

Six-Trait Writing Rubric, Student-Friendly Version (Grades 3–8)

Ideas

5 That’s it! Focused, clear, specific, concise

- My writing brims with details that hold a reader’s attention. The main point is very focused and easy to understand.
- I think a reader would learn something reading this.
- I showed what was happening (“The wildly spiraling tornado aimed straight for our barn”) rather than just telling (“It was scary”).
- My topic is small and focused: “What to do when a tornado hits.”
- Interesting tidbits (“You hear a tornado before you see it”) keep my readers reading; no one will get bored and doze off reading this.
- I included what was important (whether a tornado can really pick up a house) and left out trivia and details not related to my topic (names of hurricanes since 1900).
- I could easily answer the question: What is the point of this paper or this story?

3 On my way—Ready for serious revision

- A reader would understand my MAIN idea. I could use more information, though. Also, I need to get choosy and toss out details that do not matter.
- Some details are important and interesting: “She always wore non-matching socks.” “The clouds were the color of tarnished pewter.” Other details are too general or are things everyone already knows: “She was nice.” “It was a July day in Arizona. The weather was warm.”
- My topic is still too big: “Weather,” “World Peace,” “All about Computers.”
- I think a reader would still have some important questions: “Who’s Pearl? I can’t tell if she’s your aunt or your pet goldfish.” “Does global warming affect weather?” “What actually caused the hot air balloon to crash? I kept waiting for your explanation.”

1 Just beginning

- Someone else who reads my paper might have trouble figuring out what I’m trying to say.
- I might not know enough yet about this topic to write.
- My details are vague: “It was fun and stuff.”
- I’m still thinking on paper. I’m looking for an idea.
- I’m not sure what my topic is, OR, maybe my topic is too big: “All about Earth.”

Organization

5 That's it! Clear and compelling, easy to follow!

- I give my reader a strong sense of direction. The structure of my paper helps make the meaning clear.
- My opening gets a reader's attention and gives a clue about what's coming.
- Everything seems in order. You won't feel like reshuffling the deck.
- I've made the connections so clear you'll see just how details link to the main idea.
- The pacing is just right. I sped along when there wasn't much to tell, but slowed down when details and close-ups were needed.
- I didn't stop suddenly or drag the paper out. I ended in a good spot—and with a good thought. My conclusion will make you linger a moment.

3 On my way—Ready for serious revision

- It's partly smooth, partly bumpy. Some shape. Some direction. You won't feel lost if you pay attention!
- I have a beginning, but I'm not sure it's a grabber. How many readers will keep going?
- Usually, you can see how I got from point to point, but you might need to make some leaps.
- Most things are in the right spot. Some things might need to be moved.
- I have a conclusion. It might not be as punchy or insightful as I'd like.

1 Just beginning

- My writing doesn't have a real shape or direction yet.
- I'm not sure where to begin or where to go next.
- What goes with what?
- How does my information connect to the main idea?
- Ideas seem jumbled, scrambled. It's just a list of stuff.
- How do I end this?

Voice

5 **That's it! It's me! Individual, expressive, engaging . . . hear it?**

- You could tell this was mine if you knew me. It's personal and unique—like fingerprints.
- I have put my personal stamp on this paper.
- I'm speaking right to the reader. I picture my reader. I imagine how s/he will feel reading this.
- I want the reader to feel what I feel, to see what I see.
- Because I'm fascinated by this topic, my reader will be curious and involved, too. It's a journey of discovery for both of us.
- The tone (humorous, serious, businesslike, friendly) and style (casual and chatty or formal and professional) are just right for my topic and for my audience.

3 **On my way—Ready for serious revision**

- I hear myself in spots. My voice booms through for a moment here and there—then fades to a whisper.
- I don't think you'll fall asleep, but it isn't strong enough yet to make you laugh, cry, or pound the table.
- I feel OK about this topic. I might like it more if I knew more or connected it to my own experience.
- Sometimes I'm speaking to the reader. Other times, I don't even think about having a reader.
- My writing is right on the edge of being funny, scary, dramatic, or strong. I just can't seem to get there.

1 **Just beginning**

- I don't feel engaged by this topic, so how can I get a reader interested?
- If you didn't know, you couldn't tell who wrote this. There isn't that much of me in here.
- This writing might be flat, but it feels safe. I'm not taking any risks here.
- To tell you the truth, this topic bores me. I guess it shows.
- I've hidden behind a lot of generalities: "We should all get an education." "War is brutal."
- I've said what millions of others have said. It's not personal or individual.

