

Grade 8
English Language Arts/Literacy
Research Simulation Task

2021 Released Items

2021 Released Items: Grade 8 Research Simulation Task

The Research Simulation Task requires students to analyze an informational topic through several articles or multimedia stimuli. Students read and respond to a series of questions and synthesize information from multiple sources in order to write an analytic essay.

The 2021 blueprint for grade 8 Research Simulation Task includes Evidence-Based Selected Response/Technology-Enhanced Constructed Response items as well as one Prose Constructed Response prompt.

Included in this document:

- Answer key and standards alignment
- Items with the associated text(s)

Additional related materials not included in this document:

- Sample scored student responses with annotations and practice papers
- Scoring Rubric for Prose Constructed Response Items
- Guide to English Language Arts/Literacy Released Items: Understanding Scoring

**Released Items Answer and Alignment Document ELA/Literacy:
Grade 8**

Text Type: Research Simulation Task		
Passage(s): Train the Mind to Run Right Through Winter/Exercise and Cold Weather/Winter Workouts		
Item Code	Answer(s)	Standards/Evidence Statement Alignment
VF640580	Item Type: EBSR Part A: B Part B: B, D	L 8.4.1 RI 8.1.1
VF640584	Item Type: EBSR Part A: B Part B: C	RI 8.1.1 RI 8.3.1
VF640564	Item Type: EBSR Part A: D Part B: C	RI 8.1.1 RI 8.3.1 RI 8.6.2
VF640647	Item Type: EBSR Part A: C Part B: A	L 8.4.1 RI 8.1.1 RI 8.4.1
VH002999	Item Type: EBSR Part A: A Part B: A	RI 8.1.1 RI 8.2.1
VF640688	Item Type: EBSR Part A: B Part B: C	L 8.4.1 RI 8.1.1 RI 8.4.1
VF640685	Item Type: EBSR Part A: A Part B: B	RI 8.1.1 RI 8.2.1
VH003015	Item Type: EBSR Part A: A Part B: C	RI 8.1.1 RI 8.2.1
VH007336	Item Type: PCR Refer to Grade 8 Scoring Rubric	RI.8.1.1 RI.8.2.2 RST.8.1.3
VF640739	Item Type: PCR (additional item) Refer to Grade 8 Scoring Rubric	RI 8.1.1 RI 8.3.1 RI 8.9.1

Today you will research the topic of exercising in cold weather. You will read the passage “Train the Mind to Run Right Through Winter.” Then you will read the passage “Exercise and Cold Weather” and the passage “Winter Workouts.” As you review these sources, you will gather information and answer questions about exercising in cold weather so you can write an essay.

Read the passage “Train the Mind to Run Right Through Winter.” Then answer the questions.

Train the Mind to Run Right Through Winter

by Gina Kolata

- 1 IN late summer, Sharon Henderson, the manager of the Lululemon athletic clothing store in my town, started organizing Saturday morning group runs. People had two options: three miles at a slower pace or six miles at a faster one.
- 2 There was a good turnout at first—more than two dozen people, most of them slower runners, showed up.
- 3 Then they stopped coming. Was it the string of gray, rainy Saturdays?
- 4 Granted, it is difficult to get up and be at Lululemon by 8:30 a.m. when the temperature is dropping and a steady rain is falling. But, still. One recent Saturday, it was just me and my friend Claire Brown running on the slick streets in the rain.
- 5 Very few studies have asked whether people exercise less in inclement weather and, if so, which ones are more likely to slack off or forge ahead. Maybe that’s because the results of the studies are not exactly surprising.
- 6 “Why do people work out more in San Diego than in Michigan?” asked James Pivarnik, an exercise physiologist at the Michigan State University. “Gee, I can’t imagine.”
- 7 HIS study of Michigan residents found that people expended 15 to 20 percent more calories a week exercising in the spring and summer than they did in the fall and winter.
- 8 Something similar seems to happen in Columbus, Ohio, said Janet Buckworth, an exercise physiologist at Ohio State University.
- 9 She found that college students lost cardiovascular fitness in winter but maintained their strength, indicating that while some of them did not want to go

outside and run, at least they may have been going to the gym.

