

## REFERENCE: SIX TRAITS +1 OF EFFECTIVE WRITING

### TRAIT DEFINITIONS

- Ideas** The heart of the message, the content of the piece, the main theme, together with the details (documented support, elaboration, anecdotes, images) that enrich and develop the theme by building understanding or holding a reader's attention.
- Organization** The internal structure of a piece, the thread of central meaning, the logical pattern of ideas. Writing that exhibits strong organization begins with a purposeful, engaging lead and wraps up with a satisfying and thought-provoking conclusion. In between, the writer takes care to link each detail or new development to a larger picture, building to a turning point or key revelation, and always including strong transitions that form a kind of safety net for the reader, who never feels lost.
- Voice** The heart and soul of a piece, the magic, the wit. It is the writer's unique and personal expression emerging through words. Voice is the presence of the writer on the page. When the writer's passion for the topic and concern for the audience are strong, the text dances with life and energy, and the reader feels a strong and intimate connection to both the writing and the writer.
- Word Choice** The use of rich, colorful, precise language that moves and enlightens the reader. It is the love of language, a passion for words, combined with a skill in choosing words that creates just the right mood, impression, or image in the heart and mind of the reader.
- Sentence Fluency** The rhythm and flow of the language, the sound of word patterns, the way in which the writing plays to the ear – not just to the eye. It is finely crafted construction combined with a sense of grace that invites expressive oral reading. Writers achieve good Sentence Fluency through logic, creative phrasing, parallel construction, alliteration, rhyme, absence of redundancy, variety in sentence length and structure, and a true effort to create language that cries out to be spoken aloud.
- Conventions/  
Mechanics** The mechanical correctness of the writing – spelling, grammar and usage, paragraphing, capitalization, punctuation, etc. Almost anything a copy editor would attend to falls under the heading of Convention. It does not include layout, formatting, or handwriting.
- Presentation** Presentation combines both visual and verbal elements – it is the way the message is exhibited on paper. Even if the ideas, words, and sentences are vivid, precise, and well-constructed, the paper will not be inviting to read unless the guidelines of presentation are observed. Presentation zeroes in on the form and layout of the text and its readability; the piece should be pleasing to the eye.

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**Rubric: Ideas and Content**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Just Beginning</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Just beginning to figure out what I want to say.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>On My Way</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Some really good parts, some not there yet.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Exactly What I Intended</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">My writing is focused, clear, and specific.</p>
<p>When someone else reads my paper, it will be hard for them to understand what I mean or what it is all about.</p>	<p>The reader usually knows what I mean. Some parts will be better when I tell just a little more about what is important.</p>	<p>My writing is full of the kinds of details that keep the readers attention and show what is really important about my topic.</p>
<p>=&gt; I haven't shared much information. I guess I don't know enough yet about this topic to write about it.</p> <p>=&gt; My details are so vague it is hard to picture anything.</p> <p>=&gt; I'm still thinking aloud on paper. I'm looking for a good idea.</p> <p>=&gt; Maybe I'll write about this, but then, maybe I'll write about that.</p>	<p>=&gt; Some of the things I say are new, but other things everybody knows already.</p> <p>=&gt; Some details I have used are pretty general like: "Her hat was nice," or "It was a sunny day."</p> <p>=&gt; I think my topic might be too big and I got bogged down trying to tell a little about a lot.</p> <p>=&gt; Sometimes I was very clear about what I meant, but at other times it was still fuzzy.</p>	<p>=&gt; I know a lot about this topic, and when someone else reads it, they'll find some new or little known information.</p> <p>=&gt; I made sure to show what was happening ("The wildly spiraling tornado aimed straight for our barn.") rather than telling what happened ("It was scary.")</p> <p>=&gt; I filled my paper with interesting tidbits that make reading it fun and lively.</p> <p>=&gt; I made sure my topic was small enough to handle. "All About Baseball" was too big – I changed it to "How to Steal a Base."</p> <p>=&gt; I could easily answer the question, "What is the point of this paper or story?"</p>

