

5-POINT 3-12 WRITER'S RUBRIC

IDEAS

- 5** This paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme.
- A. The topic is **narrow** and **manageable**.
 - B. **Relevant, showing vs. telling, quality details** give the reader important information that goes **beyond the obvious** or predictable.
 - C. **Accurate details** are present to support the main ideas.
 - D. The writer seems to be writing from **knowledge** or **experience**; the ideas are **fresh** and **original**.
 - E. The reader's questions are **anticipated and answered**.
 - F. **Insight**—an understanding of life and a knack for picking out what is significant—is an indicator of high level performance, though not required.
- 3** The writer is beginning to define the topic, even though development is still basic or general.
- A. The topic is fairly broad; however, you can see where the writer is headed.
 - B. Support is attempted, but doesn't go far enough yet in fleshing out the key issues or story line.
 - C. Ideas are reasonably clear, though they may not be detailed, personalized, accurate, or expanded enough to show in-depth understanding or a strong sense of purpose.
 - D. The writer seems to be drawing on knowledge or experience, but has difficulty going from general observations to specifics.
 - E. The reader is left with questions. More information is needed to "fill in the blanks."
 - F. The writer generally stays on the topic but does not develop a clear theme. The writer has not yet focused the topic past the obvious.
- 1** As yet, the paper has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. To extract meaning from the text, the reader must make inferences based on sketchy or missing details. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:
- A. The writer is still in search of a topic, brainstorming, or has not yet decided what the main idea of the piece will be.
 - B. Information is limited or unclear or the length is not adequate for development.
 - C. The idea is a simple restatement of the topic or an answer to the question with little or no attention to detail.
 - D. The writer has not begun to define the topic in a meaningful, personal way.
 - E. Everything seems as important as everything else; the reader has a hard time sifting out what is important.
 - F. The text may be repetitious, or may read like a collection of disconnected, random thoughts with no discernable point.

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ORGANIZATION

5 The organization enhances and showcases the central idea or theme. The order, structure, or presentation of information is compelling and moves the reader through the text.

- A. An **inviting introduction** draws the reader in; a **satisfying conclusion** leaves the reader with a sense of closure and resolution.
- B. **Thoughtful transitions** clearly show how ideas connect.
- C. Details seem to fit where they're placed; **sequencing is logical** and **effective**.
- D. **Pacing is well controlled**; the writer knows when to slow down and elaborate, and when to pick up the pace and move on.
- E. The **title**, if desired, is **original** and captures the central theme of the piece.
- F. The choice of structure matches the **purpose** and **audience**, with effective paragraph breaks.

3 The organizational structure is strong enough to move the reader through the text without too much confusion.

- A. The paper has a recognizable introduction and conclusion. The introduction may not create a strong sense of anticipation; the conclusion may not tie-up all loose ends.
- B. Transitions sometimes work, at other times, connections between ideas are unclear.
- C. Sequencing shows some logic, but not under control enough that it consistently supports the development of ideas. The structure may be predictable taking attention away from the content.
- D. Pacing is fairly well controlled, though the writer sometimes lunges ahead too quickly or spends too much time on details that do not matter.
- E. A title (if desired) is present, although it may be uninspired or an obvious restatement of the prompt or topic.
- F. The organization sometimes supports the main point or story line, with an attempt at paragraphing.

1 The writing lacks a clear sense of direction. Ideas, details, or events seem strung together in a loose or random fashion; there is no identifiable internal structure. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:

- A. There is no real lead to set-up what follows, no effective conclusion to wrap things up.
- B. Connections between ideas are confusing or absent.
- C. Sequence is random and needs lots of work.
- D. Pacing feels awkward; the writer slows to a crawl when the reader wants to move on, and vice versa.
- E. No title is present (if requested) or, if present, does not reflect the content.
- F. Problems with organization make it hard for the reader to understand the main point or story line, with little or no attempt at paragraph breaks.

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VOICE

5 The writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that is individual, compelling, and engaging. The writer crafts the writing with an awareness and respect for the audience and the purpose for writing.

- A. The writer connects strongly with the **audience** through the intriguing focus of the topic, selection of relevant details, and the use of natural, engaging language.
- B. The **purpose** of the writing is accurately reflected in the writer's choice of individual and compelling content, and the arrangement of ideas.
- C. The writer takes a **risk** by the inclusion of personal details that reveal the person behind the words.
- D. **Expository or persuasive** writing reflects a strong commitment to the topic by the careful selection of ideas that show why the reader needs to know this.
- E. **Narrative** writing is personal and engaging, and makes you think about the author's ideas or point of view.

