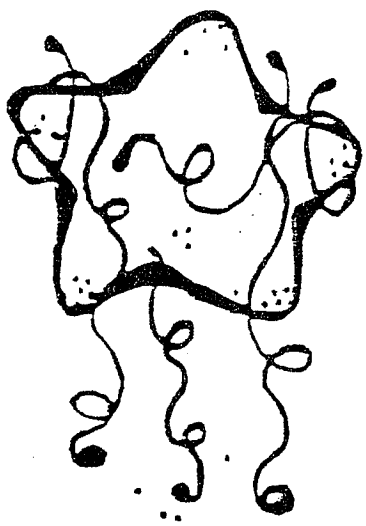
THE 6-TRAIT ANALYTIC MODEL

I believe it is important not only to share a common vision for lifelong learning and literacy; but a common vocabulary for how we talk about such issues.



Dr. Beverly Ann Chin
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Teachers write in class not to impress children with their superior skills, but to show that even adults often have better ideas the second time around . . . . If Dr. Seuss writes one thousand pages to produce a sixty-page book, then surely it's all right if a rank beginner in the first grade has to scratch something out.

Donald Graves & Virginia Stuart
Write From the Start
ISBN: 0-451-15048-1
Page 87

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THE BIG PICTURE

1. Weave in the traits as they make sense for you, your students, and your curriculum.

2. Help students understand where the traits come from and give them their own criteria. Then begin teaching how to USE the traits for *focused* revision.
   - Begin with one trait at a time
   - Ideas or Word Choice is a good place to start
   - Save Organization for a while . . .

3. Teaching CONVENTIONS (editing) as you go, all the time.

4. Your students will write more effectively if:
   - they truly understand the difference between revision and editing.
   - they learn to assess and discuss the work of others.

5. Invest time in allowing students to write often and for many purposes.
   - 45 minutes three times a week as a minimum
   - Writing activities can happen throughout the school day!

6. Help your parents understand the vision of success you have for students by:
   - sharing the writing criteria with them.
   - using comments from the criteria on student papers as part of their evaluation.

7. GRADES . . . find a balance
   Think *PERFORMANCE, PROGRESS, & PARTICIPATION*

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10 Reasons to Read Aloud to Students

1. Student writers hear NEW WORDS ... and ...

2. Develop SENTENCE SENSE, and an ear for RHYTHM

3. Hear STANDARD FORMS of English

4. Enjoy and compare DIVERSE WRITING STYLES

5. Develop a sense of STORY

6. See that reading is ENJOYABLE

7. Use reading as a DOORWAY TO WRITING

8. Use reading as a SPRINGBOARD TO DISCUSSION

9. Gain new KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING

10. IT'S FUN!!!

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THE 6-TRAIT ANALYTIC MODEL FOR WRITING ASSESSMENT

1. IDEAS

The ideas are the heart of the message, the content of the piece, the main theme, together with the details that enrich and develop that theme.

2. ORGANIZATION

Organization is the internal structure of a piece of writing, the thread of central meaning, the logical and sometimes intriguing pattern of the ideas.

3. VOICE

The voice is the heart and soul, the magic, the wit, along with the feeling and conviction of the individual writer coming out through the words.

4. WORD CHOICE

Word choice is the use of rich, colorful, precise language that moves and enlightens the reader.

5. SENTENCE FLUENCY

Sentence fluency is 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.

6. CONVENTIONS

Conventions are the mechanical correctness of the piece—spelling, grammar and usage, paragraphing, use of capitals, and punctuation.

Assessment and Accountability Program, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1996.

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SIX-TRAIT ANALYTICAL WRITING ASSESSMENT MODEL
Scoring Guide (Rubric)

- Ideas and Content
- Organization
- Voice
- Word Choice
- Sentence Fluency
- Conventions

5 STRONG
STRONG:
shows control and skill; many strengths present

4 MATURING
MATURING:
on balance, the strengths outweigh the weaknesses; writing is taking shape!

3 DEVELOPING
DEVELOPING:
about half-way home; strengths and weaknesses are about equal; first draft stage

2 EMERGING
EMERGING:
isolated moments begin to show what the writer intends; however, shortcomings still dominate

1 NOT YET
NOT YET:
getting started but the result is unclear, fuzzy, struggling, tentative; writer is searching and exploring

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IDEAS AND CONTENT
(Development)

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, telling, quality details** give the reader important information that goes **beyond the obvious** or predictable.
C. Reasonably **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 indepth 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. Organization **flows so smoothly** the reader hardly thinks about it; the choice of structure matches the **purpose** and **audience**.

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 often work well**; at other times, connections between ideas are fuzzy.
C. **Sequencing** shows **some logic**, but not under control enough that it consistently supports the ideas. In fact, sometimes it is so predictable and rehearsed that the **structure takes 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 storyline**; at other times, the reader feels an urge to slip in a transition or move things around.

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 real conclusion** to wrap things up.
B. Connections between ideas are **confusing** or not even present.
C. **Sequencing needs** lots and lots of **work.**
D. **Pacing feels awkward**; the writer slows to a crawl when the reader wants to get on with it, and vice versa.
E. **No title is present** (if requested), or if present, **does not match** well with the content.
F. Problems with organization make it **hard for the reader to get a grip** on the main point or story line.

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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 tone of the writing **adds interest** to the message and is **appropriate for the purpose and audience.**
B. The reader feels a **strong interaction** with the writer, sensing the **person behind the words.**
C. The writer **takes a risk** by revealing who he or she is consistently throughout the piece.
D. **Expository or persuasive** writing reflects a **strong commitment** to the topic by showing **why** the **reader needs to know this** and why he or she should care.
E. **Narrative** writing is **honest, personal, engaging** and makes you **think about and react to** the author's ideas and point of view.

3 *The writer seems sincere, but not fully engaged or involved. The result is pleasant or even personable, but not compelling.*

A. The writer seems aware of an audience but discards personal insights in favor of **obvious generalities.**
B. The writing communicates in an **earnest, pleasing, yet safe** manner.
C. Only **one or two moments here or there** intrigue, delight, or move the reader. These places may **emerge strongly for a line or two, but quickly fade away.**
D. **Expository or persuasive** writing **lacks consistent engagement** with the topic to build credibility.
E. **Narrative** writing is **reasonably sincere**, but doesn't reflect unique or individual perspective on the topic.

