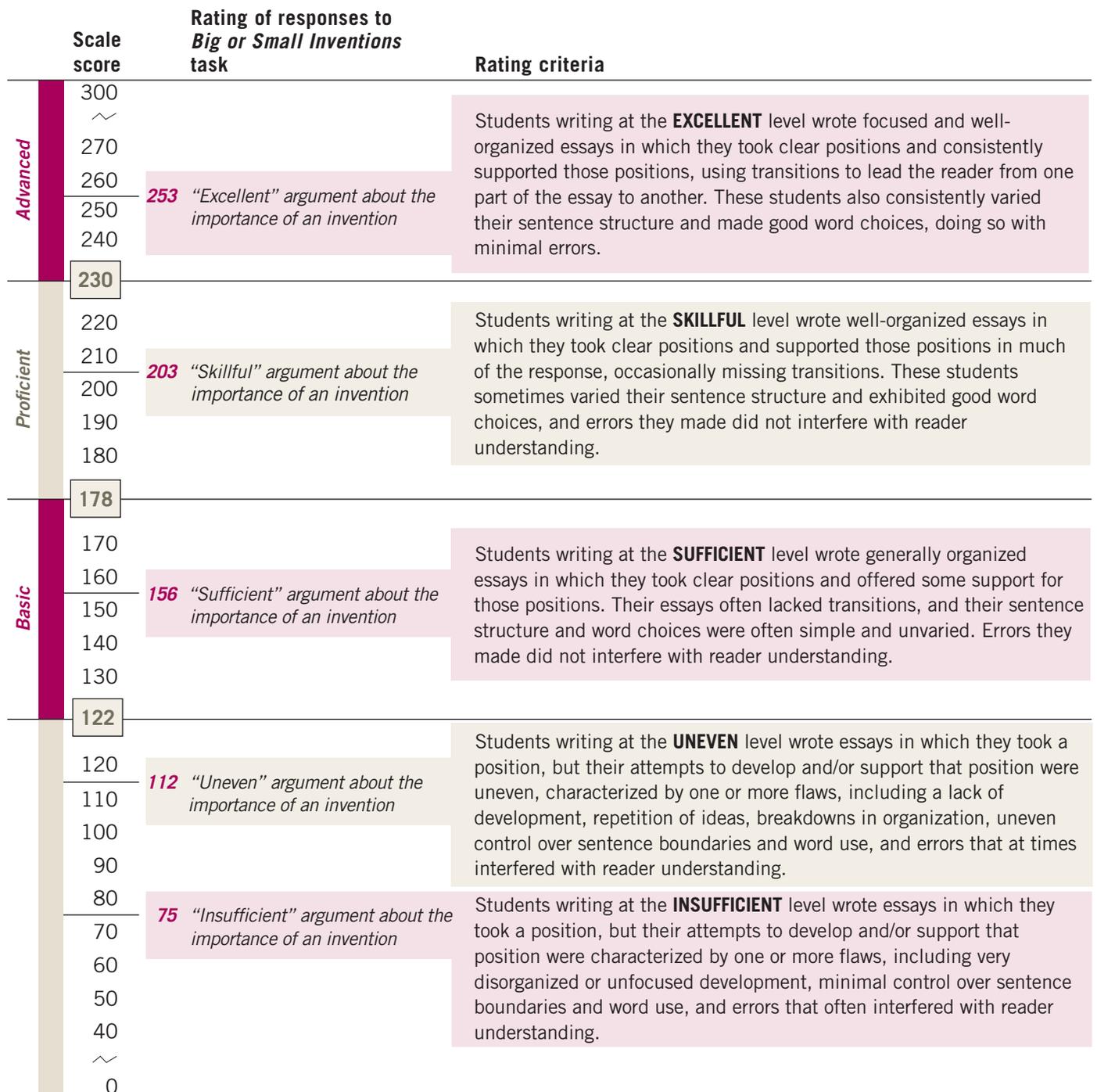


## Range of Twelfth-Grade Persuasive Writing Skills

The item map below illustrates the range of writing ability demonstrated by twelfth-graders. For example, students performing near the middle of the *Basic* range were likely to be able to provide a “Sufficient” response for the *Big or Small Inventions* writing task. Students performing near

the middle of the *Proficient* range were more likely to provide a “Skillful” response, and responses rated as “Excellent” were likely to be provided by students performing in the *Advanced* range. Examples of responses rated as “Uneven” and “Excellent” are presented on the following pages.