3 The writer seems sincere, but not fully engaged or involved. The writing has discernable purpose, but is not compelling.

- A. The writing attempts to connect with the audience in an earnest, pleasing, but impersonal manner
- B. The writer seems aware of a purpose, and attempts to select content and structures that reflect it.
- C. The writer occasionally reveals personal details, but primarily avoids risk.
- D. Expository or persuasive writing lacks consistent engagement with the topic, and fails to use ideas to build credibility.
- E. Narrative writing is sincere, but does not reflect a unique or individual perspective on the topic.

1 The writer seems indifferent to the topic and the content. The writing lacks purpose and audience engagement.

- A. The writer's ideas and language fail to connect with the audience.
- B. The writer has no clear purpose, and the chosen style does not match the content or ideas.
- C. The writing is risk free, and reveals nothing about the author.
- D. Expository or persuasive writing is lifeless and mechanical, or lacks accurate information.
- E. Narrative: The development of the topic is so limited that no point of view is discernable.

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WORD CHOICE

5 Words convey the intended message in a precise, interesting, and natural way. The words are powerful and engaging.

- A. Words are **specific** and **accurate**. It is easy to understand just what the writer means.
- B. **Striking words and phrases** often catch the reader's eye and linger in the reader's mind.
- C. Language and phrasing are **natural, effective, and appropriate** for the audience.
- D. **Lively verbs** add energy while **specific nouns** and **modifiers** add depth.
- E. Choices in language **enhance** the **meaning** and **clarify** understanding.
- F. **Precision** is obvious. The writer has taken care to put just the right word or phrase in just the right spot.

3 The language is functional, even if it lacks much energy. It is easy to figure out the writer's meaning on a general level.

- A. Words are adequate and correct in a general sense, and they support the meaning by not getting in the way.
- B. Familiar words and phrases communicate but rarely capture the reader's imagination.
- C. Attempts at colorful language show a willingness to stretch and grow but sometimes reach beyond the audience (thesaurus overload!).
- D. Despite a few successes, the writing is marked by passive verbs, everyday nouns, and mundane modifiers.
- E. The words and phrases are functional with only one or two fine moments.
- F. The words may be refined in a couple of places, but the language looks more like the first thing that popped into the writer's mind.

1 The writer demonstrates a limited vocabulary or has not searched for words to convey specific meaning.

- A. Words are so nonspecific and distracting that only a very limited meaning comes through.
- B. Problems with language leave the reader wondering. Many of the words just don't work in this piece.
- C. Audience has not been considered. Language is used incorrectly making the message secondary to the misfires with the words.
- D. Limited vocabulary and/or misused parts of speech seriously impair understanding.
- E. Words and phrases are so unimaginative and lifeless that they detract from the meaning.
- F. Jargon or clichés distract or mislead. Redundancy may distract the reader.

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SENTENCE FLUENCY

5 The writing has an easy flow, rhythm, and cadence. Sentences are well built, with strong and varied structure that invites expressive oral reading.

- A. Sentences are constructed in a way that underscores and enhances the **meaning**.
- B. Sentences **vary in length as well as structure**. Fragments, if used, add style. Dialogue, if present, sounds natural.
- C. **Purposeful** and **varied sentence beginnings** add variety and energy.
- D. The use of **creative and appropriate connectives** between sentences and thoughts shows how each relates to, and builds upon, the one before it.
- E. The writing has **cadence**; the writer has thought about the sound of the words as well as the meaning. The first time you read it aloud is a breeze.

3 The text hums along with a steady beat, but tends to be more pleasant or businesslike than musical, more mechanical than fluid.

- A. Although sentences may not seem artfully crafted or musical, they get the job done in a routine fashion.
- B. Sentences are usually constructed correctly; they hang together; they are sound.
- C. Sentence beginnings are not ALL alike; some variety is attempted.
- D. The reader sometimes has to hunt for clues (e.g., connecting words and phrases like however, therefore, naturally, after a while, on the other hand, to be specific, for example, next, first of all, later, but as it turned out, although, etc.) that show how sentences interrelate.
- E. Parts of the text invite expressive oral reading; others may be stiff, awkward, choppy, or gangly.

1 The reader has to practice quite a bit in order to give this paper a fair interpretive reading. The writing reflects more than one of the following problems:

- A. Sentences are choppy, incomplete, rambling or awkward; they need work. Phrasing does not sound natural. The patterns may create a sing-song rhythm, or a chop-chop cadence that lulls the reader to sleep.
- B. There is little to no “sentence sense” present. Even if this piece was flawlessly edited, the sentences would not hang together.
- C. Many sentences begin the same way—and may follow the same patterns (e.g., subject-verb-object) in a monotonous pattern.
- D. Endless connectives (and, and so, but then, because, and then, etc.) or a complete lack of connectives create a massive jumble of language.
- E. The text does not invite expressive oral reading.

