

Idea Development – Creative/Personal Writing

Knowing what I want to say *Focusing on the main point*
Adding important details *Getting rid of “filler”*
Identifying the purpose

5 My paper is clear, focused, and full of important details. I know my purpose (why I’m writing).

- You can tell I know a lot about this topic. I thought about it before writing.
- I can sum this paper up on one dear sentence: _____.
- I chose details that were interesting or would give reader new information; I left out information or facts everyone already knows (“filler”).
- Once you start reading, you will not want to stop.
- You can picture what I’m talking about. I *show* things happening in my writing; I don’t just *tell* about them.
- The purpose of this paper is _____ (to tell a story, give an opinion, explain something, etc.).

3 It’s a good beginning. You can get the general idea of what I’m trying to say. I need more details though.

- If I knew more about this topic, I could make it more interesting.
- Some of my “details” are really filler-things most readers probably know.
- More examples would help make my writing believable and informative.
- My topic feels *too* big. No wonder I don’t have room for details.
- I give readers the big picture. But if they want to know more, they’ll have to “fill in the blanks”.
- What’s the *one main thing* I’m trying to say? I don’t think it really stands out yet.
- I’m *pretty* sure my purpose is to _____ (tell a story, give an opinion, explain something etc.).

1 I’m Just figuring out what I want to say.

- Help! I need a LOT more information before I’m ready to write!
- I’m still thinking on paper. It just rambles on without saying much.
- I need details, details, *details!* Plus I need to get rid of the junk- the stuff I wrote just to fill space.
- A person reading this couldn’t really picture anything. It’s still out of focus.
- Could I sum this up in one sentence? Are you kidding? *I’m* not even sure *what* my purpose is.

Idea Development – Informational Writing

Ideas are all about information: information gathered through research, or pulled together from the writer’s experience. The main thesis, argument or story line is supported by carefully selected facts, details, examples or anecdotes that build understanding or hold a reader’s attention.

5 The writing is clear, well-supported or developed, and enhanced by the kind of detail that keeps readers reading.

- The writer selectively chooses *just* the right information to make the paper understandable, enlightening and interesting-without bogging down in trivia.
- Details work together to expand the main topic or develop a story, giving the whole piece a strong sense of focus.
- The writer’s knowledge, experience, insight or unique perspective lends the writing a satisfying ring of authenticity.
- The amount of detail is just right-not skimpy, not overwhelming.

3 The writer has made a solid beginning in defining a topic or mapping out a story line. It is easy to see where the paper is headed, though more expansion is needed to complete the picture.

- General, global information provides the big picture- and makes the reader long for specifics.
- Well-focused information blends with repetitive points, trivia or meanderings.
- The writer draws on *some* personal experience-but too often settles for generalities or clichéd thinking.
- Unneeded information may eat up space that should have gone to important details. Where’s the balance?

1 Sketchy, loosely information forces the reader to make inferences. Readers will likely notice more than one of these problems—

- The main topic is still unclear, out of focus- or not yet known, even to the writer.
- Missing, limited or unrelated details require the reader to fill in many blanks.
- List of “factlets” may be substituted for true development or expansion.
- Everything seems as important as everything else. What *is* the main point?

Organization – Creative/Personal Writing

Putting things in order Writing a lead
Writing a conclusion Linking ideas together

5 My paper is as clear and easy to follow as a good road map.

- My beginning (lead) pulls readers right in.
- Every detail falls in just the right place.
- You never feel lost.
- Everything in this paper relates to my main point or main story.
- You never wonder how one idea connects to another. I made those links clear.
- My paper ends in a good spot. My ending makes you think.

3 If you pay attention, you can follow my paper pretty well.

- Most things are in order. I might move *some* things around, though.
- I have a lead. It might not grab you, but hey—it's *there!*
- Most details relate to my main point or story, but now and then, I wander a little.
- Now and then, you might say, “What does this have to do with anything?”
- I tried to link ideas together. Sometimes, I tried so hard that my transitions (*My first point, My second point, My final point etc.*) got in the way. I overdid it.
- I have a conclusion. It needs work, but I have one.