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**Rubric: Organization**

1 <b>Just Beginning</b>	3 <b>On My Way</b>	5 <b>Exactly What I Intended</b>
Not shaped yet.	Some really smooth parts, others need work.	My writing has a clear and compelling direction.
<p>=&gt; There isn't really a beginning or end to my paper. It just "takes off."</p> <p>=&gt; I'm confused about how the details fit with the main idea or story.</p> <p>=&gt; My ideas seem scrambled, jumbled, and disconnected. It's confusing.</p> <p>=&gt; Conclusion? Oops, I forgot.</p>	<p>=&gt; I have a beginning, but it really doesn't grab you or give clues about what is coming.</p> <p>=&gt; Sometimes it is not clear how the details I have used connect to the main idea or story.</p> <p>=&gt; Some of my details are in the right spot but some should come earlier or later.</p> <p>=&gt; I've lingered too long in some places, and sped through others.</p> <p>=&gt; I have a conclusion, it just isn't the way I want it yet. I may have gone too long or just tried to sum it up in a ho-hum way.</p>	<p>=&gt; My beginning gets the reader's attention and gives clues about what is coming.</p> <p>=&gt; Every detail adds a little more to the main idea or story.</p> <p>=&gt; All my details are in the right place; everything fits like a puzzle.</p> <p>=&gt; I ended at a good spot and didn't drag on too long. I left my reader with something to think about.</p>

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**Rubric: Voice**

<p align="center"><b>1</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Just Beginning</b></p> <p align="center">Not Yet Me</p>	<p align="center"><b>3</b></p> <p align="center"><b>On My Way</b></p> <p align="center">Individuality Fades In and Out</p>	<p align="center"><b>5</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Exactly What I Intended</b></p> <p align="center">Individual and Powerful</p>
<p>I'm not comfortable sharing what I truly think and feel yet.</p>	<p>What I truly think and feel sometimes shows up.</p>	<p>My paper has lots of personality. It sounds different from the way anyone else writes.</p>
<p>=&gt; If you didn't really know, it might be hard to tell who wrote this paper; you can't really hear my voice in there yet.</p> <p>=&gt; I'm not comfortable taking a risk by telling you what I really think – I've taken the safe route by hiding my true feelings.</p> <p>=&gt; My paper is all telling and no showing at all.</p> <p>=&gt; I've held myself back by using general statements like: "It was fun," "She was nice," "I like him a lot."</p>	<p>=&gt; Although readers will understand what I mean, it won't make them feel like laughing, crying, or pounding the table.</p> <p>=&gt; My writing is right on the edge of being funny, exciting, scary, or downright honest – but it's not there yet.</p> <p>=&gt; My personality pokes through here and there, but then gets covered up again.</p> <p>=&gt; My writing is pleasant, but a little cautious.</p> <p>=&gt; I've done a lot of telling and not enough showing.</p>	<p>=&gt; I have put my personal stamp on this paper; it's really me!</p> <p>=&gt; Readers can tell I am talking right to them.</p> <p>=&gt; I write with confidence and sincerity.</p> <p>=&gt; My paper is full of feelings and my reader will feel what I feel.</p> <p>=&gt; I'm not afraid to say what I really think.</p> <p>=&gt; You can tell that I wrote this. No one else sounds like this!</p>

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**Rubric: Word Choice**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Just Beginning</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Confusing, Misused Words and Phrases Abound</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>On My Way</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Correct but Not Striking</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>5</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Exactly What I Intended</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Extremely Clear, Visual and Accurate</p>
<p>My reader is often asking, “What did you mean by this?”</p>	<p>The words in my paper get the message across, but don’t capture anyone’s imagination or attention.</p>	<p>I picked just the right words for just the right places.</p>
<p>=&gt; A lot of my words and phrases are vague: “We liked to do things,” “We were friends and stuff.”</p> <p>=&gt; My words don’t make pictures yet. “Something neat happened.” “It was awesome.”</p> <p>=&gt; Some of my words are applied correctly.</p> <p>=&gt; Over and over I use the same words.</p>	<p>=&gt; I used everyday words pretty well, but I didn’t stretch for a new or better way to say things.</p> <p>=&gt; Most of the time the reader will figure out what I mean even if a few words are goofed up.</p> <p>=&gt; Occasionally, I may have gone a bit overboard with words that tried to impress the reader.</p> <p>=&gt; My words aren’t very specific. Instead of saying, “The sun went down” I should have said, “The sun sagged into the treetops.” Clearer, juicier details were needed!</p> <p>=&gt; There are many tired out clichés (“Bright and early” “Quick as a wink”) as there are new, fresh and original phrases.</p>	<p>=&gt; All the words in my paper fit. Each one seems just right.</p> <p>=&gt; My words are colorful, snappy, vital, brisk, and fresh. You won’t find overdone, vague, or flowery language.</p> <p>=&gt; Look at my energetic verbs!</p> <p>=&gt; Some of the words and phrases are so vivid that the reader won’t be able to forget them.</p>

