

NWREL's 6 Traits Writing Rubric  
 (modified to 4 levels of performance)

	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Ideas</b>	<p>The paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme.</p> <p>A. The topic is narrow and manageable.</p> <p>B. Relevant, telling, quality details give the reader important information that goes beyond the obvious or predictable.</p> <p>C. Reasonably accurate details are present to support the main ideas.</p> <p>D. The writer seems to be writing from knowledge or experience. Ideas are fresh and original.</p> <p>E. The reader's questions are anticipated and answered.</p> <p>F. Insight—an understanding of life and a knack for picking out what is significant—is an indicator of a high level of performance, although not required.</p>	<p>The paper is clear and focused. The reader can easily understand the main ideas. Support is present, although it may be limited.</p> <p>A. The topic is explained, although developmental details may occasionally be out of balance with the main idea(s).</p> <p>B. Supporting details are relevant but may be overly general or limited in places; when appropriate, resources are used to provide accurate support.</p> <p>C. An easily identifiable purpose with clear main idea(s) is present. The content and selected details are relevant but perhaps not consistently well-chosen for the audience and purpose.</p> <p>D. The writer seems to be drawing on knowledge or experience and is going from general observations to specifics.</p> <p>E. Some of the reader's questions are anticipated and answered to some extent.</p> <p>F. Some connections and insights are present.</p>	<p>The writer is beginning to define the topic, even though development is still basic or general.</p> <p>A. The topic is fairly broad; however, you can see where the writer is headed.</p> <p>B. Support is attempted but does not go far enough yet in fleshing out the key issues or story line.</p> <p>C. Ideas are reasonably clear, although they may not be detailed, personalized, accurate, or expanded enough to show in-depth understanding or a strong sense of purpose.</p> <p>D. The writer seems to be drawing on knowledge or experience but has difficulty going from general observations to specifics.</p> <p>E. The reader is left with questions. More information is needed to "fill in the blanks."</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>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 the following problems:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>B. Information is limited or unclear, or the length is not adequate for development.</p> <p>C. The idea is a simple restatement of the topic or an answer to the question with little or no attention to detail.</p> <p>D. The writer has not begun to define the topic in a meaningful, personal way.</p> <p>E. Everything is treated as being as important as everything else. The reader has a hard time sifting out what is important.</p> <p>F. The text may be repetitious or may read like a collection of disconnected, random thoughts with no discernable point</p>
<b>Organization</b>	The organization enhances	Organization is clear and	The organizational structure is	The writing lacks a clear

	<p>and showcases the central idea or theme. The order, structure, or presentation of information is compelling and moves the reader through the text.</p> <p>A. An inviting introduction draws the reader in, and a satisfying conclusion leaves the reader with a sense of closure and resolution.</p> <p>B. Thoughtful transitions clearly show how ideas connect.</p> <p>C. Details seem to fit where they are placed. Sequencing is logical and effective.</p> <p>D. Pacing is well controlled. The writer knows when to slow down and elaborate, and when to pick up the pace and move on.</p> <p>E. The title, if desired, is original and captures the central theme of the piece.</p> <p>F. The choice of structure matches the purpose and audience, with effective paragraph breaks.</p>	<p>coherent. Order and structure are present, but may seem formulaic.</p> <p>A. The paper has a recognizable, developed beginning that may not be particularly inviting and a developed conclusion that may lack subtlety.</p> <p>B. Transitions work, but some are stilted or formulaic.</p> <p>C. Details fit where they are placed. Sequencing is clear.</p> <p>D. Pacing is controlled. The writer usually slows down to elaborate and moves ahead when appropriate.</p> <p>E. The title, if desired, captures the central theme.</p> <p>F. The organization helps the reader, despite some weaknesses. Paragraph breaks are used correctly.