- 10** “Columbus is incredibly dreary in the winter,” Dr. Buckworth said. “It is wet and cold, and we get snow.”
- 11** So maybe the question is not, “Why do people stay home in dreary weather?” as much as, “Why do some go out and exercise anyway?”
- 12** Dr. Buckworth said that, in her experience, it was the people who were new to exercise who gave up in bad weather.
- 13** “If you are beyond the point that you are learning how to exercise, you can’t imagine not running in bad weather,” she said. Her advice to people who want to keep exercising all year: find something you can do indoors, plan to exercise with a friend or do something—like update your playlist—that can make your workout more fun.
- 14** Dr. Pivarnik tells people they need to make up their minds that they will have a regular exercise routine, no matter what. “If you are one of those people who are going to back off, you are just going to have to find something to make you do it,” Dr. Pivarnik said. “It has to be a behavioral thing in your head. It’s not going to happen just because the weather is nice, you have to think about it.”
- 15** My friend Jen Davis, a physical chemist, uses a term from chemistry: Running on dreary days requires high activation energy, she says. In chemistry, activation energy is what must be added to start a reaction.
- 16** But those of us who exercise in all sorts of weather will attest that there is a certain thrill that can come from terrible conditions. “It makes us tough,” Jen said. She calls our runs in horrendous conditions “epic runs.” And she’s right. They are truly memorable, ones we actually recall fondly.
- 17** There also are epic bike rides, as Richard Armington will attest. Rich, a software engineer in Montgomery, N.J., rode 200 miles over two days in a cold rain recently. It was a fund-raising trip for Battle Against Hunger, and his group had been training all summer.
- 18** Last year, the group rode in a hurricane, but that proved too much—the bikers had to stop at lunchtime on the second day, three quarters of the way through the trip.
- 19** “Why do I do this?” he said. “For me, it’s two challenges: the athletic challenge and the challenge of getting others to sponsor and give to the cause.”
- 20** Glenn Swan, a cyclist in Ithaca, N.Y., says his area has some of the worst weather in the country, but he does not let a little rain or snow stop him. Mr. Swan, a research technician at Cornell and owner of a bike shop called Swan’s Cycles, said, “Our phrase is, ‘We ride even if the sun shines.’”
- 21** His epic ride took place with friends in Virginia. They started at the bottom of a mountain on a sunny morning. Soon it started to drizzle. “We said, ‘At least it’s

not raining,” Mr. Swan said. Then, as they ascended, it started to rain.

- 22** “We said, ‘At least it’s not snowing.’” Then it started to snow.
- 23** “We said, ‘At least the snow is not sticking.’” Then it started to stick.
- 24** By the time they got to the top of the mountain, they were in a blizzard. They eventually made it to a lodge, 20 miles away, where they spent the night. And they have been talking about the trip ever since.
- 25** But the problem with epic runs or rides is that each one ups the ante. A day with just ordinary bad weather simply is not memorable after a while.
- 26** Jen and I noticed that recently on a dark, rainy, windy night. We had planned to run after work but—just this once—we thought that maybe we could do one of those mind-numbingly dull treadmill runs in the gym.
- 27** I called my coach, Tom Fleming, and told him our plans. He hates treadmills, thinking that if you want to train for road races, you have to run on roads. Treadmills, he says, are “propelling you over the running surface.” When you run, he adds, “you propel yourself over the surface,” which can include hills, flat areas, and places where the surface is uneven. “That’s a harder effort for sure,” Tom said.
- 28** So, Tom told me: Don’t go to the gym. Run outside.
- 29** So we did, and it was fine. Fun, actually.
- 30** But epic? No. We have had much tougher runs than that.

Glossary Definition

ups the ante = a term taken from card games that means, essentially, to increase the challenge

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1. Part A

What is the meaning of the word **inclement** as it is used in paragraph 5 of “Train the Mind to Run Right Through Winter”?