1 *The writer seems indifferent, uninvolved, or distanced from the topic and/or the audience. As a result, the paper reflects more than one of the following problems:*

A. The writer is **not concerned with the audience**. The writer's style is a **complete mismatch** for the intended reader or the writing is **so short** that little is accomplished beyond introducing the topic.
B. The writer speaks in a kind of **monotone** that flattens all potential highs or lows of the message.
C. The writing is **humdrum and "risk-free."**
D. The writing is **lifeless or mechanical**; depending on the topic, it may be overly technical or jargonistic.
E. The development of the topic is **so limited** that **no point of view is present**—zip, zero, zilch, nada.

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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. The words and phrases **create pictures and linger in your mind.**
C. The language is **natural and never overdone**; both words and phrases are **individual** and **effective**.
D. **Striking words and phrases** often catch the reader's eye—and linger in the reader's mind. (You can recall a handful as you reflect on the paper.)
E. **Lively verbs** energize the writing. **Precise nouns and modifiers** add depth and specificity.
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;** they simply **lack much flair and originality**.
B. Familiar **words and phrases communicate,** but rarely capture the reader's imagination. Still, the paper may have **one or two fine moments.**
C. **Attempts at colorful language** show a willingness to stretch and grow, but sometimes it goes too far (thesaurus overload!).
D. The writing is marked by **passive verbs, everyday nouns and adjectives, and lack of interesting adverbs.**
E. The words are only occasionally refined; it's more often, **"the first thing that popped into my mind."**
F. The words and phrases are **functional**—with only a moment or two of sparkle.

1 *The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary, searching for words to convey meaning. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:*

A. Language is so **vague** (e.g., *It was a fun time, She was neat, It was nice, We did lots of stuff*) that only a **limited message** comes through.
B. **"Blah, blah, blah"** is all that the reader reads and hears.
C. **Words are used incorrectly,** making the message secondary to the misfires with the words.
D. **Limited vocabulary** and/or frequent **misuse of parts of speech** impair understanding.
E. **Jargon or clichés** distract or mislead. Persistent **redundancy** distracts the reader.
F. Problems with language **leave the reader wondering** what the writer is trying to say. The **words just don't work** in this piece.

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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 were 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 to enhance readability. 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.**

GRADES 7 AND UP ONLY: The writing is sufficiently complex to allow the writer to show skill in using a wide range of conventions. For writers at younger ages, the writing shows control over those conventions that are gradelage appropriate.

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. **Paragraphing is attempted** but may run together or begin in the wrong places.
E. **Problems with grammar or usage are not serious** enough to distort meaning but may not be correct or accurately applied all of the time.
F. **Moderate** (a little of this, a little of that) **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.

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Beginning Writer's Continuum (BWC)

How to use the continuum -
We suggest you make a copy of the Beginning Writer's Continuum and the regular 6+1 Trait™ rubric and compare the two. As you begin to examine both documents carefully, you will notice they are VERY different in form and function. The BWC (Beginning Writer's Continuum) is designed to document specific new writing skills as they are acquired, step-by-step. The standard 6+1 Trait™ rubric, on the other hand, is not developmental; instead, it assesses a range of performance across the traits (beginning to strong), and is applicable to writers of all ages, given that there is enough text to evaluate against this criteria.

If you look closely at the continuum, you will notice that by the time a writer regularly demonstrates skills described at the "3" level, you will find language in the descriptors similar to those in the regular 6+1 Trait™ criteria. This is because the criteria by which we evaluate writing are present in the earliest of writing pieces–on a developmental continuum. When deciding which criteria to use, the BWC or the 6+1 trait rubric, ask yourself, "Which rubric will give the student and teacher the best information to improve performance next time?" *Consider the complexity of the piece you are evaluating*. If the writing sample is only a few sentences, regardless of the quality, you are better served with the BWC. If the student's writing has matured to the point he or she is able to write a complete paragraph or two, then begin transitioning to the 6+1 Trait™ rubric. There ARE second and early third graders who write enough text and with enough sophistication that the regular rubric clearly provides a picture of their performance. But, as a general rule, most young writers are better served with the BWC.

The core of the 6+1 Trait™ assessment model is the regular rubric, which is generally used with late third graders on up. The Beginning Writer's Continuum is an add-on piece to support teachers and students as they create their own writing process classrooms and begin building a common vocabulary and vision for good writing. What does all this mean for teachers of beginning writers? Can we actually use the traits with writers who are still working on creating a complete sentence? Orienting their letters in the same direction? Drawing? It's the best time to start! Teachers of primary students can begin building a strong foundation **using the language** of the traits to respond to student writing, drawing, even storytelling. The traits are there from the beginning. A drawing full of detail indicates keen observation and attention–that's **Ideas**. Sequential pictures are an indication of **Organization**. **Voice** might first show itself through speaking and storytelling. By stepping back and recognizing that writing includes thinking, listening, reading, planning, talking, drawing ... we open our eyes to all sorts of possibilities. We teach our children and ourselves what rubrics are and how to use them in all different aspects of their learning; we focus on helping children internalize that "process" is a huge part of learning and that the writing process is something we all work on together.

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6-Trait Assessment for Beginning Writers

1 EXPERIMENTING

IDEAS
- Uses scribbles for writing
- Dictates labels or a story
- Shapes that look like letters
- Line forms that imitate text
- Writes letters randomly

ORGANIZATION
- Ability to order or group not yet present
- No sense of beginning or end
- Connections between ideas are confusing

VOICE
- Communicates feeling with size, color, shape, line in drawing or letter imitation
- Work is similar to everyone else's
- Unclear response to task
- Awareness of audience not present

2 EMERGING

IDEAS
- Some recognizable words present
- Labels pictures
- Uses drawings that show detail
- Pictures are supported by some words

ORGANIZATION
- No title (if requested)
- **Experiments with beginnings**
- Begins to group like words/pictures
- Transitions or evidence of sequencing are haphazard

VOICE
- Hints of voice present in words and phrases
- Looks different from most others
- Energy/mood is present
- Treatment of topic predictable
- Audience is fuzzy—could be anybody, anywhere

3 DEVELOPING

IDEAS
- Attempts a story or to make a point
- Illustration supports the writing
- Meaning of the general idea is recognizable/understandable
- Some ideas clear but some are still fuzzy

ORGANIZATION
- A title is present (if requested)
- Limited transitions present
- Beginning but no ending except "The End"
- Attempts at sequencing and transitions