</p>	<p>strong enough to move the reader through the text without too much confusion.</p> <p>A. The paper has a recognizable introduction and conclusion. The introduction may not create a strong sense of anticipation, or the conclusion may not tie-up all loose ends.</p> <p>B. Transitions sometimes work, but at other times, connections between ideas are unclear.</p> <p>C. Sequencing shows some logic, but not under control enough that it consistently supports the development of ideas. The structure may be predictable and take attention away from the content.</p> <p>D. Pacing is fairly well controlled, although the writer sometimes lunges ahead too quickly or spends too much time on details that do not matter.</p> <p>E. The title, if desired, is present, although it may be uninspired or an obvious restatement of the prompt or topic.</p> <p>F. The organization sometimes supports the main point or story line and shows an attempt at paragraphing.</p>	<p>sense of direction. Ideas, details, or events seem strung together in a loose or random fashion. The writing shows no identifiable internal structure and reflects more than one of the following problems:</p> <p>A. The paper has no real lead to set up what follows, and no real conclusion to wrap up.</p> <p>B. Connections between ideas are confusing or absent.</p> <p>C. Sequencing is random and needs lots of work.</p> <p>D. Pacing feels awkward. The writer slows to a crawl when the reader wants to move on, and vice versa.</p> <p>E. The title, if desired, is missing or does not reflect the content.</p> <p>F. Problems with organization make understanding the main point or story line hard for the reader. Few or no paragraph breaks are used.</p>
<b>Voice</b>	The writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that	A voice is present. The writer seems committed to the topic,	The writer seems sincere but not fully engaged or involved.	The writer seems indifferent to the topic and the content. The

	<p>is individual, compelling, and engaging. The writer crafts the writing with an awareness and respect for the audience and the purpose for writing.</p> <p>A. The writer connects strongly with the audience through the intriguing focus of the topic, selection of relevant details, and use of natural, engaging language.</p> <p>B. The purpose of the writing is accurately reflected in the writer's choice of individual and compelling content, and the arrangement of ideas.</p> <p>C. The writer takes a risk by the inclusion of personal details that reveal the person behind the words.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>E. Narrative writing is personal and engaging, and makes you think about the author's ideas or point of view.</p>	<p>and may convey a sense of "writing to be read." In places, the writing is expressive, engaging, or sincere.</p> <p>A. The writing has a sense of audience. The writer seems to be aware of the reader but has not consistently employed an appropriate voice. The reader may glimpse the writer behind the words and feel a sense of interaction in places.</p> <p>B. The writer is aware of a purpose, and selects content and structures that reflect it.</p> <p>C. The writer sometimes reveals personal details, taking a small risk.</p> <p>D. Expository or persuasive writing reflects consistent engagement with the topic, and uses ideas to build credibility.</p> <p>E. Narrative writing is sincere, but the reader has trouble discerning the author's point of view.</p>	<p>The writing has discernable purpose but is not compelling.</p> <p>A. The writing attempts to connect with the audience in an earnest, pleasing, yet impersonal manner</p> <p>B. The writer seems aware of a purpose, and attempts to select content and structures that reflect it.</p> <p>C. The writer rarely reveals personal details, and primarily avoids risk.</p> <p>D. Expository or persuasive writing lacks consistent engagement with the topic, and fails to use ideas to build credibility.</p> <p>E. Narrative writing is sincere but does not reflect a unique or individual perspective on the topic.</p>	<p>writing lacks purpose and audience engagement.</p> <p>A. The writer's ideas and language fail to connect with the audience.</p> <p>B. The writer has no clear purpose, and the chosen style does not match the content or ideas.</p> <p>C. The writing is risk free, and reveals nothing about the author.</p> <p>D. Expository or persuasive writing is lifeless and mechanical, or lacks accurate information.</p> <p>E. The narrative development of the topic is so limited that no point of view is discernable.</p>