- A. avoidable
- B. severe
- C. unexpected
- D. varying

Part B

Which **two** words from the passage support the meaning of the word **inclement**?

- A. steady (paragraph 4)
- B. slick (paragraph 4)
- C. surprising (paragraph 5)
- D. terrible (paragraph 16)
- E. memorable (paragraph 16)
- F. dark (paragraph 26)

2. Part A

Read the sentence from paragraph 20 of "Train the Mind to Run Right Through Winter."

Mr. Swan, a research technician at Cornell and owner of a bike shop called Swan's Cycles, said, "Our phrase is, 'We ride even if the sun shines.'"

What idea in the passage does Mr. Swan's comment support?

- A. Beginners rarely exercise year-round.
- B. Commitment to exercise is important.
- C. Exercise is best enjoyed in fine weather.
- D. Bad weather makes exercise more challenging.

Part B

Which sentence from the passage provides the **best** support for your response in Part A?

- A. "Granted, it is difficult to get up and be at Lululemon by 8:30 a.m. when the temperature is dropping and a steady rain is falling." (paragraph 4)
- B. "Dr. Buckworth said that, in her experience, it was the people who were new to exercise who gave up in bad weather." (paragraph 12)
- C. "Dr. Pivarnik tells people they need to make up their minds that they will have a regular exercise routine, no matter what." (paragraph 14)
- D. "They are truly memorable, ones we actually recall fondly." (paragraph 16)

3. Part A

Why does the author of “Train the Mind to Run Right Through Winter” describe the experiences of different runners and cyclists?

- A. to suggest how location can influence the type of exercise people do
- B. to explain why people often stop exercising at certain times of the year
- C. to compare the lasting memories of people who run and people who cycle
- D. to show that some people enjoy running and cycling in harsh environments

Part B

Which sentence from the passage provides the **best** support for your response in Part A?

- A. “Was it the string of gray, rainy Saturdays?” (paragraph 3)
- B. ““Why do people work out more in San Diego than in Michigan?”” (paragraph 6)
- C. “But those of us who exercise in all sorts of weather will attest that there is a certain thrill that can come from terrible conditions.” (paragraph 16)
- D. “Last year, the group rode in a hurricane, but that proved too much—the bikers had to stop at lunchtime on the second day, three quarters of the way through the trip.” (paragraph 18)

Read the passage “Exercise and Cold Weather.” Then answer the questions.

Exercise and Cold Weather

- 1** Almost everyone can exercise safely during cold weather. But if you have certain conditions, such as asthma, heart problems or Raynaud’s disease, check with your doctor before you work out in cold weather. Your doctor can review any special precautions you need based on your condition or medications you might take. The following tips can also help you stay safe—and warm—while working out in the cold.

Dress in layers

- 2** One of the biggest mistakes you can make while exercising in cold weather is to dress too warmly. Exercise generates a considerable amount of heat—enough to make you feel like it’s much warmer than it really is. Yet, once your sweat starts to dry, you can get chilled. The solution?
- 3** Dress in layers that you can remove as soon as you start to sweat and then put back on as needed. First, put on a thin layer of synthetic material, such as polypropylene, which draws sweat away from your body. Avoid cotton, which stays wet next to your skin. Next, add a layer of fleece or wool for insulation. Top this with a waterproof, breathable, outer layer. A heavy down jacket or vest may cause you to overheat if you’re exercising hard. If you’re lean, you may need more insulation than someone who is heavier. If it’s very cold, consider wearing a face mask or scarf to warm the air before it enters your lungs.
- 4** You may need to experiment before you find a combination of clothing that works well for you based on your exercise intensity. Keep in mind, too, that stop-and-go activities, such as mixing walking with running, can make you more vulnerable to the cold if you repeatedly work up a sweat and then get chilly.