VOICE
- Expresses some predictable feelings
- Moments of individual sparkle, but then hides
- Repetition of familiar ideas reduces energy
- Awareness that the writing will be read by someone else
- Reader has limited connection to writer

4 CAPABLE

IDEAS
- Writing tells a story or makes a point
- Illustration (if present) enhances the writing
- Idea is generally on topic
- Details are present but not developed (lists)

ORGANIZATION
- An appropriate title is present (if requested)
- Attempts transitions from sentence to sentence
- Beginning works well and attempts an ending
- Logical sequencing
- Key ideas begin to surface

VOICE
- Writing is individual and expressive
- Individual perspective becomes evident
- Personal treatment of a standard topic
- Writes to convey a story or idea to the reader
- Attempts non-standard point of view

5 EXPERIENCED

IDEAS
- Presents a fresh/original idea
- Topic is narrowed and focused
- Develops one clear, main idea
- Uses interesting, important details for support.
- Writer understands topic well

ORGANIZATION
- An original title is present (if requested)
- Transitions connect main ideas
- The opening attracts
- An effective ending is tried
- Easy to follow
- Important ideas stand out

VOICE
- Uses text to elicit a variety of emotions
- Takes some risks to say more than what is expected
- Point of view is evident
- Writes with a clear sense of audience
- Cares deeply about the topic

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1 EXPERIMENTING

WORD CHOICE
- Writes letters in strings
- Imitates word patterns
- Pictures stand for words and phrases
- Copies environmental print

SENTENCE FLUENCY
- Mimics letters and words across the page
- Words stand alone
- Patterns for sentences not in evidence
- Sentence sense not yet present

CONVENTIONS
- Writes letter strings (pre-phonetic: dmRxzz)
- Attempts to create standard letters
- Attempts spacing of words, letters, symbols or pictures
- Attempts to write left to right
- Attempts to write top/down
- Punctuation, capitalization etc. not making sense, yet
- Student interpretation needed to understand text/pictures

2 EMERGING

WORD CHOICE
- Recognizable words
- Environmental words used correctly
- Attempts at phrases
- Functional language

SENTENCE FLUENCY
- Strings words together into phrases
- Attempts simple sentences
- Short, repetitive sentence patterns
- Dialogue present but not understandable

CONVENTIONS
- Attempts semi-phonetic spelling (MTR, UM, KD, etc.)
- Uses mixed upper and lower case letters
- Uses spaces between letters and words
- Consistently writes left to right
- Consistently makes effective use of top to bottom spacing
- Random punctuation
- Nonstandard grammar is common

3 DEVELOPING

WORD CHOICE
- General or ordinary words
- Attempts new words but they don't always fit
- Settles for the word or phrase that "will do"
- Big words used only to impress reader
- Relies on slang, clichés, or repetition

SENTENCE FLUENCY
- Uses simple sentences
- Sentences tend to begin the same
- Experiments with other sentence patterns
- Reader may have to reread to follow the meaning
- Dialogue present but needs interpretation

CONVENTIONS
- Uses phonetic spelling (MOSTR, HUMN, KLOSD, etc.) on personal words
- Spelling of high frequency words still spotty
- Uses capitals at the beginning of sentences
- Usually uses end punctuation correctly (.!?)
- Experiments with other punctuation
- Long paper may be written as one paragraph
- Attempts standard grammar

4 CAPABLE

WORD CHOICE
- Uses favorite words correctly
- Experiments with new and different words with some success
- Tries to choose words for specificity
- Attempts to use descriptive words to create images

SENTENCE FLUENCY
- Simple and compound sentences present and effective
- Attempts complex sentences
- Not all sentences begin the same
- Sections of writing have rhythm and flow

CONVENTIONS
- Transitional spelling on less frequent words (MONSTUR, HUMUN, CLOSSED, etc.)
- Spelling of high frequency words usually correct
- Capitals at the beginning of sentences and variable use on proper nouns
- End punctuation is correct (.!?) and other punctuation is attempted (such as commas)
- Paragraphing variable but present
- Noun/pronoun agreement, verb tenses, subject/verb agreement

5 EXPERIENCED

WORD CHOICE
- Everyday words used well
- Precise, accurate, fresh, original words
- Creates vivid images in a natural way
- Avoids repetition, clichés or vague language
- Attempts at figurative language

SENTENCE FLUENCY
- Consistently uses sentence variety
- Sentence structure is correct and creative
- Variety of sentence beginnings
- Natural rhythm, cadence and flow
- Sentences have texture which clarify the important idea

CONVENTIONS
- High frequency words are spelled correctly and very close on other words
- Capitals used for obvious proper nouns as well as sentence beginnings
- Basic punctuation is used correctly and/or creatively
- Indents consistently to show paragraphs
- Shows control over standard grammar

