

Scoring Guide: Organization

The internal structure of the piece—the thread of logic, the pattern of meaning.

6 Exceptional

- A. **Creating the Lead:** The writer grabs the reader's attention from the start and leads him or her into the piece naturally. He or she entices the reader, providing a tantalizing glimpse of what is to come.
- B. **Using Sequence Words and Transition Words:** The writer includes a variety of carefully selected sequence words (such as *later*, *then*, and *meanwhile*) and transition words (such as *however*, *also*, and *clearly*), which are placed wisely to guide the reader through the piece by showing how ideas progress, relate, and/or diverge.
- C. **Structuring the Body:** The writer creates a piece that is easy to follow by fitting details together logically. He or she slows down to spotlight important points or events, and speeds up when he or she needs to move the reader along.

HIGH

5 Strong

- D. **Ending With a Sense of Resolution:** The writer sums up his or her thinking in a natural, thoughtful, and convincing way. He or she anticipates and answers any lingering questions the reader may have, providing a strong sense of closure.

4 Refining

- A. **Creating the Lead:** The writer presents an introduction, although it may not be original or thought provoking. Instead, it may be a simple restatement of the topic and, therefore, does not create a sense of anticipation about what is to come.
- B. **Using Sequence Words and Transition Words:** The writer uses sequence words to show the logical order of details, but they feel obvious or canned. The use of transition words is spotty and rarely creates coherence.
- C. **Structuring the Body:** The writer sequences events and important points logically, for the most part. However, the reader may wish to move a few things around to create a more sensible flow. He or she may also feel the urge to speed up or slow down for more satisfying pacing.

MIDDLE

3 Developing

- D. **Ending With a Sense of Resolution:** The writer ends the piece on a familiar note: "Thank you for reading . . .," "Now you know all about . . .," or "They lived happily ever after." He or she needs to tie up loose ends to leave the reader with a sense of satisfaction or closure.

2 Emerging

- A. **Creating the Lead:** The writer does not give the reader any clue about what is to come. The opening point feels as if it were chosen randomly.
- B. **Using Sequence Words and Transition Words:** The writer does not provide sequence and/or transition words between sections or provides words that are so confusing the reader is unable to sort out one section from another.
- C. **Structuring the Body:** The writer does not show clearly what comes first, next, and last, making it difficult to understand how sections fit together. The writer slows down when he or she should speed up and speeds up when he or she should slow down.
- D. **Ending With a Sense of Resolution:** The writer ends the piece with no conclusion at all—or nothing more than "The End" or something equally bland. There is no sense of resolution, no sense of completion.

LOW

1 Rudimentary

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Comments: Organization

- A. "Your lead drew me right in and made me want to read more. That's a sign of strong organization. Do you have favorite books? Check out their leads and see if they work as well as yours. I'll bet they do."

- B. "Linking details using sequence and transition words can be tricky. You do it well, though. Your words create order, which is a very important part of organization."

- C. "Your use of _____ (comparison/contrast, chronological sequence, point-by-point analysis, for instance) as an organizational structure was the ideal choice for this topic. You sped up to get to the next point, and slowed down when you wanted to explain or show more, which is excellent use of pacing."

- D. "The ending of your piece encouraged me to think about this topic in a whole new way. You wrapped up all the details nicely and pushed my thinking. Nice job!"

- A. "You begin logically. Now, let's think of ways to make your lead thought provoking and attention grabbing. After all, if you entice readers at the start, they will be much more likely to read on."

- B. "You've organized your piece by connecting details with words and phrases. That's great, although there are places where the connection needs to be clearer. Also, can you accomplish this by using words and phrases that are more natural?"

- C. "Reread your piece to see if you can spot its most important point. Then think about ways to speed up or slow down to build to that point more carefully, thoughtfully, and deliberately."

- D. "Writing the right ending to a piece is like choosing the right frosting for a cake. Take a look at your ending here. Is there a way to make it more mouth-watering by saying something more original and satisfying?"

- A. "Hmmm . . . I'm not sure this is the best beginning for your piece. Try something stronger and more creative—something that connects more directly to the rest of the piece."

- B. "I'm struggling to see how your details fit together. Can you address that by using sequence and transition words like *later* and *however*, which will improve your piece's organization and make it easier to follow?"

- C. "Your organization will be more effective if there is a logical flow of ideas from beginning to end. Will you put your details in an order that makes more sense and builds to a high point?"