Protect your hands, feet and ears

- 5** When it’s cold, blood flow is concentrated on your body’s core, leaving your hands and feet vulnerable to frostbite. Try wearing a thin pair of gloves under a pair of heavier gloves or mittens lined with wool or fleece. Don the mittens or gloves before your hands become cold and then remove them if your hands begin to sweat.
- 6** Consider buying exercise shoes a half-size or one size larger than usual to allow for thick thermal socks or an extra pair of regular socks. And don’t forget a hat or headband to protect your ears, which also are vulnerable to frostbite.

Pay attention to weather conditions and wind chill

- 7** Exercising when it's cold and raining can make you more vulnerable to the cold. If you get soaked, you may not be able to keep your core body temperature high enough, and layering won't help if your clothes are wet. If it's extremely cold, you may need to take your exercise indoors or skip it for a day or two.
- 8** Wind chill extremes can make exercising outdoors unsafe even if you dress warmly. The wind can penetrate your clothes and remove the insulating layer of warm air that surrounds your body, and any exposed skin is vulnerable to frostbite.
- 9** If the temperature dips well below 0°F (-17.8°C) or the wind chill is extreme, consider taking a break or choosing an indoor activity instead, or take extra precautions if you choose to exercise outdoors anyway.

Choose appropriate gear

- 10** If it's dark when you exercise outside, wear reflective clothing. To stay steady on your feet, choose footwear with enough traction to prevent falls, especially if it's icy or snowy. Wear a helmet while skiing, snowboarding and snowmobiling. Consider using chemical heat packs to warm up your hands or feet.

Remember sunscreen

- 11** It's as easy to get sunburned in winter as in summer—even more so if you're exercising in the snow or at high altitudes. Wear a sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB rays and has an SPF of at least 30. Use a lip balm that contains sunscreen. And protect your eyes from snow and ice glare with dark glasses or goggles.

Head into the wind

- 12** If possible, do the second half of your workout with the wind at your back. This way, you're less likely to get chilled, especially if you've worked up a sweat. This may take some planning of your exercise route before you head out the door.

Drink plenty of fluids

- 13** You need to stay well hydrated when exercising in cold weather just as you do when exercising in warm weather. Drink water or sports drinks before, during and after your workout, even if you're not really thirsty. You can become just as dehydrated in the cold as in the heat from sweating, breathing and increased urine production, but it may be harder to notice during cold weather.

Know the signs of frostbite and hypothermia

- 14** Frostbite is most common on exposed skin, such as your cheeks, nose and ears, but it also can occur on hands and feet. Early warning signs include numbness, loss of feeling or a stinging sensation. If you suspect frostbite, get out of the cold immediately and slowly warm the affected area—but don't rub it since that can damage your skin. If numbness continues, seek emergency care.
- 15** Exercising in cold, rainy weather increases the risk of hypothermia, as does being an older adult. Hypothermia signs and symptoms include intense shivering, slurred speech, loss of coordination and fatigue. Seek emergency help right away for possible hypothermia.

Glossary Definition

Raynaud's disease = a condition that causes numbness in certain areas, such as fingers, toes, or noses, in cold temperatures or stressful situations

Don = put on

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4. Part A

What is the meaning of the word **vulnerable** as it is used in paragraphs 4, 5, 7, and 8 of “Exercise and Cold Weather”?

- A. immersed in
- B. developing into
- C. unprotected against
- D. dangerously close to

Part B

Why does the author repeat the word **vulnerable** throughout the passage?

- A. to stress the need to take multiple precautions in the winter
- B. to emphasize that exercising outdoors is unsafe throughout the year
- C. to create the sense that exercising outdoors is exciting
- D. to motivate the reader to exercise in the winter

5. Part A

Which sentence **best** states a central idea of the passage “Exercise and Cold Weather”?

- A. Healthy people can exercise outdoors even when it is cold outside.
- B. When exercising in cold weather, people must be aware of frostbite.
- C. People need to use sunscreen even when exercising in cold weather.
- D. When it is cold outside, people should exercise indoors to prevent injury.