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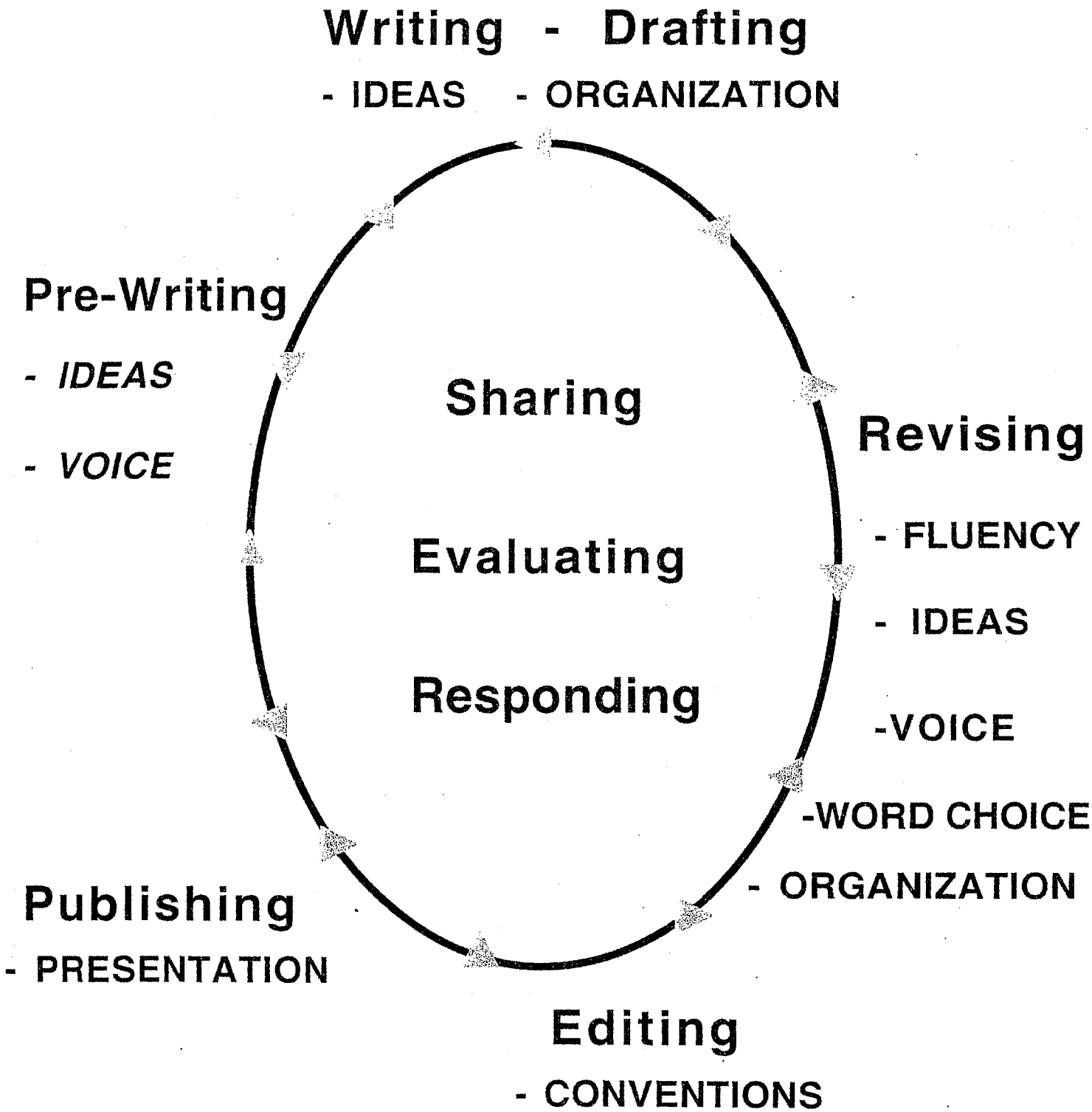
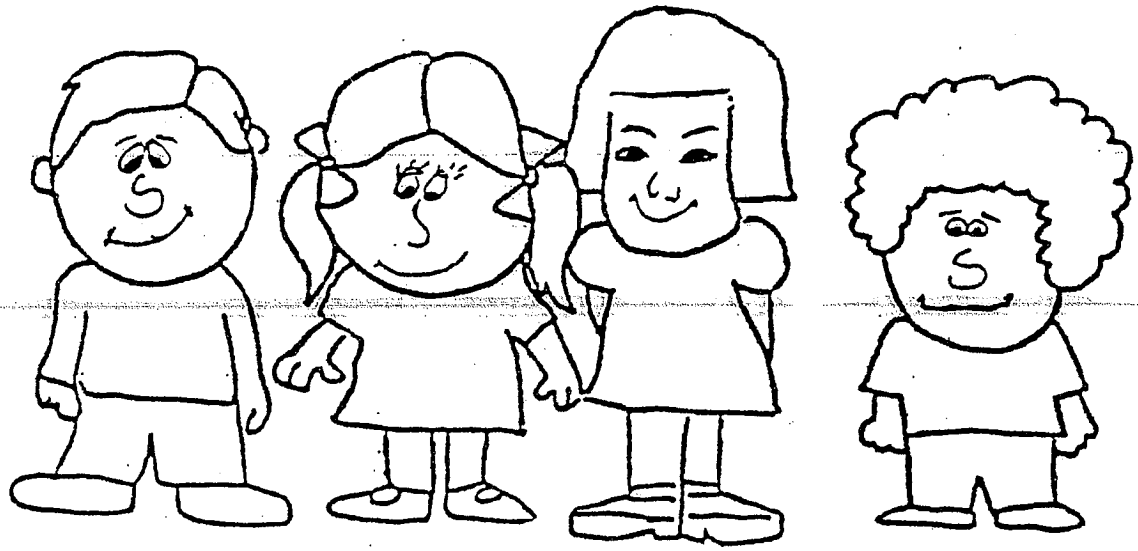
Writing Process - Instruction



The Student Friendly Guide to Writing with Traits



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The writer should not follow rules,
but follow language toward meaning,
always seeking to understand what is appearing on the page,
to see it clearly,
to evaluate it clearly,
for clear thinking will produce clear writing.

—Donald Murray

This book is dedicated to the students and teachers across the United States, especially in Beaverton and Portland, Oregon where this model originated in 1984, who are challenging themselves and each other to become clearer thinkers and better writers using the six analytic traits. We hope that our work helps you to reach your goals!

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Ideas and Content

> *We don't want (the writer) to describe every ride at Disneyland, or tell us that the Grand Canyon is awesome. . . If one of the rides at Disneyland got stuck, or if somebody fell into the awesome Grand Canyon,* ***that*** *would be worth hearing about.*
>
> *–William Zinsser*

Ideas and Content is what you have to say--the reason for writing your paper. Everything about your writing begins with that message. If you can choose your own topic, pick something important to you, that you know a lot about. If someone picks the topic for you, look for a way to connect it to your own experience. That way, you can use what you know.

This is one of the secrets~~**keep it small.** If your topic is too big (like "Animals of Africa") you'll wind up trying to tell too much and not be able to focus on any one idea long enough to make it clear. Skipping it down ("[illegible] Pairs) so you can handle it. Put in the kind of details to show you pay attention to the world and notice how it works.

Surprise your reader with what you know. Don't spend time on things that anyone else could write. Don't say, "Cooking in a restaurant can be hard work." Even people who don't cook can figure that out. Instead, tell what goes on in the kitchen if an angry customer sent the food back. *That* would be an interesting insight!

One more hint: **Make your ideas crystal clear.** Avoid general statements like "Our trip was exciting." Exciting how? Instead, say "I chased two very hungry black bears away from our camping supplies." Specific details that help the reader picture what is happening can *make or break* your writing.