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CONVENTIONS

5 The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, usage, paragraphing) and uses conventions effectively. Errors tend to be so few that just minor touch-ups would get this piece ready to publish.

- A. Spelling is generally correct, even on more difficult words.
- B. The punctuation is accurate, even creative, and guides the reader through the text.
- C. A thorough understanding and consistent application of **capitalization** skills are present.
- D. **Grammar and usage are correct** and contribute to clarity and style.
- E. **Paragraphing tends to be sound** and reinforces the organizational structure.
- F. The writer **may manipulate conventions** for stylistic effect—and it works! The piece is very close to being **ready to publish**.

3 The writer shows reasonable control over a limited range of standard writing conventions. Conventions are sometimes handled well and enhance readability; at other times, errors are distracting and impair readability.

- A. Spelling is usually correct or reasonably phonetic on common words, but more difficult words are problematic.
- B. End punctuation is usually correct; internal punctuation (commas, apostrophes, semicolons, dashes, colons, parentheses) is sometimes missing/wrong.
- C. Most words are capitalized correctly; control over more sophisticated capitalization skills may be spotty.
- D. Problems with grammar or usage are not serious enough to distort meaning but may not be correct or accurately applied all of the time.
- E. Paragraphing is attempted but may run together or begin in the wrong places.
- F. Moderate editing would be required to polish the text for publication.

1 Errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, usage, and grammar and/or paragraphing repeatedly distract the reader and make the text difficult to read. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:

- A. Spelling errors are frequent, even on common words.
- B. Punctuation (including terminal punctuation) is often missing or incorrect.
- C. Capitalization is random and only the easiest rules show awareness of correct use.
- D. Errors in grammar or usage are very noticeable, frequent, and affect meaning.
- E. Paragraphing is missing, irregular, or so frequent (every sentence) that it has no relationship to the organizational structure of the text.
- F. The reader must read once to decode, then again for meaning. Extensive editing (virtually every line) would be required to polish the text for publication

Expectations should be based on grade level and include only skills that have been taught

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PRESENTATION

5 The form and presentation of the text enhances the ability for the reader to understand and connect with the message. It is pleasing to the eye.

- A. If handwritten (either cursive or printed), the **slant is consistent**, letters are clearly formed, **spacing is uniform** between words, text is easy to read.
- B. If word-processed, there is **appropriate use of fonts and font sizes** which invites the reader into the text.
- C. The use of **white space** (spacing, margins, etc.) allows the reader to easily focus on the text and message without distractions. There is just the right amount of balance of white space and text on the page. The formatting suits the purpose for writing.
- D. The use of a **title, side heads, page numbering, bullets**, and evidence of correct use of a style sheet (when appropriate) makes it easy for the reader to access the desired information and text. These markers allow the hierarchy of information to be clear to the reader.
- E. When appropriate to the purpose and audience, there is **effective integration of text and illustrations, graphs, maps, tables, etc.** There is clear alignment between the text and visuals. Visuals support and clarify important information or key points made in the text.

3 The writer's message is understandable in this format.

- A. Handwriting is readable, although there may be discrepancies in letter shape and form, slant, and spacing. Some words or passages are easier to read than others.
- B. Experimentation with fonts and font sizes is successful in some places, but begins to get fussy and cluttered in others. The effect is not consistent throughout the text.
- C. While margins may be present, some text may crowd the edges. Consistent spacing is applied, although a different choice may make text more accessible (e.g., single, double, or triple spacing).
- D. Although some markers are present (titles, numbering, bullets, side heads, etc.), they are not used to their fullest potential to access the greatest meaning from the text.
- E. An attempt is made to integrate visuals and text although the connections may be limited.

1 The reader receives a garbled message due to problems relating to the presentation of the text.

- A. Letters are irregularly slanted, formed inconsistently, or incorrectly, and the spacing is unbalanced or not even present, it is very difficult to read and understand the text.
- B. The writer has gone wild with multiple fonts and font sizes. It is a major distraction to the reader.
- C. The spacing is random and confusing to the reader. There may be little or no white space on the page.
- D. Lack of markers (title, page numbering, bullets, side heads, etc.) leave the reader wondering how one section connects to another and why the text is organized in this manner on the page.
- E. Visuals do not support or further illustrate key ideas presented in the text. They may be misleading, indecipherable, or too complex to be understood.