Part B

Which sentence from the passage **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A. “Almost everyone can exercise safely during cold weather.” (paragraph 1)
- B. “If it’s extremely cold, you may need to take your exercise indoors or skip it for a day or two.” (paragraph 7)
- C. “It’s as easy to get sunburned in winter as in summer—even more so if you’re exercising in the snow or at high altitudes.” (paragraph 11)
- D. “Frostbite is most common on exposed skin, such as your cheeks, nose and ears, but it also can occur on hands and feet.” (paragraph 14)

Read the passage “Winter Workouts.” Then answer the questions.

Winter Workouts

by Chris Hayhurst

- 1 Are you among the winter weary—the type for whom snow or ice or just plain cold spells an end to exercise and the start of a long hibernation? If so, you might want to listen to Gary Sforzo. He’s a professor of exercise and sports sciences at Ithaca College in upstate New York (where winter temperatures routinely drop into the teens and the record low is - 21 degrees Fahrenheit), and he has studied people like you. He’s come to a conclusion: “Get out there,” he says. “Get out of your house. Just don’t slip on the ice.”
- 2 Too cold? Too windy? Sforzo has no sympathy. “If you’re an otherwise regular exerciser,” he notes, “and you choose not to exercise in cold weather, you’ll potentially lose whatever benefits you gained during the rest of the year.”

Where You Are

- 3 What feels cold, of course, depends on the individual. If you live in Southern California, a low in the 40s might seem freezing, and just going for a walk might feel like an adventure. If, on the other hand, you live in Vermont, as Brittany L., 16, and Libby G., 17, do, a winter day with temps in the 40s feels downright balmy. When it’s cold in Vermont, eyebrows grow icicles. And kids like Brittany and Libby go skiing.
- 4 “Even when it’s freezing out,” says Brittany, “once you get to the top of the mountain”—after riding the lift or hiking up—“all you have to do is just let yourself go. It’s a blast.”
- 5 Libby agrees, saying nothing quite compares to carving a tight turn down a steep ski slope. “It’s totally exhilarating.”
- 6 Brittany and Libby, it should be noted, are top-tier winter athletes. They both attend high school at Vermont’s Stratton Mountain School, a sports academy for skiers and snowboarders. And they’ve both been nominated to the 2012 U.S. Ski Team’s Alpine Development Team—a training program for potential future Olympians. In other words, the girls are well on their way to big-time skiing careers. So, that winter cold? Whatever. “As long as you put enough clothes on,” says Libby, “no matter what level you’re at, you can have a great time.”
- 7 Brittany’s advice is similar. “If you’re having fun, you won’t even think about the cold.”

'There's No Ice Here!'

- 8** Of course, you don't need cold weather and the great outdoors to enjoy winter sports. In cold regions, frozen ponds and lakes provide great opportunities for skating, whether it's figure skating, speed skating, or even a brisk game of ice hockey. Indoor rinks offer hockey and figure skating programs for teens at any level nationwide—even in Kissimmee, Fla., where the average high temperature in December is 73 degrees F.
- 9** Figure skating is a great way to express yourself, not only athletically but also artistically, says 16-year-old Irena U., who trains at the Ice Factory in Kissimmee. "You get to try new things all the time," she says. "You can really be creative."
- 10** Irena says she first tried skating during a family visit to Canada when she was 4 years old. Now, she says, she competes year-round, is working on landing her triple jumps, and hopes to one day compete on the national level. And yes, when she's carrying around her skates in the hot Florida sunshine, she does get funny looks. "They're like, 'How do you skate? There's no ice here!'"

