

Sample Test Questions for the California High School Proficiency Examination (CHSPE)

The sample test questions are also available on the CHSPE Web site at <http://www.chspe.net/about>. On the Web site, the multiple-choice questions are formatted the same way they are in the actual test booklet.

English-language Arts Section

Language Subtest

Writing Task

The Language subtest of the English-language Arts section of the CHSPE includes one persuasive writing task. For the writing task you will be asked to write an essay to persuade a specified audience of your opinion about an issue. You will need to be specific and explain your reasons for your opinion.

Sample Writing Task

Some people believe that high school classes should not begin before 9:00 a.m. Do you agree or disagree? Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper to persuade readers to accept your opinion on this issue. Be specific and explain your reasons. (Do not sign your letter.)

Essay Scoring Scale

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- 5 **Essay addresses the writing task in an effective manner. The essay:**
 - defends a clearly stated position with appropriate reasoning and specificity; is purposefully organized.
 - effectively anticipates and addresses the readers' potential concerns.
 - demonstrates control of a variety of sentence structures; uses precise word choice.
 - is generally free of errors in grammar, usage, and/or conventions.
- 4 **Essay addresses the writing task in a competent manner. The essay:**
 - defends a position with adequate reasoning and some degree of specificity; is organized.
 - anticipates and addresses some of the readers' potential concerns.
 - demonstrates control of sentence structure; uses generally appropriate word choice.
 - may have a few minor errors in grammar, usage, and/or conventions.
- 3 **Essay addresses the writing task in a basic manner. The essay:**
 - supports a position with some reasons and details; has some organization.
 - anticipates and attempts to address some of the readers' potential concerns.
 - demonstrates basic control of sentence structure and word choice.
 - may have errors in grammar, usage, and/or conventions, but errors do not cause confusion.
- 2 **Essay addresses the writing task in a limited manner. The essay:**
 - may not have a clear position; may provide limited reasons or irrelevant details; may be poorly organized.
 - may make a limited attempt to anticipate and address the readers' potential concerns.
 - exhibits inadequate control of sentence structure and word choice.
 - may have serious and repeated errors in grammar, usage, and/or conventions that cause confusion.
- 1 **Essay may or may not address the writing task. The essay:**
 - may have no position; provides few if any reasons or details.
 - makes little or no attempt to anticipate and address the readers' potential concerns.
 - exhibits little or no control of sentence structure.
 - may have pervasive errors in grammar, usage, and/or conventions that cause significant confusion.

The following "Writer's Checklist" (Reproduced by permission. ©2008 by NCS Pearson, Inc.) will be provided with the CHSPE writing task.

Writer's Checklist

- Did I write about the topic?
- Did I express my ideas in complete sentences?
- Did I give enough details to explain or support my ideas?
- Did I include only those details that are about my topic?
- Did I write my ideas in an order that is clear for the reader to follow?
- Did I write a topic sentence for each paragraph?
- Did I use a capital letter at the beginning of each sentence and for all other words that should be capitalized?
- Did I use the correct punctuation at the end of each sentence and within each sentence?
- Did I spell words correctly?
- Did I print or write clearly?

Sample Essays

Below and on the next page are two sample essays in response to the sample writing task on the previous page. The first is an example of an essay at score point 4; the second is an example of an essay at score point 2. The commentary with each sample essay explains why the essay earned the score that it did.

Sample Essay — Score Point 4

The following essay earned a score of 4. The essay addresses the writing task in a competent manner.

Dear Editor:

Recently people have been discussing changing the hours of school, should schools begin at 8 am or after 9 am. I believe the early start is better for several reasons.

There are many advantages to starting school early. One of the most important reasons is for sports, and jobs. Students who play sports need to practice after school. If school begins later in the day, it will end later, and athletes will be practicing late into the afternoon, getting home after dark. Students who work in the afternoon will face the same problems and may have their hours cut if they can't get to work at an earlier time. Also, students often spend several hours a night online or text-messaging friends. If these activities are started later in the day students will be getting to bed even later than they do now.