1 Hey—do you see any pattern here? I don't.

- I'm not sure where I'm going—so it's pretty hard for me to guide a reader!
- A beginning? Actually, I just started in...
- I pretty much wrote things down as I thought of them. I'm not sure they're in any kind of order.
- Things are kind of jumbled together, like junk in the attic.
- Linking ideas? I haven't gotten that far yet. I'm not sure what goes with that.
- The main point? I guess that's for the reader to figure out!
- An ending? Not really. I just stopped when I ran out of ideas.

Organization – Informational Writing

Organization is the internal structure of the piece. It is both skeleton and glue. Strong organization begins with a purposeful, engaging lead and wraps up with a thought-provoking close. In between, the writer takes care to link each detail or new development to a larger picture, building to a turning point or key revelation and always including strong transitions that form a kind of safety net for the reader, who never feels lost.

5 The order, presentation, or internal structure of the piece is compelling and guides the reader purposefully through the text.

- The entire piece has a strong sense of direction and balance. Main ideas or key points stand out clearly.
- An inviting lead draws the reader in; a satisfying conclusion ties up loose ends.
- Details seem to fit right where they are placed, making the text easy to follow and understand.
- Transitions are strong but natural.
- Pacing feels natural and effective; the writer knows just when to linger over details and when to get moving.
- Organization flows so smoothly the reader does not need to think about it.

3 The organizational structure allows the reader to move through the text without undue confusion.

- Sequencing of main ideas seems reasonably appropriate; the reader rarely, if ever, feels lost.
- The introduction and conclusion are recognizable and functional.
- Transitions are usually present, but sometimes a little too obvious or too structured.
- Structure may be so dominant or predictable that it literally smothers the ideas and voice.
- Information is *mostly* presented in an orderly if not quite compelling fashion.

1 Ideas, details or events seem loosely strung together. Readers will likely notice more than one of these problems—

- As yet, there is no clear sense of direction to carry the reader from point to point.
- No real lead sets up what follows.
- No real conclusion wraps things up.
- Missing or unclear transitions force the reader to make giant leaps.
- Sequencing feels more random than purposeful, often leaving the reader with a sense of being adrift.
- The writing does not move purposefully toward any main message or turning point.

Voice – Creative/Personal Writing

*Putting yourself into your writing
Liking your topic-and letting it show!*

*Knowing our audience
Matching voice to purpose*

5 My personal fingerprints are on this piece of writing.

- You can hear my voice in every line.
- You can tell I care about this topic.
- I know who my audience is, and I used a voice that is right for that audience.
- I also know my purpose (to tell a story, to write a business letter, to make an argument), and I used a voice right for that purpose.
- I write with confidence-because I know my topic well.
- When I read this piece aloud, I like the sound of it.
- My voice will get-and hold-your attention.

3 You will probably hear *moments* of voice in this writing.

- Sometimes this sounds just like me. Other times it sounds as if anyone could have written it.
- I don't mind this topic, but it doesn't exactly fascinate me. I guess you can tell that sometimes.
- I know who my audience is, but I didn't really think about making my voice just right for them.
- I also know my purpose (to tell a story, to write a business letter, to make an argument), but I didn't really try to match my voice to that purpose.
- I'd be more confident if I knew a little more about this topic.
- When I read this piece aloud, I like parts of it.
- You might notice my voice-but I'm not sure it would make anyone sit up and listen.

1 I don't feel as if I put that much energy into this writing. I'm not sure it sounds like me. Maybe it doesn't have much voice. Or maybe it's the wrong voice.

- I don't hear my voice in this writing.
- I do not find this topic interesting, so why try to make it interesting for others?
- I'm not sure who my audience is. Would this voice suit them? Beats me.
- Matching voice to purpose? What *is* the right voice for a story? A business letter? A personal essay? A letter to the editor? I have to think about this.
- I don't know enough about this topic yet to sound confident.
- I don't like my writing that much when I read it aloud. It's just not me. And it sure won't get anybody's attention.