### GRADE 12 NAEP WRITING ITEM MAP



NOTE: The sample grade 12 writing task in the 2007 writing assessment was mapped onto the NAEP 0–300 writing scale. The map shows, for each level on the scoring guide from “Insufficient” through “Excellent,” the scale score attained by students who had a 65 percent probability of attaining that level or higher for the selected task. Scale score ranges for writing achievement levels are referenced on the map.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 Writing Assessment.

## Example of an “Uneven” Response

The response shown on the following page was rated as “Uneven” because, while it takes a clear position, its attempt to support that position is uneven in terms of development and organization. The response offers only minimal support for the idea that the small inventions are more important (“I write everyday and listen to music”), moves immediately into a tangentially related argument about how bigger inventions make people lazy, and concludes with a new and undeveloped idea about computer use. Further, grammatical errors, such as misused prepositions (“on my personal daily life”) and lack of subject-verb agreement, sometimes interfere with comprehension.

The content of the student’s planning page shown below illustrates how the student engaged in prewriting activities by creating two lists: one of big inventions and one of small inventions. Although there is evidence that some of the elements from the planning page were utilized, the response was marked with several notable errors and lapses in continuity

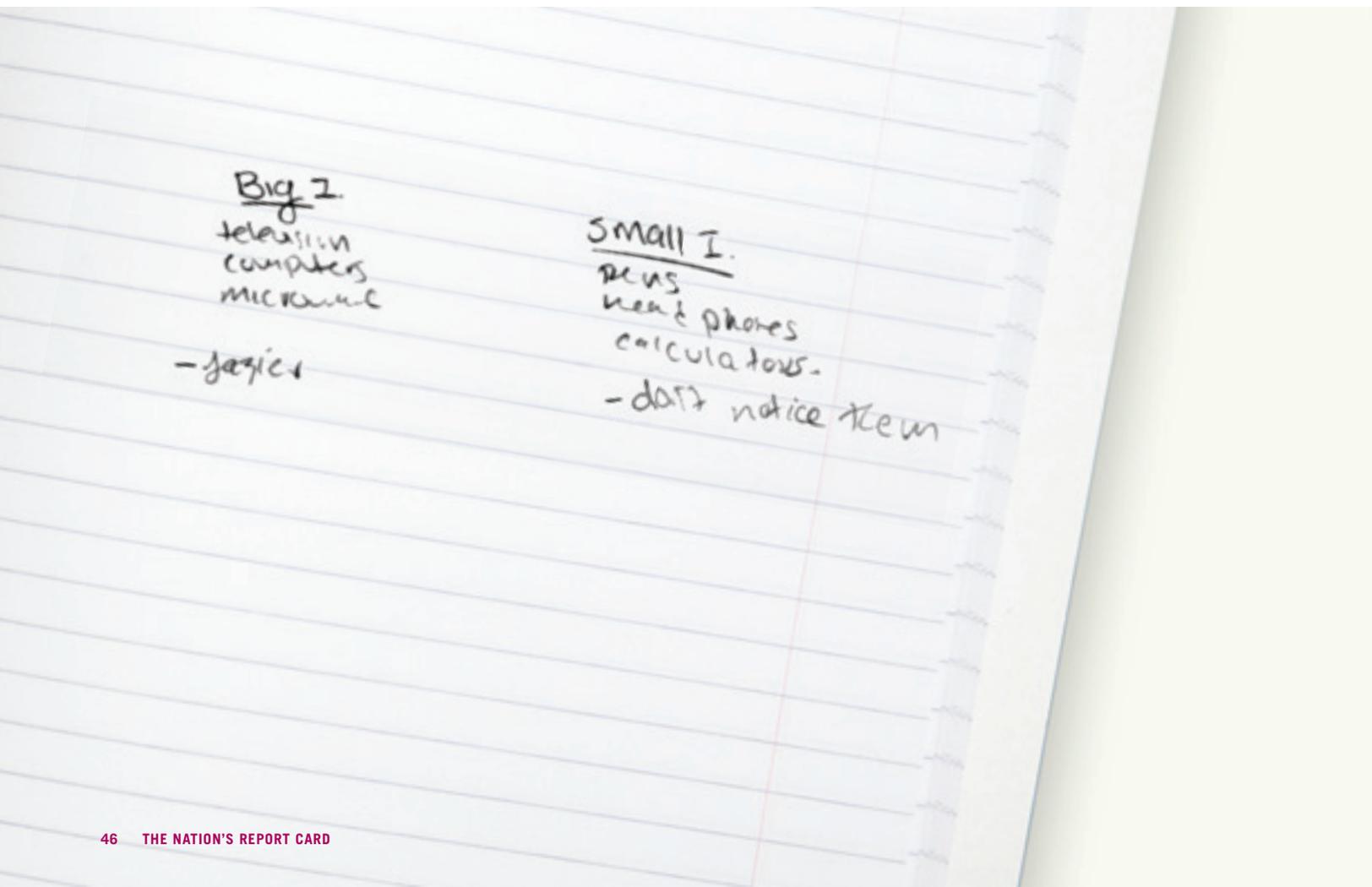
throughout. Only the student’s completed response was considered in the rating process.