Another reason for staying with the early start is that it prepares students to enter the work force. Very few jobs in the real world allow you to start work at 9 or later in the morning. Students need to be able to work in the early morning hours to be ready for college classes, the military, or a job.

I know that some people want to start school after 9 am and they do have a point. Recent studies have shown that teenagers are more alert in the afternoons than in the morning. These people argue that a late start will let students get more sleep and be more alert in school the next day. This argument doesn't convince me, though, because teenagers will just stay up later if they know they can get up later. They will just stay up until 2 am and get up at 8 for the later start.

I believe that schools will do better to stay with 8 am starting times. Because so many students have jobs, play sports, or just like to hang out with their friends after school, it's better to get school over with early in the day. It's also better training for the future.

COMMENTARY

This essay establishes its position in the second sentence: *"I believe the early start is better for several reasons."* It supports its position in the following paragraph by citing the needs of both athletes and students who work as well as considering the socialization time that students spend on the phone and online. Paragraph three, while less well developed, also supports the writer's position by offering another reason for an early start: *"it prepares students to enter the work force."* The writer's reasoning is adequate although not well developed; it does include some degree of specificity, citing *"practicing late into the afternoon, getting home after dark."*

This essay also anticipates and addresses some of the readers' potential concerns or counter-arguments in paragraph four. Referring to *"studies [that show] that teenagers are more alert in the afternoons,"* the writer acknowledges that the late start does have some arguments in its favor. However, the writer finds this reasoning unpersuasive. While late start proponents might believe students would be able to get more sleep, the writer states that *"teenagers will just stay up later if they know they can get up later"* and offers an example: *"they will just stay up until 2 am and get up at 8."* The writer finishes the essay with a return to the initial statement of position and ends with a new idea: *"it's better to get school over with early in the day."*

This essay demonstrates control of sentence structure although there are some errors. The very first sentence is a run-on; there should be a semi-colon or a period between *"school"* and *"should."* Some commas are misused (paragraph two: *"for sports, and jobs"*) or omitted (*"day students"*), and there is one misspelled word: *"argument"* (paragraph four). The word choice is generally appropriate, and while there are some awkwardly stated sentences (*"Recently people have been discussing changing the hours of school, should schools begin at 8 am or after 9 am."*), most sentences are under control and do not cause confusion. The writer is inconsistent in notation of time and part of day (sometimes *"8"* and sometimes *"8 am"*). These errors, however, do not cause confusion.

Overall, this is a solid 4 essay. It addresses the writing task in a competent manner, defining and defending its position with adequate reasoning and some specific examples, and it anticipates and addresses readers' concerns. It displays control of sentence structure, word choice, and the conventions of written English.

Sample Essay — Score Point 2

The following essay earned a score of 2. The essay addresses the writing task in a limited manner.

Note that with a writing score of 2, an examinee cannot pass the Language subtest. See “Score Combinations to Pass the Language Subtest” on page 18.

I do not believe that school classes should start before 9:00 am, I agree strongly that they should start afterwards. I agree with this statement for multiple reasons, reasons like that most kids do not like to wake up that early unless we are forced so then we are still sleepy and our minds do not work fully. More reasons are that if school could start after 9:00 more students would come to first and second period instead of sleeping in. If school was to start at a later time, students would be real happy and more awake and maybe try harder on work and in classes.

COMMENTARY

This essay is a limited response to the writing task. The writer does take a position; however, the support for that position is limited. The writer offers three general reasons: kids don't like to get up early, more students would come to first and second periods instead of sleeping in, and starting later would make students happy so they would try harder. The writer fails to extend or support those reasons with any specific details. In addition, the writer does not anticipate readers' concerns or counter-arguments in favor of the other position. A short series of sentences in general support of a simplistic central idea does not demonstrate competence in writing an organized persuasive essay.

In addition to the essay's lack of development, the writer exhibits inadequate control of sentence structure. The writer incorrectly joins two sentences with a comma (“*I do not believe that school classes should start before 9:00 am, I agree strongly ...*”). This is followed by a run-on sentence. However, this essay does not contain serious or repeated errors in usage or conventions. The essay's lack of development and support prevents it from receiving a higher score.