Word Choice

5 That's it! Fresh, original, precise. Every word counts.

- I searched and I stretched to find just the right words to make my meaning clear.
- Look at my energetic verbs: leaped, tumbled, raged, flailed, cowed, quaked, moped.
- Some words and phrases will linger in your memory . . . “The pond was alive with frogs.” “I went headfirst into murky, shadowy waters.”
- My words help the reader picture what I'm talking about, and understand my message.
- Not a word is misused. Every word carries its weight.
- I've used words that will be appealing, informative, and understandable to my reader.
- No clichés, no redundancy—except for effect. I rejected jargon in favor of language that speaks to readers.

3 On my way—Ready for serious revision

- These words get the general message across, but I don't see many “quotable moments.”
- My reader will figure out what I mean, but I'm not stretching here.
- I'm settling for basic meaning. It's clear. But it could use imagination, flair, pizzazz.
- Did I write to impress? Well, I may have engaged in the practice of jargonistic overinflated expressionism for the purpose of creating an impression . . .
- Tired clichés are like little anchors in my paper: “Bright and early,” “Quick as a flash.” But I do have an original phrase or two—“Freeze drying is a sort of mummification of the 90s.”

1 Just beginning

- I can just hear my reader saying, “What did you mean by this?”
- My words are too general and vague to paint pictures: “Something neat happened.” “It was great.” “She was special.” “We liked to do things and stuff together.”
- Some of my words are mistaken—oops! I mean misused.
- I use the same words over and over and over; it's just those same words over and over. They're words, and they're the same. And I use them over and over until my paper is over.

Sentence Fluency

5 That's it! Smooth, rhythmic, easy to read. It just flows along.

- These sentences almost sing. It is very easy to read this paper aloud with lots of inflection.
- Some sentences are long and stretchy, some short and snappy.
- Sentence beginnings vary and show how ideas connect with phrases like . . . As a matter of fact, Next, On the other hand, Taking a closer look at the evidence, In addition.
- Excess baggage has been cast off. These sentences are lean and clean.

3 On my way—Ready for serious revision

- It's pretty easy to read aloud if you take your time, but I wish I sounded smoother in places.
- I've noticed something about my sentences. My sentences are all about the same length. Some of my sentences could be combined. Some of my sentences could be shortened.
- I could use some connecting phrases . . . When this happened . . . Later . . . Another thing to consider . . . For example . . . Nevertheless . . . However . . . to show how ideas are linked.
- These sentences are readable and reasonably clear, but they are way too wordy. I should cut some deadwood.
- Here and there, I really like the way I strung words together. In some places my writing is smooth—easy to read.

1 Just beginning

- This paper is hard to read aloud, even with practice.
- As I read, I find myself stopping, going back, rechecking the meaning.
- I'm having a hard time telling where one sentence ends and the next begins.
- Help! Some of these sentences don't make sense.
- All my sentences begin with the same two or three words.
- I've got a problem . . . Either everything is strung together in one endless sentence, OR many choppy tiny sentences make for a bump-bump-bumpy ride.
- I'd need to do a lot of oral editing (putting words in, taking words out) to make this clear for a reader.

Conventions

5 That's it! Edited, polished, correct. Beautiful!

- There are so few errors in this paper, it would be a snap to get it ready to publish.
- I have used capitals correctly.
- My spelling is accurate; I have checked words I did not know.
- Paragraph indentations clearly show where discussion of a new topic begins.
- Punctuation is used correctly and makes it easy to read and interpret each sentence.
- Grammar and usage are correct and consistent.
- My conventions are as formal as they need to be, given my purpose and audience.

3 On my way—Ready for serious editing

- I took a look. I made corrections. But some bothersome little mistakes still need cleaning up.
- You won't find BIG GLARING errors—the kind that make it hard to understand what I mean.
- Little, hard-to-spot errors? Well, you WILL find sum—uh, make that *some*.
- Spelling is correct on most simple words. I may have errors on bigger words.
- Sentences and most proper nouns begin with capitals.
- I used paragraphs. Do they ALL begin in the right spots? I need to check.
- Minor problems with grammar or usage could make a careful reader pause now and then. Subjects and verbs agree, but I'm not always sure about *who* and *whom* or *me*, *myself*, and *I*.
- My paper is readable, but it's a draft away from “ready” when it comes to editing.

1 Just beginning

- You may need to read once to decode, then again to focus on meaning.
- Speling errors ar comen, even on simple words.
- I sometime's, used “punctuation” where it wasnt needed and in other place's I forgot
- I've GoT capiTaL LetteRs scatteRed arouND, or else i forgot to use them at all.
- When do you indent again? After each sentence? Each page? Every three inches?
- The truth is, I haven't spent much time editing this paper, yet.