<p><b>Word Choice</b></p>	<p>Words convey the intended message in a precise, interesting, and natural way. The words are powerful and engaging.</p> <p>A. Words are specific and</p>	<p>Words effectively convey the intended message. The writer employs a variety of words that are functional and appropriate to audience and purpose.</p>	<p>The language is functional, even if it lacks much energy. The audience can easily figure out the writer's meaning on a general level.</p> <p>A. Words are adequate and</p>	<p>The writer demonstrates a limited vocabulary or has not searched for words to convey specific meaning.</p> <p>A. Words are so nonspecific and distracting that only a very</p>

	<p>accurate. The audience can easily understand just what the writer means.</p> <p>B. Striking words and phrases often catch the reader's eye and linger in the reader's mind.</p> <p>C. Language and phrasing are natural, effective, and appropriate for the audience.</p> <p>D. Lively verbs add energy while specific nouns and modifiers add depth.</p> <p>E. Language choices enhance the meaning and clarify understanding.</p> <p>F. Precision is obvious. The writer has taken care to put just the right word or phrase in just the right spot.</p>	<p>A. Words work but do not particularly energize the writing.</p> <p>B. Some experimentation with language is evident. The writing has some fine moments and generally avoids clichés.</p> <p>C. Attempts at colorful language may occasionally seem overdone.</p> <p>D. The words evoke clear images, and figurative language may be used.</p> <p>E. Expression is fresh and vivid most of the time.</p> <p>F. The writer has attempted to use the best words or phrases for the paper.</p>	<p>correct in a general sense, and they support the meaning by not getting in the way.</p> <p>B. Familiar words and phrases communicate but rarely capture the reader's imagination.</p> <p>C. Attempts at colorful language show a willingness to stretch and grow but sometimes reach beyond the audience (thesaurus overload!).</p> <p>D. Despite a few successes, the writing is marked by passive verbs, everyday nouns, and mundane modifiers.</p> <p>E. Words and phrases are functional with only one or two fine moments.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>limited meaning comes through.</p> <p>B. Problems with language leave the reader wondering. Many of the words just do not work in this piece.</p> <p>C. Audience has not been considered. Language is used incorrectly making the message secondary to the misfires with the words.</p> <p>D. Limited vocabulary and/or misused parts of speech seriously impair the understanding.</p> <p>E. Words and phrases are so unimaginative and lifeless that they detract from the meaning.</p> <p>F. Jargon or clichés distract or mislead. Redundancy may distract the reader.</p>
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<p><b>Sentence Fluency</b></p>	<p>The writing has an easy flow, rhythm, and cadence. Sentences are well built, with strong and varied structures that invite expressive oral reading.</p> <p>A. Sentences are constructed in a way that underscores and enhances the meaning.</p> <p>B. Sentences vary in length as well as structure. Fragments, if used, add style. Dialogue, if present, sounds natural.</p> <p>C. Purposeful and varied sentence beginnings add variety and energy.</p> <p>D. The use of creative and appropriate connectives between sentences and thoughts shows how each relates to, and builds upon, the one before it.</p> <p>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 out loud is a breeze.</p>	<p>The writing flows; however, connections between phrases or sentences may be less than fluid. Sentence patterns are somewhat varied, contributing to ease in oral reading.</p> <p>A. Sentences are constructed correctly and enhance the meaning.</p> <p>B. Occasional lapses in stylistic control are present. Dialogue, if used, sounds natural for the most part, but may at times sound stilted or unnatural. Sentences show strong control over simple sentence structures but variable control over more complex sentences. Fragments, if present, are usually effective.</p> <p>C. Sentence beginnings are varied, although some repeated patterns may detract somewhat from the overall impact.</p> <p>D. Appropriate connectives are used.</p> <p>E. The writing has a natural sound. The reader can move easily through the piece, although the piece may lack a certain rhythm and grace.</p>	<p>The text hums along with a steady beat but tends to be more pleasant or businesslike than musical, more mechanical than fluid.