Voice – Informational Writing

Voice is the presence of the writer on the page. When the writer's passion for the topic and concern for the audience are strong, the text virtually dances with life and energy, and the reader feels a strong connection to both writing and writer.

5 The writer's energy and passion for the subject drive the writing, making the text lively, expressive, and engaging.

- The tone and flavor of the piece fit the topic, purpose, and audience well.
- The writing bears the clear imprint of this particular writer.
- The writer seems to know his/her audience, and shows a strong concern for their informational needs and interests.
- Narrative text is open and honest.
- Expository or persuasive text is provocative, lively, and designed to hold a reader's attention.

3 The writer seems sincere and willing to communicate with the reader on a functional, if somewhat distant level.

- The tone and flavor of the piece could be altered slightly to better fit the topic, purpose, or audience.
- The writer had not quite found his or her voice but is experimenting-and the result is pleasant or intriguing, if not unique.
- Though clearly aware of an audience, the writer only occasionally speaks right to that audience or invites the audience "in".
- The writer often seems reluctant to "let go" and thus holds individuality, passion, and spontaneity in check. Nevertheless, voice pops out on occasion.
- The writer is "there"-then gone. Present-but distant, reserved, hesitant.

1 The writer seems definitely distanced from topic, audience, or both: as a result, the text may lack life, spirit, or energy. Readers are likely to notice one or more of these problems-

- The tone and flavor of the piece are inappropriate for the topic, purpose, and/or audience.
- The writer does not seem to reach out to the audience or to anticipate their interests and needs.
- Though it may communicate on a functional level, the writing takes no risks and does not engage, energize or move the reader.
- The writer does not project enough personal enthusiasm for the topic to make it come alive for the reader.

Word Choice – Creative/Personal Writing

Painting word pictures

Avoiding fluff (*nice*, *special*)

Finding the right words

Favoring strong verbs

5 The words and phrases I've chosen seem exactly right to capture my thoughts and feelings.

- Every word or phrase helps make my meaning clear.
- Words are used correctly. *I know*-I checked.
- You can tell I am Writing to inform (or persuade or amuse) my reader-not to impress someone with overdone language.
- I used some everyday language, but in a slightly new and appealing way.
- Do you have some favorite words or phrases in this piece? I do.
- I counted on good strong verbs (*squash*, *wheedle*, *cajole*, *renounce*) and precise nouns. You won't find mountains of modifiers weighing down my writing.
- I avoided the big word choice pitfalls: redundancy; vague, fluffy language (*nice*, *special*, *great*, *exciting*); jargon; and overblown, flowery language that annoy some readers.

3 My language communicates; it gets the job done.

- You can understand my basic meaning. Some language is too general, however (*We had a fun time*).
- Most words are used correctly. I didn't often stretch hard, though.
- Here and there I might have tried to impress my reader-even if it took a thesaurus to do it.
- I may have forgotten to define some technical terms (if used).
- Strong verbs? What's wrong with *is*, *are*, *was*, *were*? And you can't have too many marvelous modifiers—can you?
- Did I get overly flowery in spots? (*Her wild mane of hair cascaded tumultuously over her pearly shoulders.*)_ well, chalk it off to romantic novel syndrome.

1 What does this mean? I'm not sure myself.

- Some of this wording is so vague I don't know if it means anything: *It was really fun and stuff, but then you know, a lot of stuff changed in some ways.*
- I think I misused too many words: *She had a magnanimous hole emanating from the toe of her stocking.*
- A lot of my redundant phrases get a little redundant. That happens a lot.
- Inflated or jargonistic language makes my paper ponderous and hard to read: *I endeavor to imitate the goals that society has ratified.*
- I can picture my reader saying, "*Oh, come off it!*" OR maybe, "*what on earth does he/she mean??*"

Word Choice – Informational Writing

Word choice is precision in the use of words—wordsmithery. It is the love of language, a passion for works, combined with a skill in choosing words that create just the mood, impression, or word picture the writer wants to instill in the heart and mind of the reader.