> *Human beings have a great need to represent their experience through writing. We need to make our truths beautiful.*
>
> *--Lucy McCormick Calkins*

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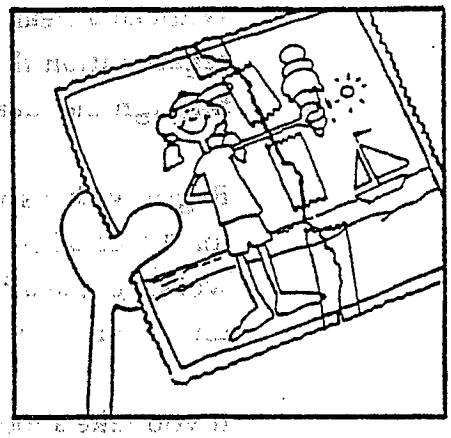
Ideas and Content

⑤ Paper - Focused, Clear, and Specific

My writing is full of the kinds of details that keep the reader's attention and show what is really important about my topic.



- I know a lot about this topic, and when someone else reads it, they'll find out some new or little-known information.
- 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").
- I filled my paper with interesting tidbits that make reading it fun and lively.
- 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."
- I could easily answer the question, "What is the point of this paper/story?"

③ Paper - Some Really Good Parts, Some Not There Yet

The reader usually knows what I mean. Some parts will be better when I tell just a little more about what is important.

- Some of the things I said are new, but other things everyone knows already.
- Some details I have used are pretty general, like: "Her hat was nice," or "It was a sunny day."
- I think my topic might be too big and I got bogged down trying to tell a little about a lot instead of a lot about a little.
- Sometimes I was very clear about what I meant, but at other times, it was still fuzzy.

① Paper - Just Beginning to Figure Out What I Want to Say.

When someone else reads my paper, it will be hard for them to understand what I mean or what it is all about.

- I haven't shared much information. I guess I don't know enough yet about this topic to write about it.
- My details are so vague it is hard to picture anything.
- I'm still thinking aloud on paper. I'm looking for a good idea.
- Maybe I'll write about this, but then, maybe I'll write about that ...

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Organization

> I look back and forth and see potential endings and titles and leads. I'm looking for a trail through the material I have. . .
>
> --Donald Murray

Without a clear trail, your ideas collapse or crash into each other. It is the **organization that gives your writing direction** and it helps the reader move through the ideas in a purposeful way.

Begin with a strong lead so you hook the reader right off the bat. Don't settle for "Once upon a time" or "My paper is all about dogs." Think about your lead working like a fishing lure or fly that dangles right in front of the nose of the fish until it just can't resist and takes a big, committed bite. Ahhh, gottcha!

If you take a look at your whole piece of writing, **it should carefully build** to the most important moment or point you are trying to make. Toss your reader interesting details that work like stepping stones--each getting the reader closer and closer to the key idea or event.

The **order of your details** is really important, too. Ideas shouldn't dive-bomb the reader out of the blue; they should come at just the right time to help the reader understand. Everything needs to fit together with a strong connecting line back to the main idea.

Watch out for getting bogged down in trivial details (what color the hero's socks were, or whether she had milk on her cereal). Keep moving right along. And when you reach the end of the story or make your last point, STOP! Make that last sentence count by leaving the reader with something to think about. Good endings are tough, but don't fall into the pit with "And I woke up and it was only a dream," or "Now you know the three reasons why Americans should car pool." Readers won't feel satisfied with these endings and *neither will you*.

> ORGANIZATION IS THE HARDEST TRAIT.
>
> --K-12 STUDENT WRITERS ACROSS AMERICA

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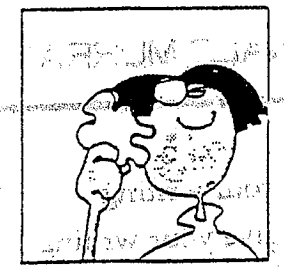
Organization

⑤ Paper - Clear and Compelling Direction

I've chosen an order that works well and makes the reader want to find out what's coming next.



- My beginning gets the reader's attention and gives clues about what is coming.
- Every detail adds a little more to the main idea or story.
- All my details are in the right place; everything fits like a puzzle.
- I ended at a good spot and didn't drag on too long. I left my reader with something to think about.

③ Paper - Some Really Smooth Parts, Others Need Work

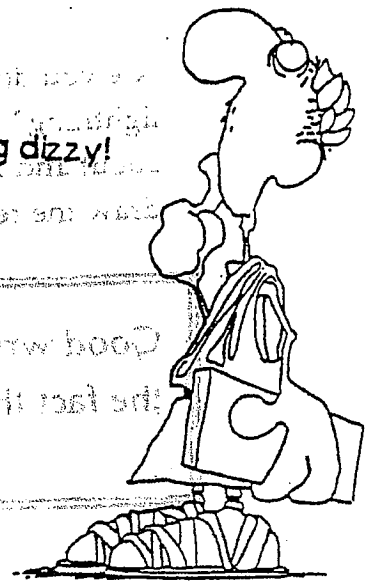
The order of my story/paper makes sense most of the time.

- I have a beginning, but it really doesn't grab you or give clues about what is coming.
- Sometimes it is not clear how the details I have used connect to the main idea or story.
- Some of my details are in the right spot, but some should come earlier or later.
- I've lingered too long in some places, and sped through others.
- I have a conclusion, it just isn't the way I want it yet. I may have gone on too long or just tried to sum up in a ho hum way.

① Paper - Not Shaped Yet

The order in my paper is jumbled and confused. I'm feeling dizzy!

- There isn't really a beginning or ending to my paper. It just kinda "takes off .."
- I'm confused about how the details fit with the main idea or story.
- My ideas seem scrambled, jumbled and disconnected. It's confusing.
- Conclusion? Oops, I forgot.



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Voice

> VOICE SEPARATES WRITING THAT IS READ FROM WRITING THAT IS NOT READ . . . VOICE IS THE WRITER REVEALED.
>
> --DONALD MURRAY

Voice is YOU coming through your writing. It's what gives your writing *personality, flavor, style* - a sound all its own. Only you can give your writing this special touch because no one else sees the world quite the way you do. Pretty neat, huh! Your voice is as distinctively yours as your fingerprints.

Honesty is important to create voice in your writing. You must say what you truly think and feel--not what you think someone else might want to hear. This takes courage. You must write from the inside out--from that part of you that's in touch with your feelings. This means you need to know yourself, listen to yourself, and trust those thoughts and feelings. Sometimes the [illegible] of writing will help you discover what you truly think and feel. It's risky, a bit scary, and exciting, too.

Think about your reader as you write. Write directly to that person just as if he or she were standing there talking to you. Be yourself. Don't try to impress the reader. Readers will respond to your sincerity, honesty, and conviction.