The writer could have improved the essay by incorporating specific examples, such as the effects of changing starting times on extracurricular activities, descriptions of student behavior in early morning classes, or specific personal experiences rather than general statements (“*most kids do not like to wake up that early ...*”). Also, the writer needs to have considered what arguments might be made for the early start: for example, getting out early in the day and having time for a job or to participate in sports. Supporting each of the ideas given with specific arguments and examples, as well as anticipating and addressing counter-arguments, could have moved this 2 essay into a higher score point.

Multiple-choice Questions (Answer key on page 5)

Read each sentence. Look at the underlined words in each one. There may be a mistake in punctuation, capitalization, or word usage. If you find a mistake, choose the answer that is the best way to write the underlined section of the sentence. If there is no mistake, choose *Correct as is*.

1. The club meeting will be held in the debate teams practice room.
- A. Debate teams practice
 - B. debate teams Practice
 - C. debate team's practice
 - D. *Correct as is*

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2. Sarah wanted to see the concert she had been looking forward to it for a long time.
- A. concert, she had been
 - B. concert; she had been
 - C. concert she has been
 - D. *Correct as is*

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Read the group of words in the box. There may be a mistake in the sentence structure. If you find a mistake, choose the answer that is written most clearly and correctly. If there is no mistake, choose *Correct as is*.

3. Veronica left the room, turned right, and, without any hesitation, walked outside.
- A. Leaving the room, turning right, Veronica walking outside without any hesitation.
 - B. Veronica left the room and she turned right and walked outside without any hesitation.
 - C. Veronica left the room turned right and walked outside without any hesitation.
 - D. *Correct as is*

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4. There are extra chairs in that room that are not needed or necessary.
- A. There are extra chairs in that room.
 - B. There are extra and unnecessary chairs in that room.
 - C. The extra chairs in that room are not needed or necessary.
 - D. *Correct as is*

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5. Some tortoises living up to 100 years are among the world's oldest animals.
- A. The world's oldest animals, some living up to 100 years are some tortoises.
 - B. Some tortoises, among the world's oldest animals, are living up to 100 years.
 - C. Living up to 100 years, some tortoises are among the world's oldest animals.
 - D. *Correct as is*

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Read the paragraph. Then read the questions that follow the paragraph. Choose the correct answer and mark your answer.

The Challenge

It started when she was in elementary school. Sonia knew that she wanted to be a champion synchronized swimmer. Today's competition would determine whether she would earn the opportunity to go to the national contest. She performed the required technical routines flawlessly and led the other swimmers going into the free competition, the portion of the program that counted most. This series of choreographed moves performed to music required a couple of qualities. For one particularly difficult element, Sonia had to remain upside down in the water for over half a minute. She could tell by the audience's thunderous applause when she emerged from the pool that the performance had gone well. Seconds later the judges confirmed it; Sonia was on her way to the national contest.

6. This series of choreographed moves performed to music required a couple of qualities?

Good writers describe the subject using details. How can the underlined words be better written to include exact details?

- A. some abilities that she had to develop
- B. specific physical qualities
- C. special moves
- D. great strength and control

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7. Which sentence would *not* belong in this paragraph?

- A. Sonia had worked hard for many years to get to this point.
- B. The routine had gone smoothly, and Sonia had done even better than she had anticipated.
- C. The cool water always felt wonderful to Sonia; she loved the smell of chlorine.
- D. Her dream, since childhood, was finally coming true.

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8. Which of these would be the best topic sentence for this paragraph?

- A. A synchronized swimming team will be sent to the Olympics.
- B. Sonia got a new swimsuit and cap for the competition.
- C. Only a few extremely talented athletes win competitions.
- D. For almost as long as she could remember, Sonia had wanted to go to the Olympics.

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**Language Subtest
Sample Items
Answer Key**

4.	A
3.	D
2.	B
1.	C
8.	D
7.	C
6.	D
5.	C

Reading Subtest

(Answer key on page 7.)