5 Precise, vivid, natural language paints a strong, clear, and complete picture in the reader's mind.

- The writer's message is remarkably clear and easy to interpret.
- Phrasing is original—even memorable—yet the language is never overdone.
- Lively verbs lend the writing power.
- Striking words or phrases linger in the writer's memory, often-prompting connections, memories, reflective thoughts, or insights.

3 The language communicates in a routine, workable manner; it gets the job done.

- Most words are correct and adequate, even if not striking.
- A memorable phrase here or there strikes a spark, leaving the reader hungry for more.
- Attempts at colorful language re full of promise, even when they lack restraint or control. Jargon may be mildly annoying, but it does not impede readability.
- General meaning is clear, but the brush is too broad to convey subtleties.

1 The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary—or uses language that simply does not speak to the intended audience. Readers are likely to notice more than one of these problems-

- Vague words and phrases (she was *nice*...*It was wonderful*...*The new budget had impact*) convey only the most general sorts of messages.
- Clichés or redundant phrases encourage the reader to skim, not linger.
- Words are used incorrectly ("*The bus impelled* into the hotel").
- Inflated or jargonistic language makes the text ponderous and hard to read.
- The reader has trouble grasping the writer's intended message.

Sentence Fluency – Creative/Personal Writing

Giving it readability

Varying beginnings

Varying length

Reading aloud to see how it sounds

5 It's a little like music—or poetry. It flows, it has rhythm, and it's easy to read aloud.

- A long sentence here, a short sentence there: 5you won't be bored.
- Read through my sentence beginnings; notice the variety.
- I have used connecting phrases to show how ideas relate: *however, then, next, after a while, besides, moreover, on the other hand, because, when, etc.*
- "Filler" has been cut, so my sentences are lean, direct, and to the point.
- You can read this writing with expression. It makes sense—and, it has style.

This text hums along. Sentences are clear and readable.

- It could be smoother, but it has some good moments.
- I've noticed something about my sentences. Most are about the same length. Maybe I should shorten some. Maybe I should lengthen others.
- I guess I did get into a rut with sentence beginnings. I guess I could use more variety. I guess I'll fix that.
- I have used some connecting phrases: *however, then, next, after a while, etc.* A few more would not hurt.
- A few sentences, like this one, are just a little on the wordy side and could stand to be cut so they wouldn't be quite so wordy.
- OK, so it's not musical yet, but you can read it aloud if you take your time.

This is a challenge to read aloud. Even for me.

- The way I've written some sentences just go right into the next sentence it's confusing to figure out where does the second sentence begin?
- I put in so many connecting words—*and, so then, because*—that it's like I was trying to write one big sentence!
- Some parts are choppy. Some sentences are too short. They need to be longer. They need to be graceful. They need to be combined.
- Some of my sentences are way, way too long and also way, way too wordy like I was just writing to keep the pencil moving or something. Some have missing.
- This is VERY HARD to read aloud *even if you practice*. It's not smooth, and some of it doesn't even make sense.
- I need to make this sound more like the way people talk.

Sentence Fluency – Informational Writing

Sentence fluency is finely crafted construction combined with a sense of rhythm and grace. Strong sentences are built through logic, creative phrasing, parallel construction, alliteration, absence of redundancy, variety in sentence length and structure, and a true effort to create language that literally cries out to be spoken aloud.

5 An easy flow and rhythm combined with sentence sense and clarity make this text a delight to read aloud.

- Sentences are well crafted, with a strong and varied structure that invites expressive oral reading.
- Purposeful sentence beginnings show how each sentence relates to and builds on the one before.
- The writing has cadence, as if the writer hears the beat in his or head.
- Sentences vary in both structure and length, making the reading pleasant and natural, never monotonous.
- Fragments, if used, add style.

3 The text hums along with a steady beat.

- Sentences are mostly grammatical and fairly easy to read aloud, given a little rehearsal.
- Graceful, natural phrasing intermingles with more mechanical structure.
- Some variation in length and structure enhances fluency.
- Some purposeful sentence beginnings aid the reader's interpretation of the text.
- Fragments may be present; some are stylistically effective.