- D. "It's tempting to cap off your piece with any old thing. I realize. But for your organization to be strong, you need to wrap it up by giving readers something to think about. Try a new way to signal 'The End.' You'll like the result."



Scoring Guide: Voice

The tone and tenor of the piece—the personal stamp of the writer, which is achieved through a strong understanding of purpose and audience.

Comments: Voice

6 Exceptional

- A. Establishing a Tone:** The writer cares about the topic, and it shows. The writing is expressive and compelling. The reader feels the writer's conviction, authority, and integrity.
- B. Conveying the Purpose:** The writer makes clear his or her reason for creating the piece. He or she offers a point of view that is appropriate for the mode (narrative, expository, or persuasive), which compels the reader to read on.
- C. Creating a Connection to the Audience:** The writer speaks in a way that makes the reader want to listen. He or she has considered what the reader needs to know and the best way to convey it by sharing his or her fascination, feelings, and opinions about the topic.

- A.** "It's clear that you enjoyed writing about this topic because it comes through loud and clear in your tone. Your writing is filled with your unique voice, making it believable and authentic."
- B.** "Because the purpose for your writing is so clear, I grasped the main idea immediately and wanted to read on. The voice stands out because you had a clear sense of why you were writing the piece in the first place."

5 Strong

- D. Taking Risks to Create Voice:** The writer expresses ideas in new ways, which makes the piece interesting and original. The writing sounds like the writer because of his or her use of distinctive, just-right words and phrases.

- C.** "Because you understand what readers need to know, your voice is strong in this piece. Your own sense of wonder and fascination about the topic is infectious."
- D.** "You've stuck your neck out in a few places, reaching to find a new way to say familiar things and adding your own perspective. The writing sounds like you, which gives it voice."

4 Refining

- A. Establishing a Tone:** The writer has established a tone that can be described as "pleasing" or "sincere," but not "passionate" or "compelling." He or she attempts to create a tone that hits the mark, but the overall result feels generic.
- B. Conveying the Purpose:** The writer has chosen a voice for the piece that is not completely clear. There are only a few moments when the reader understands where the writer is coming from and why he or she wrote the piece.
- C. Creating a Connection to the Audience:** The writer keeps the reader at a distance. The connection between reader and writer is tenuous because the writer reveals little about what is important or meaningful about the topic.

- A.** "Your piece contains voice, though it's not all that compelling. You hide how you feel about this topic a lot of the time. Build on moments where you show how you feel in order to establish a tone and strengthen the voice."
- B.** "Though I see what you are writing about, I'm struggling a little to understand why you're writing about it. You've not yet convinced me that this topic has meaning to you and, until you do, your voice won't come through."
- C.** "What fascinates you about this topic? I'd like to hear that come through in your voice. The distance you're keeping between yourself and the reader is too wide."

3 Developing

- D. Taking Risks to Create Voice:** The writer creates a few moments that catch the reader's attention, but only a few. The piece sounds like anyone could have written it. It lacks the energy, commitment, and conviction that would distinguish it from other pieces on the same topic.

- D.** "Your voice is strongest in places where you reached for a novel way to express a familiar idea or tried something new with words and phrases. Find those places and build on them to strengthen the voice in this piece."

2 Emerging

- A. Establishing a Tone:** The writer has produced a lifeless piece—one that is monotonous, mechanical, repetitious, and/or off-putting to the reader.
- B. Conveying the Purpose:** The writer chose the topic for mysterious reasons. The piece may be filled with random thoughts, technical jargon, or inappropriate vocabulary, making it impossible to discern how the writer feels about the topic.
- C. Creating a Connection to the Audience:** The writer provides no evidence that he or she has considered what the reader might need to know to connect with the topic. Or there is an obvious mismatch between the piece's tone and the intended audience.
- D. Taking Risks to Create Voice:** The writer creates no highs and lows. The piece is flat and lifeless, causing the reader to wonder why the writer wrote it in the first place. The voice does not pop out, even for a moment.

- A.** "Voice brings a piece to life. It's missing in this draft, though. What matters to you about this topic? Try adding your personal perspective to establish a tone."
- B.** "So far, this piece is a collection of random thoughts, details, and examples related to the topic. What is missing is your main point—your reason for writing the piece in the first place. That's where your voice will begin to show up, too."
- C.** "I'm concerned that the tone you've used here is inappropriate given your purpose for writing the piece. Think about your readers and the right words to connect with them to create voice."
- D.** "I know you. You are a unique person. Can you change some of the words and phrases in this piece so your voice comes through to the reader? At this point, you are AWOL."