Are you doing a paper on sea urchins? Bungee jumping? geometric shapes? lightning? dancing? Write with **confidence**, as if you know what you're talking about and it is **utterly fascinating**; your enthusiasm will be contagious and will draw the reader in to your writer's web of ideas and feelings.

> **Good writing is supposed to evoke sensation in the reader - - not the fact that it's raining, but the feel of being rained upon.**
>
> --E.L. Doctorow

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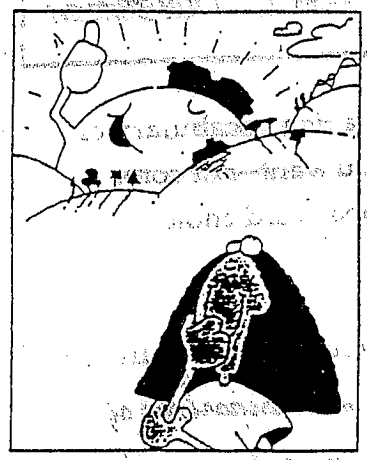
Voice

⑤ Paper - Really Individual and Powerful

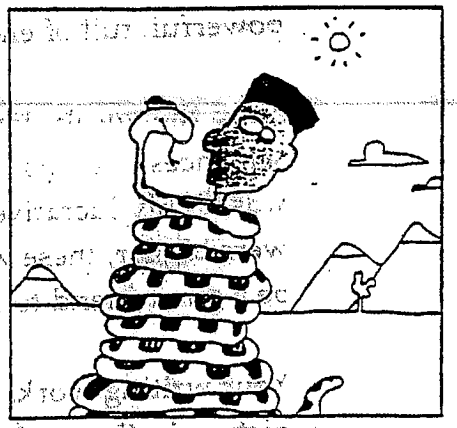
My paper has lots of personality. It sounds different from the way anyone else writes.



- I have put my personal stamp on this paper; it's really me!
- Readers can tell I am talking right to them.
- I write with confidence and sincerity.
- My paper is full of feelings and my reader will feel what I feel.
- I'm not afraid to say what I really think.
- You can tell that I wrote this. No one else sounds like this!

③ Paper - Individuality Fades In and Out

What I truly think and feel only shows up sometimes.



- Although readers will understand what I mean, it won't make them feel like laughing, crying or pounding on the table.
- My writing is right on the edge of being funny, excited, scary or downright honest - but it's not there yet.
- My personality pokes through here and there, but then gets covered up again.
- My writing is pleasant, but a little cautious.
- I've done a lot of telling and not enough showing.

① Paper - Not Yet Me

I'm not comfortable sharing what I truly think and feel yet.

- If you didn't already know, it might be hard to tell who wrote this paper; you can't really hear my voice in there yet.
- I'm not comfortable taking a risk by telling you what I really think - I've taken the safest route by hiding my true feelings.
- My paper is all telling and no showing at all.
- I've held myself back by using general statements like: 'It was fun,' 'She was nice,' 'I like him a lot.'

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Word Choice

> *I do not choose the right word. I get rid of the wrong one.*
>
> --A.E. Houseman

As you read and listen to other people speak, you cultivate a rich vocabulary of **precise and colorful words** that let you say exactly what you want--not come close, but nail it right on the head. This is the essence of good word choice. Every new word increases your power.

"But there are so many words to learn; where do I begin?" you might ask. In his book, *On Writing Well*, William Zinsser says, "*Verbs are the most important of all your tools. They push the sentence forward and give it momentum . . . flail, poke, dazzle, squash, beguile, pamper, swagger, wheedle, vex. Probably no other language has such a vast supply of verbs so bright with color.*" Learn to develop a critical eye toward the verbs in your work. Are they active, powerful, full of energy and pizzazz?

Keep the vocabulary natural. Never write to impress or you'll end up with sentences like this: "He cultivated his way into the kitchen," or "Our friendship was highly lucrative." See what happened? In an attempt to use words that were bigger, these writers forgot to make sure they made sense. A thesaurus can be a good friend to a writer, but only if used sparingly and with thought.

Your writing works best with **specific words, carefully chosen to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.** Play around with the words until they sound good. Don't say, "The dog was big and mean." Say, "A hundred pounds of snarling yellow fur launched itself from the porch, straining at a rope thin as spaghetti." Now that's something we can see happening!

> The race in writing is not to the swift, but to the original.
>
> --William Zinsser

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Word Choice

⑤ Paper - Extremely Clear, Visual, and Accurate

I picked just the right words for just the right places.

- All the words in my paper fit. Each one seems just right.
- My words are colorful, snappy, vital, brisk and fresh. You won't find overdone, vague, or flowery language.
- Look at all my energetic verbs!
- Some of the words and phrases are so vivid that the reader won't be able to forget them.

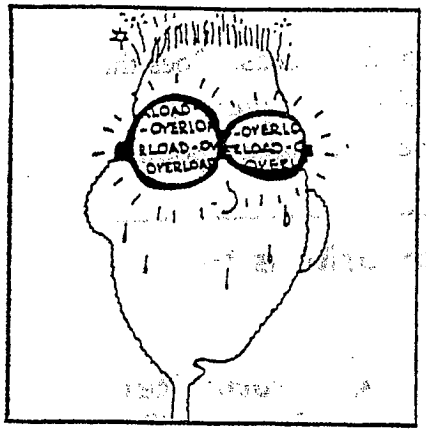
③ Paper - Correct But Not Striking

The words in my paper get the message across, but don't capture anyone's imagination or attention.

- I used everyday words pretty well, but I didn't stretch for a new or better way to say things.
- Most of the time the reader will figure out what I mean even if a few words are goofed up.
- Occasionally, I may have gone a bit overboard with words that tried to impress the reader.
- My words aren't real specific. Instead of saying, "The sun went down" I should have said, "The sun sagged into the treetops." Better, juicier details were needed!
- There are as many tired out cliches ("Bright and early," "Quick as a wink") as there are new, fresh and original phrases: "My mother made me feel more special than all her potted plants."

① Paper - Confusing, Misused Words, and Phrases Abound

My reader is often asking, "What did you mean by this?"



- A lot of my words and phrases are vague: "We liked to do things," "We were friends and stuff."
- My words don't make pictures yet. "Something neat happened." "It was awesome."
- Some of my words are misapplication - Oops, I mean misused.
- Over and over I used the same words, over and over, and then over and over again until my paper was over.