The table below shows the percentage of twelfth-graders within each achievement level whose responses were rated as “Uneven” or higher. For example, 93 percent of students performing at the *Basic* level at least were able to write essays that took a clear position, even if support for that position was inconsistently developed, repetitive, or sometimes exhibited sentence, word choice, or other errors that could interfere with reader understanding.

Percentage rated as “Uneven” or higher for twelfth-graders at each achievement level in 2007

Overall	Below <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Proficient</i>	At <i>Advanced</i>
87	52	93	100	‡

‡ Reporting standards not met. Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 Writing Assessment.



Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century many inventions have been given to us. Some big like the microwave, television and computer and some small like the pen, calculator and headphones. The ones that affect me mostly on my personal daily life basis would be the small ones. I write everyday and listen to music. In my opinion the larger inventions are what has made people so lazy. Instead of going outside they stay at home and watch the television. Instead of cooking meals they just pop something in the microwave. I usually go to the library to do research. I don't think computers that necessary. So in my life it's the small objects that are necessary, not the big ones.

## Example of an “Excellent” Response

The response shown on the following page was rated as “Excellent” because it is focused and well organized. The position that the larger inventions are more important in the student’s life is clearly stated and consistently supported. The response begins with a well-developed section about the utility of the Internet and then moves into an argument about the convenience and environmental virtues of fuel-efficient cars. The response uses contrast effectively to make its point (“Once, a student had to spend hours searching through books for a research paper. Now it takes...”), and demonstrates consistently varied sentence structure and good word choices. Errors are minimal.

The content of the student’s planning page shown below illustrates how the student engaged in prewriting activities by creating three lists: one of big inventions, one of small inventions, and one of inventions followed by ideas. It is notable that this third list produced during planning contributed to the shaping of information in the student’s response.