1 A fair interpretive oral reading of this text takes practice. The reader is likely to notice *more than one* of these problems—

- Irregular or unusual word patterns make it hard to tell where one sentence ends and the next begin. Some word patterns may not be sentences at all.
- Ideas are hooked together by numerous connectives (and...but...so then) to create one gangly endless "sentence".
- Short, choppy sentences bump the reader through the text.
- Repetitive sentence patterns put the reader to sleep.
- Transitions re either missing or so overdone they become distracting.
- The reader must often pause and reread for meaning.
- Fragments, if used, seem accidental; they do not work.

Conventions – Creative/Personal Writing

Almost anything a copy editor would attend to falls under the heading of conventions. This includes punctuation, spelling, grammar and usage, capitalization, and paragraphing—the spit-and-polish phase of preparing a document for publication. It does not (in this scoring guide) include layout, formatting, or handwriting.

5 The writer shows excellent control over a wide range of standard writing conventions and uses them with accuracy and (when appropriate) creativity and style to enhance meaning.

- Errors are so few and so minor that a reader can easily overlook them unless searching for them specifically.
- The text appears clean, edited, and polished.
- Older writers (grade 6 and up) create text of sufficient length and complexity to demonstrate control of conventions appropriate for their age and experience.
- The text is easy to mentally process; there is nothing to distract or confuse a reader.
- Only light touch-ups would be required to polish the text for publication.

3 The writer shows reasonable control over the most widely used writing conventions and applies them with fair consistency to create text that is adequately readable.

- There are enough errors to distract an attentive reader somewhat; however, errors do not seriously impair readability or obscure meaning.
- It is easy enough for an experienced reader to get through the text without stumbling, but the writing clarity needs polishing.
- The paper reads much like a second rough draft—readable, but lacking close attention to conventions.
- Moderate editing would be required to get the text ready for publication.

1 The writer demonstrates limited control even over widely used writing conventions. The reader is likely to notice more than one of the following problems—

- Errors are sufficiently frequent and/or serious enough to be distracting; it is hard for the reader to focus on ideas, organization, or voice.
- The reader may need to read once to decode, then again to interpret and respond to the text.
- The paper reads like a first rough draft, scribbled hastily without thought for conventions.
- Extensive editing would be required to prepare the text for publication.

Conventions – Informational Writing

Proofreading *Checking sources to make sure it's right*
Editing *Using editing tool (dictionary, handbook, spell checker, etc.)*

5 I know my conventions and it shows. This is ready to publish. I know because I proofread it—*carefully*.

- An editor wouldn't have much to do on this paper; you'd have to hunt for errors.
- The text is clean, edited and corrected.
- Spelling, punctuation, capitals and grammar are all correct.
- Paragraphs show where I switch topics or where a new person begins to speak.
- Only light touch-ups would be required to polish the text for publication.
- A reader will breeze right through this text it's easy to mentally process.
- Well-used conventions help make meaning clear.

3 My conventions are getting there. You'll probably notice a few errors, but they won't keep you from understanding the meaning.

- I read through it. I made some corrections. I'd need more to do more if I wanted to publish it.
- Spelling is correct on simple words. On more difficult words, you might find some minor errors.
- I think I did a pretty good job on capitals.
- My punctuation, is pretty good except I'm not sure about all my commas and I might have used too many exclamation points!!
- It reads like a second draft—not too rough, but definitely needs work.
- Conventions aren't strong enough to enhance meaning, but they don't really get in the way, either.

1 This paper needs editing! You might need to read it once to decode it, and then again to think about the meaning.

- Even looking thru hear I see lots of errors.
- My spelling needs work, so does my punctuation so do my capital letters?
- I might have some errors in grammar. My subjects and verbs doesn't always agree.
- I scribbled this down in a Big Hurry. I haven't had time to edit it yet it needs work
- Problems with conventions get in the way of meaning.