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**Rubric: Sentence Fluency**

<p align="center"><b>1</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Just Beginning</b></p> <p align="center">Needs work</p>	<p align="center"><b>3</b></p> <p align="center"><b>On My Way</b></p> <p align="center">Routine and Functional</p>	<p align="center"><b>5</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Exactly What I Intended</b></p> <p align="center">Varied and Natural</p>
<p>Because there isn't enough "sentence sense" yet, this paper is difficult to read aloud, even with practice.</p>	<p>The paper has some smooth parts, other parts need work.</p>	<p>The sentences in my paper are clear and delightful to read aloud.</p>
<p>=&gt; As I read my paper, I have to go back, stop, and reread, just to figure out the sentences.</p> <p>=&gt; I'm having a hard time telling where one sentence stops and another begins.</p> <p>=&gt; The sentence patterns in my paper are so repetitive they might put my reader to sleep!</p> <p>=&gt; I have to do quite a bit of oral editing (leaving some words out, putting some others in) just to help the listener get the meaning.</p>	<p>=&gt; Some of my sentences are smooth and natural, but others are halting.</p> <p>=&gt; Sentence beginnings are more alike than different.</p> <p>=&gt; I need to add linking words (Therefore... Later... When this happened...) to show how sentences connect.</p> <p>=&gt; Some sentences should merge; others need to be cut in two.</p> <p>=&gt; I have used more words than necessary – I still need to trim some dead wood.</p>	<p>=&gt; Some sentences are long and stretchy, while some are short and snappy.</p> <p>=&gt; It's easy to read my paper aloud. I love the sound.</p> <p>=&gt; Sentence beginnings vary; they show how ideas connect.</p> <p>=&gt; You can tell that I have good "sentence sense" because my paper just flows.</p> <p>=&gt; All excess baggage has been cut. I've economized with words.</p>

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**Rubric: Conventions**

1 <b>Just Beginning</b> Editing Not Under Control Yet	3 <b>On My Way</b> About Half-Way Home	5 <b>Exactly What I Intended</b> Mostly Correct
It would take a first reading to decode, and then a second reading to get the meaning of the paper.	A number of bothersome mistakes in my paper need to be cleaned up before I am ready to publish.	There are very few errors in my paper; it wouldn't take long to get this ready to publish.
<p>=&gt; Spelling errors are common, even on simple words.</p> <p>=&gt; My paper has errors in punctuation and grammar that send the reader back to the beginning of a sentence to sort things out.</p> <p>=&gt; I've got capital letters scattered all over the place or not at all.</p> <p>=&gt; I haven't got the hang of paragraphs yet.</p> <p>=&gt; The truth is, I haven't spent much time editing this paper.</p>	<p>=&gt; Spelling is correct on simple words. It may not always be right on the harder words.</p> <p>=&gt; Most sentences and proper nouns begin with capitals, but a few have been overlooked.</p> <p>=&gt; Paragraphs are present, but not all begin in the right spots.</p> <p>=&gt; A few problems with grammar and punctuation might make a reader stumble or pause now and again.</p> <p>=&gt; My paper reads like a first draft; I was more concerned with getting my ideas down than making sure all the editing was completed.</p>	<p>=&gt; I have used capitals correctly.</p> <p>=&gt; Periods, commas, exclamation marks and quotation marks are in the right places.</p> <p>=&gt; My spelling is accurate.</p> <p>=&gt; Every paragraph is indented to show where a new idea begins.</p> <p>=&gt; My grammar usage is consistent and shows control.</p>

**SIX TRAITS +1 OF WRITING Scoring Rubric**

Writer's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Peer Editor's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Work \_\_\_\_\_

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Ideas And Content</b>					
<b>Organization</b>					
<b>Word Choice</b>					
<b>Voice</b>					
<b>Sentence Fluency</b>					
<b>Conventions</b>					
<b>Presentation</b>					