1 Rudimentary

Scoring Guide: Word Choice

The specific vocabulary the writer uses to convey meaning and enlighten the reader.

- 6 Exceptional**
- A. Applying Strong Verbs:** The writer uses many "action words," giving the piece punch and pizzazz. He or she has stretched to find lively verbs that add energy to the piece.
- B. Selecting Striking Words and Phrases:** The writer uses many finely honed words and phrases. His or her creative and effective use of literary techniques such as alliteration, simile, and metaphor makes the piece a pleasure to read.
- C. Using Specific and Accurate Words:** The writer uses words with precision. He or she selects words the reader needs to fully understand the message. The writer chooses nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and so forth that create clarity and bring the topic to life.
- D. Choosing Words That Deepen Meaning:** The writer uses words to capture the reader's imagination and enhance the piece's meaning. There is a deliberate attempt to choose the best word over the first word that comes to mind.
- 5 Strong**
- A. Applying Strong Verbs:** The writer uses the passive voice quite a bit and includes few "action words" to give the piece energy.
- B. Selecting Striking Words and Phrases:** The writer provides little evidence that he or she has stretched for the best words or phrases. He or she may have attempted literary techniques, but they are clichés for the most part.
- C. Using Specific and Accurate Words:** The writer presents specific and accurate words, except for a few related to sophisticated and/or content-related topics. Technical or irrelevant jargon is off-putting to the reader. The words rarely capture the reader's imagination.
- D. Choosing Words That Deepen Meaning:** The writer fills the piece with unoriginal language rather than language that results from careful revision. The words communicate the basic idea, but they are ordinary and uninspired.
- 4 Refining**
- A. Applying Strong Verbs:** The writer makes no attempt at selecting verbs with energy. The passive voice dominates the piece.
- B. Selecting Striking Words and Phrases:** The writer uses words that are repetitive, vague, and/or unimaginative. Limited meaning comes through because the words are so lifeless.
- C. Using Specific and Accurate Words:** The writer misuses words, making it difficult to understand what he or she is attempting to convey. Or he or she uses words that are so technical, inappropriate, or irrelevant that the average reader can hardly understand what he or she is saying.
- D. Choosing Words That Deepen Meaning:** The writer uses many words and phrases that simply do not work. Little meaning comes through because the language is so imprecise and distracting.

Comments: Word Choice

- A.** "Verbs such as _____ and, my favorite, _____ energize your writing. Writers who choose action words so well know how to keep their work lively, from beginning to end."
- B.** "You've thought about the words and phrases in this piece. Examples of figurative language such as _____ and _____ created visual images in my mind. Your word choice stands out."
- C.** "I appreciate how you've chosen words so carefully. You've selected words that relate directly to your topic, and you've used them correctly, which makes your message so clear."
- D.** "You could have used the word _____ but you stretched as a writer by choosing _____. Your piece is strong because you chose words that help me think more deeply about your idea."
- A.** "With a few notable exceptions, such as _____ and _____, you've chosen lackluster verbs. Your piece needs energy, and adding more action words will help you reach that goal."
- B.** "Your attempts at figurative language are admirable. Now let's try to sharpen them. You'll notice that you repeat words quite often, too. Word choice is strong when a piece flows naturally and keeps the reader reading."
- C.** "Remember to consider the reader when you choose words. Will all readers know what _____ means, for instance? Is there a better word? Imprecise words or too much jargon can be off-putting."
- D.** "Your piece is generally easy to read and understand. Now, how about focusing on 'just right' words to inform and/or engage the reader? Push yourself to do that."
- A.** "There are lots of words in your draft. I couldn't find a single strong verb, though. Replace several of your 'to be' verbs with stronger, more energetic ones. Your word choice will improve immediately."
- B.** "You've overdosed on the word _____. Because you've used it far too many times, it has lost meaning. Replace it in a few spots and then hunt for any dull words or phrases and revise accordingly."
- C.** "I'm not familiar with some of the words you've used. They seem very content specific. Please go through this piece and choose words that the average reader will understand."
- D.** "I'm not sure all the words in your piece make sense. Can you look up and _____ in the dictionary? I'm muddled over what you are trying to say."

1 Rudimentary

4

Scoring Guide: Sentence Fluency

The way the words and phrases flow through the piece. It is the auditory trait because it's "read" with the ear as much as the eye.