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Sentence Fluency

> Clarity, clarity, clarity. When you become hopelessly mired in a sentence, it is best to start fresh . . ."
>
> --Strunk and White
> *The Elements of Style*

Read what you write aloud and **listen to the rhythm of the language.** Do you like what you hear? Does it make you sit up and take notice, or are you lulled to sleep by the sing-song sameness of each sentence pattern? Writers who read a lot notice that they develop a feeling for sentences that some people call "sentence sense." It's that sense that there's more than one way to say a thing--but some ways just sound better than others.

Your sentences should be clear; they should make sense. **Cut the deadwood.** Don't say: "At this point in time, we feel we are about ready to begin to fight." Say, "Now we're ready to fight." Make every word work hard and your sentences will be powerful, full of punch.

Notice how your sentences begin. These beginnings are repetitive and boring: "We went to the beach. We had fun. We saw seagulls. We went home." Yawn! Vary the openings and combine very short sentences: "Despite being overrun with pesky seagulls, we had fun at the beach."

Don't let sentences drift on too long, either. If a sentence feels unwieldy, out of control, slice it in half. Make two sentences. As William Zinsser tells us, "There is no minimum length for a sentence that's acceptable . . . Among good writers it is the short sentence that predominates."

Read your work aloud and listen to the rhythm and flow of the words. Does the fluency match the mood and content? Long and flowing where the piece is descriptive and thoughtful; short and snappy where you need to make a point.

> **To write is to write is to write is to write is to write is to write is to write is to write.**
>
> **--Gertrude Stein**

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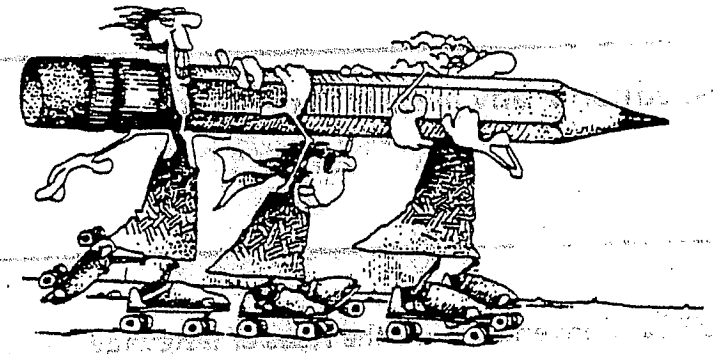
Sentence Fluency



⑤ Paper - Varied and Natural

The sentences in my paper are clear and delightful to read aloud.

- Some sentences are long and stretchy, while some are short and snappy.
- It's easy to read my paper aloud. I love the sound.
- Sentence beginnings vary; they show how ideas connect.
- You can tell that I have good 'sentence sense' because my paper just flows.
- All excess baggage has been cut. I've economized with words.

③ Paper - Routine and Functional

Some sentences are choppy or awkward, but most are clear.

- Some of my sentences are smooth and natural, but others are halting.
- Sentence beginnings are more alike than different.
- I need to add linking words (Therefore ... Later ... For this reason ... When this happened ...) to show how sentences connect.
- Some sentences should merge; others need to be cut in two.
- I have used more words than necessary -- I still need to trim some deadwood.

① Paper - Needs Work

Because there isn't enough 'sentence sense' yet, this paper is difficult to read aloud, even with practice.

- As I read my paper, I have to go back, stop, and read over, just to figure out the sentences.
- I'm having a hard time telling where one sentence stops and another begins.
- The sentence patterns in my paper are so repetitive they might put my reader to sleep!
- 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.

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Conventions

> The first editor of any piece is always the writer . . .
>
> --Nancie Atwell
> *In the Middle*

EDITING. Conventions are the rules of language ~~ *Spelling, Punctuation, Grammar/Usage, Paragraphing, and Capitalization* ~~ that make your text correct and easy for others to read. When you follow the rules, readers don't need to waste energy mentally editing; they can pay attention to your clever ideas, creative organization, unique voice, vibrant word choice, and lyrical fluency.

Conventions are different from the first five traits (Ideas, Organization, Voice, Word Choice, and Sentence Fluency) because to improve those traits you have been learning how to revise~~how to *rethink* and *re-see* your work. **Editing is** *fixing* ~~ **making sure the text is as error-free as possible.** The purpose is to make your paper readable to someone else. Sometimes mistakes in conventions [illegible] understanding your message. They also irritate some readers - something no writer sets out to do deliberately!

> **Editing is easy. All you have to do is cross out the wrong words.**
>
> **--Mark Twain**

Develop a proofreader's eye. Check everything. Then check it again. It's often hard to spot your own mistakes. Try reading aloud; it makes you slow down. You may also find it helpful to have someone else look at your work. Editing is a skill in itself--quite a bit different from writing. To be a good editor you must practice. Teach yourself to read slowly, and with care. Be honest; dare to see what is.

> **One of the hardest tasks of the writer is to read what is on the page, not what the writer hoped would be on the page.**
>
> --Donald Murray

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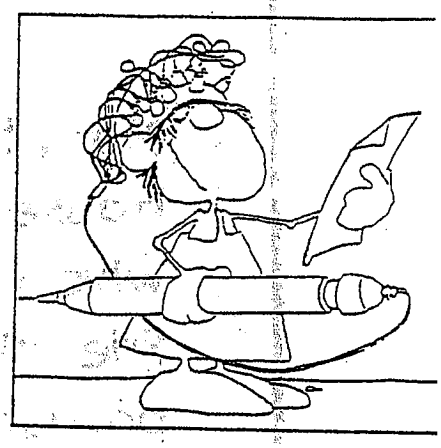
Conventions

⑤ Paper - Mostly Correct

There are very few errors in my paper; it wouldn't take long to get this ready to publish.



- I have used capitals correctly.
- Periods, commas, exclamation marks, and quotation marks are in the right places.
- My spelling is accurate.
- Every paragraph is indented to show where a new idea begins.
- My grammar/usage is consistent and shows control.

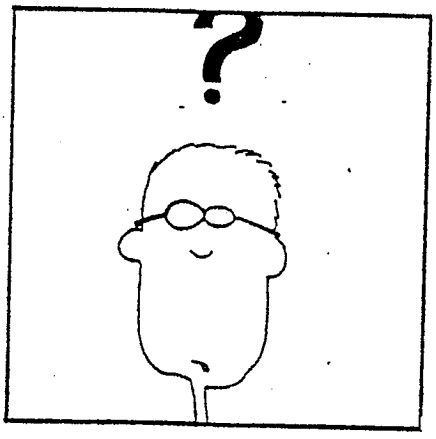
③ Paper - About Halfway Home

A number of bothersome mistakes in my paper need to be cleaned up before I am ready to publish.