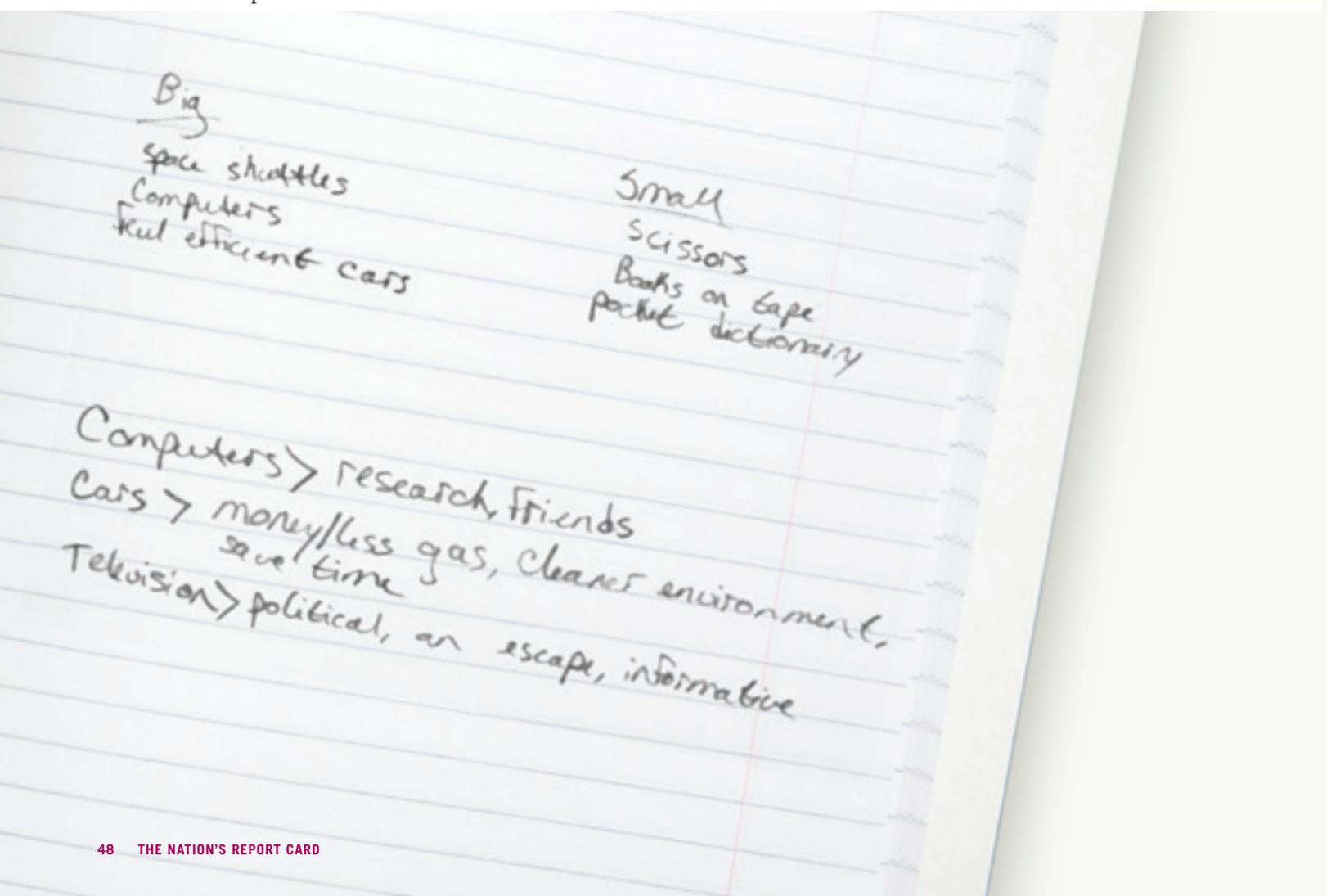
The table below shows the percentage of twelfth-graders within each achievement level whose responses were rated as “Excellent.” For example, 15 percent of students performing at the *Proficient* level were able to write well-organized essays in which they took clear positions and consistently supported those positions, using transitions to lead the reader from one part of the essay to another. These students also consistently varied their sentence structure and made good word choices, doing so with minimal errors.

Percentage rated as “Excellent” for twelfth-graders at each achievement level in 2007

Overall	Below <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Basic</i>	At <i>Proficient</i>	At <i>Advanced</i>
5	#	1	15	‡

# Rounds to zero.

‡ Reporting standards not met. Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 Writing Assessment.



Although many twentieth century inventions have been small items, the larger vehicles, such as the internet and fuel-efficient vehicles, play a more important role in my life.

The internet has opened up a world of educational research, stress relieving games, and the ability to keep in touch with far away friends, or make new friends from other countries.

Once, a student had to spend hours searching through books for a research paper. Now it takes only minutes to access a hundred thousand credible websites on any given subject. The internet has unleashed endless possibilities, both social and educational.

Automobiles have been around for a very long time. Recently, however, advances in automobile technology have skyrocketed, and made life much easier for myself and others. More fuel efficient cars mean that I can fill my tank less often, and drive farther using less fuel with gas climbing to incredible prices and many students working for minimum wage. Fuel efficient cars are a financial blessing.

Not only are cars more fuel efficient these days, they are also cleaner. The environment is a major concern for my generation, so stiffer emissions inspections and the new hybrid cars that don't run on fossil fuels are an important invention, both for me and for the environment.

While smaller inventions are important in their own ways, it's the larger inventions that preside over my daily life. Without the internet or safer, cleaner, less expensive vehicles, life would be much more difficult.