6 Exceptional

- A. Crafting Well-Built Sentences:** The writer carefully and creatively constructs sentences for maximum impact. Transition words such as *but*, *and*, and *so* are used successfully to join sentences and sentence parts.
- B. Varying Sentence Types:** The writer uses various types of sentences (simple, compound, and/or complex) to enhance the central theme or story line. The piece is made up of an effective mix of long, complex sentences and short, simple ones.
- C. Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow:** The writer thinks about how the sentences sound. He or she uses phrasing that is almost musical. If the piece were read aloud, it would be easy on the ear.
- D. Breaking the "Rules" to Create Fluency:** The writer diverges from standard English to create interest and impact. For example, he or she may use a sentence fragment, such as "All alone in the forest," or a single word, such as "Barn!" to accept a particular moment or action. He or she might begin with informal words such as *well*, *and*, or *but* to create a conversational tone, or he or she might break rules intentionally to make dialogue sound authentic.

5 Strong

- A. Crafting Well-Built Sentences:** The writer offers simple sentences that are sound, but no long, complex ones. He or she attempts to vary the beginnings and lengths of sentences.
- B. Varying Sentence Types:** The writer exhibits basic sentence sense and offers some sentence variety. He or she attempts to use different types of sentences, but in doing so creates an uneven flow rather than a smooth, seamless one.
- C. Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow:** The writer has produced a text that is uneven. Many sentences read smoothly, whereas others are choppy or awkward.
- D. Breaking the "Rules" to Create Fluency:** The writer includes fragments, but they seem more accidental than intentional. He or she uses informal words, such as *well*, *and*, or *but*, inappropriately to start sentences, and pays little attention to making dialogue sound authentic.

4 Refining

- A. Crafting Well-Built Sentences:** The writer's sentences, even simple ones, are often flawed. Sentence beginnings are repetitive and uninspired.
- B. Varying Sentence Types:** The writer uses a single, repetitive sentence pattern throughout or connects sentence parts with an endless string of transition words, such as *and*, *but*, or *because*, and so on, which distracts the reader.
- C. Capturing Smooth and Rhythmic Flow:** The writer has created a text that is a challenge to read aloud since the sentences are incomplete, choppy, stilted, rambling, and/or awkward.
- D. Breaking the "Rules" to Create Fluency:** The writer offers few or no simple, well-built sentences, making it impossible to determine whether he or she has done anything out of the ordinary. Global revision is necessary before sentences can be revised for stylistic and creative purposes.

3 Developing

2 Emerging

1 Rudimentary

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Comments: Sentence Fluency

- A.** "You've built your sentences with skill and precision, so your ideas are clear and energetic. Your correct use of grammar makes the piece easy to read."
- B.** "Your variety of simple, compound, and complex sentences creates a rhythm. Your piece is flowing very well in this regard. The sentences are working well together."
- C.** "Reading this piece aloud was a breeze. That's because your sentences flow across the page, creating a sound that is easy on the ear."
- D.** "You've taken some license with standard English and made it work effectively—for example, where you say _____. It's always a pleasure reading a piece like this one. Your 'risk-taking rocks!'"
- A.** "The way you build your sentences adds to the fluency. If you vary the beginnings and lengths of your sentences more, you'll like the result."
- B.** "How great that you tried to write compound and complex sentences! Now let's try to make them sound more natural or flow more evenly to create a nice sound overall."
- C.** "You've got some terrific sentences. Tightening some of the longer, rambling ones and, perhaps, lengthening some short, choppy ones will establish a smooth, rhythmic flow."
- D.** "When you read your piece aloud, can you find a place where you might use a fragment or repeat a sentence beginning to add just a bit more sentence fluency?"
- A.** "Many of your sentences are not complete or grammatically correct. Let's try to fix a few and, while we're at it, revise a couple to begin them in different ways."
- B.** "Reading the same type of sentence over and over can get boring for the reader. Why don't you pick a couple of repetitive sentences in this piece and try rewording them to create a more fluent sound overall?"
- C.** "Will you read this piece to me and listen carefully? I think you'll notice a lot of sentences that are incomplete, choppy, or too long. Mark those sentences and revise them for fluency."
- D.** "Let's talk about this sentence: _____. If we fix the grammar, it will become a more traditional sentence. From there, we can look for ways to break rules to create an interesting sound in other sentences, if you wish."