- Spelling is correct on simple words. It may not always be right on the harder words.
- Most sentences and proper nouns begin with capitals, but a few have been overlooked.
- Paragraphs are present, but not all begin in the right spots.
- A few problems with grammar and punctuation might make a reader stumble or pause now and again.
- My paper reads like a first draft; I was more concerned with getting my ideas down than making sure all the editing was taken care of.

① Paper - Editing Not Under Control Yet

It would take a first reading to decode, and then a second reading to get the meaning of my paper.



- Speling errer our commun, evin on simpl werdz.
- My paper, have errors in punctuation ? and grammar that send the reader back two the beginning from a sentence to sort thing out
- i've got caPital lEttEr s scattered in All Over tHe pLaCe or NOT aT all.
- → I haven't got the hang of paragraphs yet.
- The truth is, I haven't spent much time editing this paper.

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IDEAS

- Clear Focus
- Strong Central Theme
- Carefully Selected Details
- Well Developed Ideas
  (bring theme to life)
- Written From Experience
- Shows Insight *(maturity)*
- Wholeness
  (little details work together to bring out theme)

ORGANIZATION

- Inviting Introduction
- Logical Sequencing
- Smooth Transitions
- Good Pacing
- Leads to a High Point
- Conclusion with Satisfying Resolution

VOICE

- Sense of the Person Behind the Words
- Strong Reader - Writer Interaction
- Involvement
- Sense of Self
- Highly Individualistic
- Expressive

WORD CHOICE

- Strong Vocabulary
- Natural Vocabulary
- Conscious Word Choices
- Energetic Verbs
- Specific Nouns
- Effective Words & Phrases
- Minimal Reliance on Slang, Cliches, and Repetition

SENTENCE FLUENCY

- Rhythmic Pattern
- Natural
- Easy-on-the-Ear-Flow
- Easy to Read Aloud
- Poetic - Musical
- Sentence Variety
  (length, structure)
- Fragments are Effective

CONVENTIONS

- General Correctness
- Readability to a **WIDE AUDIENCE**
- General Control
- Minimal Copy Editing

CONVENTIONS

- Spelling
- Grammar - Usage
- Punctuation
- Capitalization
- Paragraphing
  (indentation)

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- General Correctness
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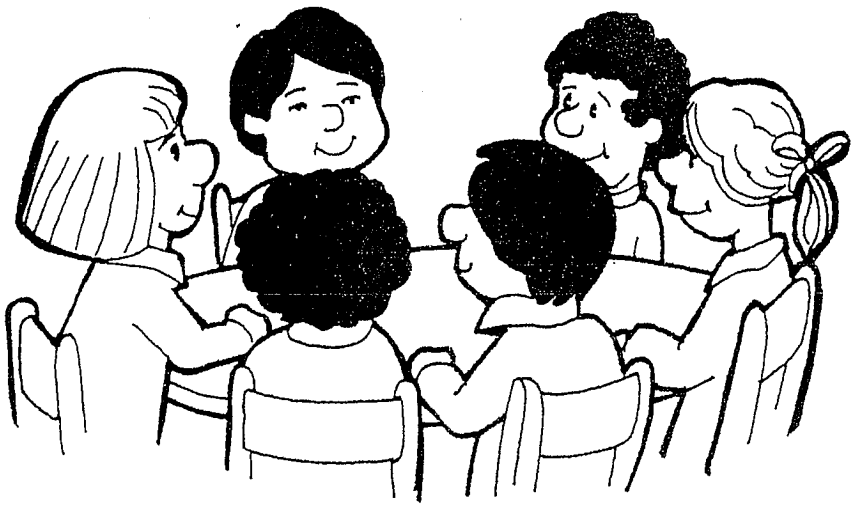

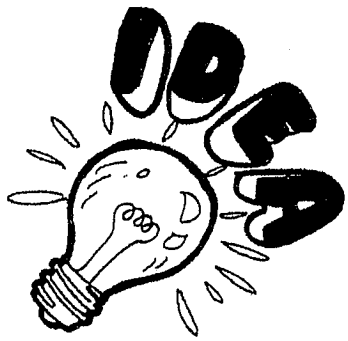

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CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING: Scoring Guide

Conceptual Understanding includes the ability to interpret the problem and select appropriate information to apply a strategy for solution. Evidence is communicated through making connections between the problem situation, relevant information, and logical/reasonable responses.

5 FULL CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING: The student uses all relevant information to solve a problem.

- The student's answer is consistent with the question/problem.
- The student is able to translate the problem into appropriate mathematical concepts.
- The student uses all relevant information given to solve the problem.

3 PARTIAL CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING: The student extracts the "essence" of the problem, but is unable to use this information to solve the problem.

- The student is only partially able to make connections between/among the concepts.
- The student's solution is not fully related to the question.
- The student understands one portion of the task, but not the complete task.

1 LACK OF CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING: The student's solution is inconsistent or unrelated to the question.

- The student translates the problem into inappropriate mathematical concepts.
- The student uses incorrect procedures without understanding the concepts related to the task.
- The student's focus is on the solution.

PROCEDURAL KNOWLEDGE: Scoring Guide

Procedural Knowledge deals with the student's ability to demonstrate appropriate use of concepts. Evidence includes the verifying and justifying of a procedure using concrete models, or the modifying of procedures to deal with factors inherent in the problem.

5 FULL USE OF APPROPRIATE PROCEDURES: The student uses principles efficiently while justifying the solution.

- The student uses appropriate mathematical terms and strategies.
- The student correctly solves and verifies the problem.
- The student uses mathematical principles and language precisely.

3 PARTIAL USE OF APPROPRIATE PROCEDURES: The student is not precise in using mathematical terms, principles, or procedures.

- The student is unable to carry out a procedure completely.
- The process the student uses to verify the solution is incorrect.

1 LACKS USE OF APPROPRIATE PROCEDURES: The student uses unsuitable methods, imprecise language, or simple manipulation of data in his/her attempted solution.

- The student fails to eliminate unsuitable methods or solutions.
- The student misuses principles.
- The student translates the problem into inappropriate procedures.