Appendix A: Task Difficulty and Mental Effort Questionnaire

In the following section, we would like you to tell us how you feel about the writing task by simply ticking (√) a number from 1 to 9. We are interested in your real situation and attitudes.

This task required extreme mental effort.

1. This task required no mental effort at all.



During this task, I felt extremely relaxed.

2. During this task I felt extremely nervous.



This task was extremely difficult.

3. This task was extremely easy.



On this task I did extremely well.

4. On this task I did not do well at all.



This task was not interesting at all.

5. This task was extremely interesting.



I want to do many more tasks like this.

6. I do not want to do more tasks like this.



**Great! You have completed the questionnaire.**

**Thank you for your cooperation!**

Appendix B: Writing Tasks

***Task 1 (simple task***[[1]](#footnote-1)***)***

Imagine you can choose two best roommates from the four candidates when the new semester starts (two students in each dormitory). Four properties of candidates: hobbies, personality, studying style and sleeping patterns are listed in the table as follows.

Read the descriptions carefully and make a considered choice of the best roommates. Write an argumentative essay. Please provide at least 3 reasons to make your decision clear and convincing. Please write at least 250 words.

The best roommates you choose: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name  Property | Nannan | Beibei | Niuniu | Dongdong |
| Hobbies | Watching movies;  Listening to music;  Reading books | Listening to music;  Blogging;  Playing the guitar | Photography;  Playing football;  Traveling | Listening to music;  Playing football;  Playing computer games |
| Personality | Introvert;  Good at listening to others;  Not good at communicating | Outgoing;  Positive and enthusiastic;  Happy to help others;  Sometimes, ignoring others’ feelings unconsciously | Like playing with others;  Not good at listening to others | Outgoing;  Humorous;  Weak self-discipline |
| Sleeping pattern | Early to bed, early to rise | Late to bed, early to rise | Early to bed, late to rise | Late to bed, late to rise |
| Studying style | He/she likes to study in a quiet place on his/her personal. | He/she likes to read out when he/she is studying. | He/she likes to study with others. | He/she likes to study on his/her personal. |

***Task 2 (complex task)***

Imagine you can choose four best roommates from the six candidates when the new semester starts (two students in each dormitory). Six properties of candidates: hobbies, personality, studying style, sleeping patterns, favorite subjects and individual sanitary habits are listed in the table as follows.

Read the descriptions carefully and make a considered choice of the best roommates. Write an argumentative essay. Please provide at least 3 reasons to make your decision clear and convincing. Please write at least 250 words.

The best roommates you choose: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name  Property | Nannan | Beibei | Niuniu | Dongdong | Kangkang | Xuxu |
| Hobbies | Watching movies;  Listening to music;  Reading books | Listening to music;  Blogging;  Playing the guitar | Photography;  Playing football;  Traveling | Listening to music;  Playing football;  Playing computer games | Playing the piano;  Listen to music;  Watching movies | Playing football;  Playing computer games;  Playing magic |
| Personality | Introvert;  Good at listening to others;  Not good at communicating | Outgoing;  Positive and enthusiastic;  Happy to help others;  Sometimes, ignoring others’ feelings unconsciously | Like playing with others;  Not good at listening to others | Outgoing;  Humorous;  Weak self-discipline | Shy;  Like to play with others;  Weak self-discipline | Like to communicate with others and also good at listening to others;  Outgoing, but sometimes kind of noisy |
| Sleeping pattern | Early to bed, early to rise | Late to bed, early to rise | Early to bed, late to rise | Late to bed, late to rise | Early to bed, late to rise | Late to bed, early to rise |
| Studying style | He/she likes to study in a quiet place on his/her personal. | He/she likes to read out when he/she is studying. | He/she likes to study with others. | He/she likes to study on his/her personal. | He/she likes to study in a quiet place on his/her personal. | He/she likes to read out in a low voice, when he/she is studying. |
| Favorite subjects | English, Chinese | Math, Music | Sports, Arts | Computers, Music | Music English | Math, Computer |
| Individual sanitary habits | Tidy, but not good at clean | Good at clean | Neutral | Good at clean | Not good at clean | Neutral |

1. The words of “simple task” or “complex task” were not shown in students’ writing prompts. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)