</p> <p>A. Although sentences may not seem artfully crafted or musical, they get the job done in a routine fashion.</p> <p>B. Sentences are usually constructed correctly. They hang together, and they are sound.</p> <p>C. Sentence beginnings are not ALL alike; some variety is attempted.</p> <p>D. The reader sometimes has to hunt for clues (for example, connecting words and phrases like <i>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, and so forth</i>) that show how sentences interrelate.</p> <p>E. Parts of the text invite expressive oral reading, while other parts may be stiff, awkward, choppy, or gangly.</p>	<p>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:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>B. Little to no “sentence sense” is present. Even if this piece was flawlessly edited, the sentences would not hang together.</p> <p>C. Many sentences begin the same way and may follow the same patterns (such as <i>subject-verb-object</i>) in a monotonous way.</p> <p>D. Endless connectives (<i>and, and so, but then, because, and then, and so on</i>) or a complete lack of connectives create a massive jumble of language.</p> <p>E. The text does not invite expressive oral reading.</p>
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<p><b>Conventions</b></p>	<p>The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, usage, and paragraphing) and uses conventions effectively to enhance readability. Errors tend to be so few that minor touch-ups would get the piece ready to publish.</p> <p>A. Spelling is generally correct, even on more difficult words.</p> <p>B. The punctuation is accurate, even creative, and guides the reader through the text.</p> <p>C. A thorough understanding and consistent application of capitalization skills are present.</p> <p>D. Grammar and usage are correct and contribute to clarity and style.</p> <p>E. Paragraphing tends to be sound and reinforces the organizational structure.</p> <p>F. The writer may manipulate conventions for stylistic effect—and it works! The piece is very close to being ready to publish.</p>	<p>The writing demonstrates control of standard writing conventions (such as punctuation, spelling, capitalization, grammar, and usage). Significant errors rarely occur. Minor errors, while perhaps noticeable, do not impede readability.</p> <p>A. Spelling is usually correct on common words.</p> <p>B. End punctuation is correct, but internal punctuation may sometimes be incorrect.</p> <p>C. Capitalization is correct, and errors, if any, are minor.</p> <p>D. Occasional lapses in correct grammar and usage are not severe enough to confuse the reader.</p> <p>E. Paragraphing is used correctly.</p> <p>F. Minor editing is required to polish the text for publication.</p>	<p>The writer shows reasonable control over a limited range of standard writing conventions. Conventions are sometimes handled well and enhance readability, but at other times, errors are distracting and impair readability.</p> <p>A. Spelling is usually correct or reasonably phonetic on common words, but more difficult words are problematic.</p> <p>B. End punctuation is usually correct, but internal punctuation (commas, apostrophes, semicolons, dashes, colons, parentheses, and so forth) is sometimes missing or wrong.</p> <p>C. Most words are capitalized correctly, but control over more sophisticated capitalization skills is spotty.</p> <p>D. Problems with grammar or usage are not serious enough to distort meaning, but errors may mildly confuse the reader.</p> <p>E. Paragraphing is attempted but paragraphs may run together or begin in the wrong places.</p> <p>F. Moderate editing (a little of this, a little of that) is required to polish the text for publication.</p>	<p>Errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, usage, and grammar or paragraphing repeatedly distract the reader and make the text difficult to read. The writing reflects more than one of the following problems:</p> <p>A. Spelling errors are frequent, even on common words.</p> <p>B. Punctuation (including terminal punctuation) is often missing or incorrect.</p> <p>C. Capitalization is random, and only the easiest rules show awareness of correct use.</p> <p>D. Errors in grammar or usage are very noticeable, frequent, and affect meaning.</p> <p>E. Paragraphing is missing, irregular, or so frequent (every sentence) that it has no relationship to the text's organizational structure.</p> <p>F. The reader must read once to decode and then again to find meaning. Extensive editing (virtually every line) is required to polish the text for publication.</p>
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