Winter Bounty

- 11** Remember what Sforzo said about losing those hard-earned benefits that come only from exercise? If you like being active, there's no reason you should stop in winter—no matter where you live. Instead, consider your options:
- 12** If you like using gravity to set you in motion, and you live in a snowy area, try snowboarding or skiing, two great sports for building strong legs and lungs. If you're a beginner, see whether you can borrow equipment from a friend or rent some. Most ski areas will have equipment for rental, and they'll make sure the equipment fits you properly and you have all the safety gear you need.
- 13** Cross-country skiers have it even easier. Once you have your gear (again, see whether you can borrow some at first), you may be able to ski just about anywhere. Many parks, golf courses, and athletic fields are open to cross-country skiers during the slow, snow-covered months.
- 14** Not interested in skiing or snowboarding, but the white stuff outside makes it hard to do much else? All is not lost: Just strap on a pair of snowshoes! Tristan M., 15, of Colorado Springs, Colo., tried it last winter when he joined his coaches and friends from the school track and cross-country teams for a cold-weather trip high into the mountains. "We hiked 6 miles out in snowshoes, carrying big backpacks, then we stayed the night in a hut and hiked back the next morning," he recalls. "It was different than running, but it used the same muscles. It was challenging, but we had fun."

- 15** Another way to get out there during the winter requires no special equipment at all, and you can do it whether there's snow or not. Just take a hike! Bring along a camera and a picnic lunch, and make a day of it. Who says you can only enjoy the out-of-doors when it's sunny and 70 degrees?

"Winter Workouts" by Chris Hayhurst, from CURRENT HEALTH TEENS. Copyright © 2012 by Scholastic Inc. Published by Scholastic Inc.

6. Part A

What does the word **exhilarating** mean as it is used in paragraph 5 of “Winter Workouts”?

- A. intimidating
- B. thrilling
- C. superior
- D. comfortable

Part B

Which sentence from the passage helps the reader understand the meaning of the word **exhilarating**?

- A. “. . . feels downright balmy.” (paragraph 3)
- B. “. . . `once you get to the top of the mountain . . .” (paragraph 4)
- C. “It’s a blast.” (paragraph 4)
- D. “. . . top-tier winter athletes.” (paragraph 6)

7. Part A

According to information in “Winter Workouts,” with which sentence would Brittany and Libby (paragraphs 3–7) and Tristan (paragraph 14) all agree?

- A. Doing physical activities in the snow can be pleasurable.
- B. Warm attire is necessary when hiking in the snow.
- C. Exercising is different when done in the snow.
- D. Playing sports in the snow can be difficult.

Part B

Which sentence from the passage **best** supports your response in Part A?

- A. “As long as you put enough clothes on . . .” (paragraph 6)
- B. “If you’re having fun, you won’t even think about the cold.” (paragraph 7)
- C. “It was different than running, but it used the same muscles.” (paragraph 14)
- D. “It was challenging. . . .” (paragraph 14)

8. Part A

Which quotation **best** states a central idea of “Winter Workouts”?

- A. “Get out there,’ he says. ‘Get out of your house. Just don’t slip on the ice.’” (paragraph 1)
- B. “If you’re an otherwise regular exerciser,’ he notes, ‘and you choose not to exercise in cold weather, you’ll potentially lose whatever benefits you gained during the rest of the year.’” (paragraph 2)
- C. “You get to try new things all the time,’ she says. ‘You can really be creative.’” (paragraph 9)
- D. “They’re like, ‘How do you skate? There’s no ice here!’” (paragraph 10)

Part B

Which sentence from the passage **best** supports your response in Part A?

- A. “Of course, you don’t need cold weather and the great outdoors to enjoy winter sports.” (paragraph 8)
- B. “Remember what Sforzo said about losing those hard-earned benefits that come only from exercise?” (paragraph 11)
- C. “If you like being active, there’s no reason you should stop in winter—no matter where you live.” (paragraph 11)
- D. “If you like using gravity to set you in motion, and you live in a snowy area, try snowboarding or skiing, two great sports for building strong legs and lungs.” (paragraph 12)

9. You have now read **three** passages discussing exercising in cold weather. Write an essay that analyzes how a person can overcome the challenges of exercising throughout the year, despite the weather conditions. Use details from all **three** passages to support your answer.

- 10.** The author of “Exercise and Cold Weather” discusses the dangers of exercising in harsh weather and the precautions people should take before exercising in these conditions. Write an essay analyzing the ways the people described in all **three** passages have either acted properly or improperly while exercising in cold weather. Be sure to include evidence from all **three** passages in your essay.