Reading Comprehension

Read the passage. Then read each question about the passage. Decide which is the best answer to the question. Mark the answer you have chosen.

The Witness Tree

A Story from Kazakhstan

Two men came before a judge in his court. “Give me justice! My neighbor has robbed me!” said one man.

“He’s lying,” the other protested. “I’ve done nothing wrong.”

“Let me hear what you both have to say,” the judge said.

The first man began. “A while ago I went on a journey. I left my life savings – a pot of gold coins – with my neighbor, he promised to guard the money while I was away. When I returned, he denied that he had ever seen my gold coins. He says I gave him nothing!”

“My neighbor is lying!” the second man said. “I know nothing about any pot of gold coins. He never gave me anything!”

“Before you left, did you tell anyone about leaving the coins with your neighbor? Did anyone see you give them to him?” the judge asked the first man.

The man replied, “For secrecy, I told no one. No one saw us because I asked my neighbor to meet me at night by a tree in the forest. There, in the dark, I gave him the coins.” The judge frowned. “It is best to have a human witness. Since there is none, we will have to ask the tree. Go to the forest. Ask the tree if it saw you give a pot of coins to your neighbor. My clerk will go with you to write down the tree’s testimony.”

The man and the clerk set off for the forest.

Meanwhile, the judge invited the neighbor to sit down. After a while he asked the neighbor, “Do you think they’ve reached the tree yet?”

The neighbor shook his head. “Not yet.”

Time passed. The judge asked again, “Do you think they’re there now?”

“No, not yet,” the neighbor answered.

More time passed. The judge asked again, “Shouldn’t they be there by now?”

The neighbor nodded. “Yes, they’re probably there.”

“Oh?” said the judge. “Didn’t you say your neighbor never gave you anything? How do you know where he’s going? How do you know how long it would take to arrive there if you’ve never been there? Bring back the gold you stole, or you’ll be in serious trouble.”

When the first man returned, the judge gave back his missing money.

“What did the tree say?” the judge asked.

“Nothing!” the bewildered man replied.

“But it revealed the truth anyway,” said the judge.

1. What was the man asked to do with his neighbor’s money?
 - A. Protect it
 - B. Bury it
 - C. Spend it
 - D. Divide it up

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2. The judge invited the neighbor to sit and wait because the judge –
 - A. knew the man was tired
 - B. wanted to find out where the tree was
 - C. had a plan to discover the truth
 - D. wanted to talk to someone

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3. People like the judge in this story can be described as –
 - A. dishonest
 - B. shrewd
 - C. generous
 - D. proud

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4. The story tells the reader –
 - A. how the neighbor was punished
 - B. why the man had trusted his neighbor
 - C. which man was lying
 - D. how far the man and the clerk walked

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5. A clue to predicting the outcome of the story occurs when the –
 - A. neighbor denies that he robbed the first man
 - B. judge is asked to settle the matter
 - C. clerk goes with the man who was robbed
 - D. judge says, “Oh?”

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6. Why would the robber assume that no one would find out his secret?
- A. He thought that the judge was dishonest.
 - B. He thought that he was smarter than the judge.
 - C. He thought his neighbor would not be able to find the tree.
 - D. He knew that trees cannot talk.

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7. This story was probably told in order to –
- A. share a true experience
 - B. help the reader settle disagreements
 - C. help the reader become rich
 - D. teach a lesson

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Reading Vocabulary.

Choose the word or group of words that means the same, or about the same, as the underlined word. Then mark the space for the answer you have chosen.

8. Amicable means the same as –
- A. friendly
 - B. anxious
 - C. jealous
 - D. patient

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Read the sentence in the box. Then choose the answer in which the underlined word is used in the same way.

9. The cold air mass will move south from Canada.

In which sentence does the word mass mean the same thing as in the sentence above?

- A. The storm warning of a blizzard caused mass concern.
- B. The oil mass spread quickly into the ocean.
- C. There was a mass of people gathering to watch the parade.
- D. The 100-member choir will mass in the auditorium on Saturday.