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Scoring Guide: Conventions

The mechanical correctness of the piece. Correct use of conventions guides the reader through the text easily.

Comments: Conventions

6 Exceptional

HIGH

A. Checking Spelling: The writer spells sight words, high-frequency words, and less familiar words correctly. When he or she spells less familiar words incorrectly, those words are phonetically correct. Overall, the piece reveals control in spelling.

B. Punctuating Effectively and Paragraphing Accurately: The writer handles basic punctuation skillfully. He or she understands how to use periods, commas, question marks, and exclamation points to enhance clarity and meaning. Paragraphs are indented in the right places. The piece is ready for a general audience.

C. Capitalizing Correctly: The writer uses capital letters consistently and accurately. A deep understanding of how to capitalize dialogue, abbreviations, proper nouns, and titles is evident.

D. Applying Grammar and Usage: The writer forms grammatically correct phrases and sentences. He or she shows care in applying the rules of standard English. The writer may break from those rules for stylistic reasons, but otherwise abides by them.

A. "Your paper proves you can spell both easy and challenging words. I appreciate how you checked it carefully to make sure each word was correctly spelled before turning it in."

B. "You use punctuation thoughtfully to guide the reader through your piece. You also started new paragraphs in all the right places, which enhances the piece's readability."

C. "Not only have you remembered to capitalize proper nouns and the first word of each sentence, you've also capitalized other elements correctly, such as the title and dialogue."

D. "It's a pleasure to read the work of a writer who has followed the rules of standard English so carefully. You obviously have a strong command of grammar and usage."

4 Refining

MIDDLE

A. Checking Spelling: The writer incorrectly spells a few high-frequency words and many unfamiliar words and/or sophisticated words.

B. Punctuating Effectively and Paragraphing Accurately: The writer handles basic punctuation marks (such as end marks and commas in a series) well. However, he or she might have trouble with more complex punctuation marks (such as quotation marks, parentheses, dashes) and with paragraphing, especially on longer pieces.

C. Capitalizing Correctly: The writer capitalizes the first word in sentences and most common proper nouns. However, his or her use of more complex capitalization is spotty when it comes to dialogue, abbreviations, and proper nouns.

D. Applying Grammar and Usage: The writer has made grammar and usage mistakes throughout the piece, but they do not interfere with the reader's ability to understand the message. Issues related to agreement, tense, and word usage appear here and there, but can be easily corrected.

A. "Before you finish this piece, check the spelling; there are words to correct. Put a check next to any word you aren't sure about and look it up in a traditional or online dictionary, or ask me or any other good speller you know."

B. "It's great that you are using punctuation in complex ways. There are still some problems to fix, though, before the piece is ready for a reader. See if you can find them. If you can't, let me help you."

C. "Nice job editing. There still are a few letters to capitalize, and I'm sure you can find those. You have the basic rules of capitalization under control. I'll help you with the more advanced ones."

D. "I have no trouble understanding what you've written, and that's what's really important about writing, right? However, there are a few problems with your grammar and usage that need to be addressed. Let me show you where they are."

3 Developing

2 Emerging

LOW

A. Checking Spelling: The writer has misspelled many words, even simple ones, which causes the reader to focus on conventions rather than on the central theme or story line.

B. Punctuating Effectively and Paragraphing Accurately: The writer has neglected to use punctuation, used punctuation incorrectly, and/or forgotten to indent paragraphs, making it difficult for the reader to find meaning.

C. Capitalizing Correctly: The writer uses capitals inconsistently, even in common places such as the first word in the sentence. He or she uses capitals correctly in some places but has no consistent control over them.

D. Applying Grammar and Usage: The writer makes frequent mistakes in grammar and usage, making it difficult to read and understand the piece. Issues related to agreement, tense, and word usage abound.

A. "Let's pick three or four words that you want to work on and start a personal list that you can check every time you write. Good spelling will come along in time if you keep working at it. Don't get discouraged."

B. "Punctuation shows readers where to pause and stop, where dialogue begins and ends, and so on. Your punctuation is not showing those things. Let's see what can be done, starting with the first sentence. Let's also look at separating your ideas into paragraphs."

C. "If you read your piece only to find words that need to be capitalized, I bet you'll find many. Take it one sentence at a time and don't forget your title."

D. "I'm having a hard time following what you've written because you're struggling with grammar and usage. Check subject-verb agreement first and then verb tense consistency. And watch out for homonyms like *there* and *their*. Using them correctly is important."

1 Rudimentary

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