

WRITE TRAITS 6-TRAIT ONE-PAGER

WORD CHOICE

- 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, 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.
 - Familiar words and phrases give the text an 'old couch' kind of feel.
 - Attempts at colorful language are 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 will likely 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 uninviting.
 - The reader has trouble grasping the writer's intended message.

SENTENCE FLUENCY

- 5** An easy flow and sentence sense 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 reader hears the beat in his or her head.
 - Sentences vary in both structure and length, making the reading pleasant and natural.
 - Fragments, if used, add style.
- 3** The text hums along with a steady beat.
- Sentences are mostly grammatical and easy to read aloud, given a little rehearsal.
 - Casual, natural phrasing intermingles with more mechanical structure.
 - More variation in length and structure would enhance fluency.
 - Some purposeful sentence beginnings add the reader's interpretation of the text.
 - Fragments may be present, not all add flair or punch.
- 1** A fair interpretive oral reading of this text takes practice. Readers will likely notice more than one of these problems:
- Irregular or unusual word patterns make it hard to tell where sentences begin and end.
 - Ideas are hooked together by numerous connectives (and...but...so their) to create one gawky, endless 'sentence.'
 - Short, choppy sentences bump the reader through the text.
 - Repetitive sentence patterns put the reader to sleep.
 - Transitions are 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

- 5** The writer shows excellent control over a wide range of standard writing conventions and uses them with accuracy and (when appropriate) creativity 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 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 reasonably control over the most widely used writing conventions, creating text that is adequately readable.
- There are enough errors to distract an attentive reader; however, errors do not seriously impair readability or obscure meaning.
 - It is easy enough for an experienced reader to get through the text, but the writing clearly 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 conventions. Readers are likely to notice one or more of these 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 rough first draft, scribbled hastily without thought for conventions.
 - Extensive editing would be required to prepare the text for publication.

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IDEA DEVELOPMENT

- 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 focused 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.
 - Lists of "facts" may be substituted for true development.
 - Everything seems as important as everything else.

ORGANIZATION

- 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.
 - Transitions are usually present, but sometimes a little too obvious or too structured.
 - Structure may be so dominant or predictable that it literally smoothes 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, leaving the reader with a sense of being adrift.
 - The writing does not move purposefully toward any main message or turning point.

VOICE

- 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 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 distant, level.
- The tone and flavor of the piece could be altered slightly to better fit the topic, purpose, or audience.
 - The writer has not quite found his or her voice, but is experimenting—and the result is pleasant or intriguing, if not unique.
 - The writer only occasionally speaks right to the audience.
 - The writer often seems reluctant to "let go," holding individuality, passion, and spontaneity in check. Nevertheless, voice pops out on occasion.
 - The writer is "there"—then gone.
- 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 personal enthusiasm for the topic or make it come alive for the reader.