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As you read each sentence, use the other words in the sentence to help you figure out what the underlined word means.

10. His reassuring words mitigated our fears.
Mitigated means –
- A. reinforced
 - B. added to
 - C. caused
 - D. eased

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**Reading Subtest
Sample Items
Answer Key**

Reading Comprehension

1. A 5. D
2. C 6. B
3. B 7. D
4. C

Reading Vocabulary

8. A 10. D
9. B

Mathematics Section (Answer key on page 10.)

Read each question or problem carefully. Then answer the question or work the problem. Mark your answer.

- The Arctic Ocean has a surface area of about 14 million square kilometers, approximately 9.8 million square kilometers of which is covered by a polar ice mass. What is the surface area of this polar ice mass written in standard form?
 - 0.0000098 sq km
 - 0.000098 sq km
 - 9,800,000 sq km
 - 98,000,000 sq km

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- Cyndi borrowed \$390 from her parents when she went on the school ski trip. If she pays them 65% of her \$40 baby-sitting fees each month, how many months will it take her to pay back the entire \$390?
 - 10
 - 15
 - 26
 - 28

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- The total length of the world's major railroad routes is approximately $3\frac{1}{4}$ times the distance from Earth to the moon. This distance from Earth to the moon is close to 240,000 miles. Which measure is closest to the length of the world's major railroad routes?
 - 7.8×10^3 mi.
 - 7.8×10^4 mi.
 - 7.8×10^5 mi.
 - 7.8×10^6 mi.

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4.

Number of Term	Term
1	8
2	4
3	2
...	...
n^{th}	$8(0.5)^{n-1}$

What is the fifth term of the geometric sequence shown in the table above?

- 1.0
- 0.75
- 0.5
- 0.25

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- What value for x makes

$$\frac{2}{x-1} = \frac{5}{x+2} \text{ true?}$$

- 3
- 1
- 1
- 3

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- A river surveyor was creating a map to show the elevation changes in a river. The line that he used to describe the changes has the equation shown below.

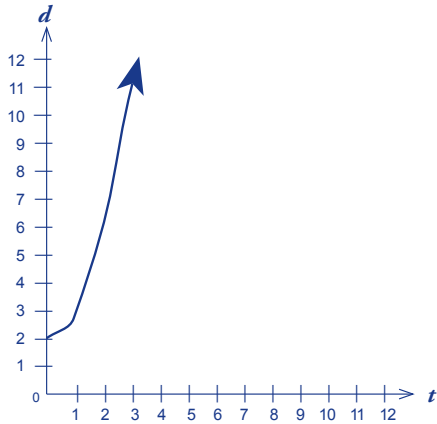
$$2x + 3y = 6$$

What is the slope of this line?

- $-\frac{3}{2}$
- $-\frac{2}{3}$
- $\frac{2}{3}$
- 2

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7. An airplane is moving down a runway with constant acceleration. The graph below shows the relationship between d , the distance from the beginning of the runway, and t , the time after the airplane begins to move.

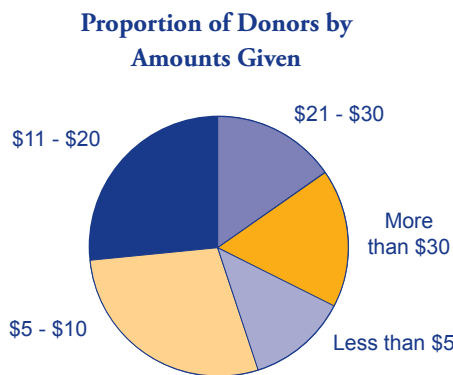


Which equation best represents this curve when $t \geq 0$?

- A. $d = \frac{t^2}{2}$
 B. $d = 2t^2$
 C. $d = t^2 - 2$
 D. $d = t^2 + 2$

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8. A group of students is collecting money to fund a bicycle path. A total of 280 people have donated. The circle graph below shows the proportion of donors by the amounts given.



Which is the closest to the number of people who gave more than \$20?

- A. 56
 B. 98
 C. 168
 D. 182

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9. The table below shows the lengths of the major north-to-south routes in the United States.

Major United States Routes

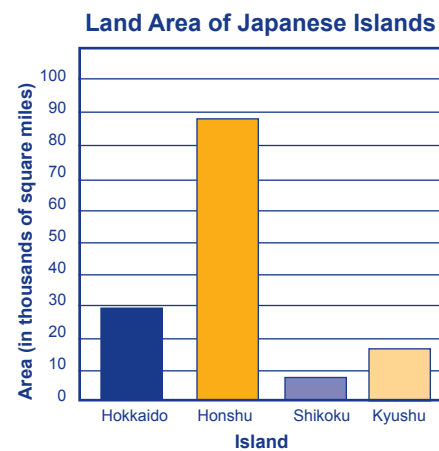
Interstate Number	Length of Highway (to the nearest 10 miles)
I-65	890
I-55	940
I-75	1790
I-15	1440
I-5	1380
I-35	1830
I-95	1890

To the nearer 10 miles, what is the difference between the mean and median of these lengths?

- A. 0
 B. 10
 C. 20
 D. 30

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10. Four of the islands of Japan account for about 96% of Japan's land area. The area of the 4 islands is shown in the bar graph below.



Which is closest to the total land area of Japan?

- A. Between 90,000 and 100,000 square miles
 B. Between 130,000 and 140,000 square miles
 C. Between 140,000 and 150,000 square miles
 D. Between 230,000 and 240,000 square miles

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11. Mr. Wu's biology class is writing group reports about the Hawaiian Islands. He has a total of 10 groups. Mr. Wu will assign an island and a topic at random to each of the groups. No two group assignments will be the same.

Five Islands: Hawaii, Maui, Lanai, Oahu, or Kauai

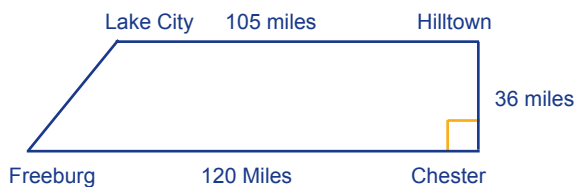
Topics: Plant Life or Animal Life

Linda and Kim are in different groups, but they both want to write about Kauai. What is the probability that both Linda's and Kim's groups will receive Kauai assignments?

- A. $\frac{1}{5}$
- B. $\frac{1}{45}$
- C. $\frac{1}{50}$
- D. $\frac{1}{90}$

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12. Each day a freight train leaves Lake City and travels to Hilltown, Chester, and Freeburg. Then it returns to Lake City. The train's route forms a trapezoid with a right angle as shown below.

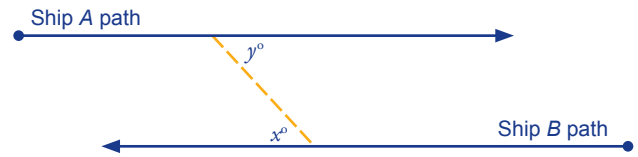


Which is closest to the distance in miles from Freeburg to Lake City?

- A. 51
- B. 43.8
- C. 39
- D. 32.7

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13. Cargo Ship *A*, carrying salmon from Alaskan waters, is traveling a linear path into port at Seattle. Cargo Ship *B*, from San Francisco, is traveling on a path parallel to the path of Cargo Ship *A*.



If the value of x is 42, what is the value of y ?

- A. 42
- B. 48
- C. 138
- D. 148

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14. Elaine has two suitcases that are similar rectangular solids. The length of the second suitcase is twice the length of the first suitcase. If the first suitcase has a volume of 1568 cubic inches, what is the volume of the second suitcase in cubic inches?

- A. 3136
- B. 6272
- C. 9408
- D. 12,544

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Mathematics Section
Sample Items
Answer Key

1.	C
2.	B
3.	C
4.	C
5.	A
6.	B
7.	D
8.	B
9.	B
10.	C
11.	B
12.	C
13.	A
14.	D