ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication has been a long time in our heads and hearts . . . and now, finally a useable document all Blaine County Educators can use. Many thanks to Sandy Scott, Marcia Rausch, Elaine Redman and Sheila Naghsh for the “brains” behind this document! Thanks to the incredible word processing magic Susie Reese provided.
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We learn to write primarily by building on our strengths. It is important for the teacher to encourage the student to see:

What has potential,

What has strength,

What can be developed.

--Donald Murray
Six – Traits Teachers’ Writing Guide

The Basics of the 6 Traits
If people cannot write well, they cannot think well, and if they cannot think well, others will do their thinking for them.

-- George Orwell
**GOALS**

- To celebrate students’ love of writing
- To see not what is *missing*… but what is *there*
- To teach ourselves to identify moments of voice, details, expressiveness, and exploration with conventions
- To help students recognize and build on their strengths
- To respond to content first
- To respond to the writer, not the writing
- To control the anxiety that urges us toward too much perfection too soon
- To see exploration as an achievement
- To help students see that writing is thinking, and conventions exist to serve ideas
- To give students the language they need to think like writers
- To share with expression, passion, voice, and heart the books WE love
- To write … and to share with students the adventures of our writing
- To nurture within ourselves a bedrock belief in the power of children to do amazing things
1. Gather and share sample papers to use for direct instruction.
2. Model revision.
3. Share examples of writing from lots of sources.
4. Use the language of the traits as you teach your favorite lessons.
5. Begin portfolios so students can see growth!
Before you consider the suggestions on the following pages, there is one basic premise to using the Six-Traits as an instructional tool that you HAVE to believe.

It’s very simple, but fundamentally important to everything that follows. . .

**REVISION IS DIFFERENT THAN EDITING**

That’s it! The heart and soul of teaching the traits.

**Revision:**
- Ideas
- Organization
- Voice
- Word Choice
- Sentence Fluency

**Editing:**
- Conventions

It takes a completely different part of your brain to know that you need to add more specific details, choose different words, or begin with a different lead than to recognize a word is misspelled or to capitalize a proper noun. By separating these two significant part of the writing process and defining them clearly so students (and teachers, too) can work on them in a purposeful and focused way we unlock one of the key mysteries of writing.

So now, on with the specifics…
Writing Instruction

Writing as a Process

pre-writing ↔ drafting ↔ revision ↔ editing ↔ publishing

Six Analytic Traits
- ideas & content
- organization
- voice
- word choice
- sentence fluency

Conventions
- spelling
- use of capitals
- punctuation
- grammar & usage
- paragraphing
THE SIX TRAITS
PRIMARY (K-3)

Ideas and Content
Does it make sense?
Details, details, details!

Organization
Beginning and ending
Order makes sense
Similar ideas/details go together

Voice
Personality!
Flavor, charm, liveliness
Individuality

Word Choice
Using words correctly
Trying something new
Verbs!
Flair

Sentence Fluency/Structure
Sentences hang together
Rhythm and flow

Writing Conventions
Left to right
Up and down
Spacing!!
Capitals
Punctuation
Grammar Usage
Paragraphing
What Teachers Look for in Writing
Intermediate (4-8)

**Ideas . . .**
- Make sense
- Get and hold my attention
- Have a main idea, thesis, center, sense of purpose
- Writer draws on experience
- Says something new, or says it in a fresh way
- Full of ideas that add interest and important information

*KEY QUESTON:* Did the writer stay focused and share original information or perspective about the topic?

**Organization . . .**
- The opening makes me want to keep reading
- Has a logical order or pattern (problem/solution, comparison-contrast, story unfolding over time, etc.)
- I can follow the story or main points
- Sometimes I can predict – sometimes the writer surprises me
- Ends well. Ties up loose ends. Doesn’t stop abruptly
- Doesn’t end with, “Then I woke up and it was all a dream!”
- Doesn’t repeat with, “Now you know the three reasons we should fight pollution.”

*KEY QUESTION:* Does the organizational structure enhance the ideas and make it easier to understand?

**Voice . . .**
- Sounds like the person who writes it
- Sounds like a particular writer
- Writing has style, flavor
- Reaches out to me, the reader. Brings me “inside”
- Makes me feel…

*KEY QUESTION:* Would you keep reading this piece if it were longer? MUCH longer?

**Word Choice . . .**
- Makes me say, “Yes, that’s just the right word or phrase.”
- Long after reading, some words still tug at my memory
- Words are used correctly
- The writer chooses wisely, but isn’t afraid to stretch
- This writer knows the language of the topic – but doesn’t try to impress me with phony, bloated, phrases
- Use simple language if it gets the job done

*KEY QUESTION:* Do the words and phrases create vivid pictures and linger in your mind?

**Sentence Fluency**
- It’s smooth going – easy to the ear
- I could easily read this aloud
- Almost every sentence begins in a slightly different way, OR
- Repetition is rhythmic and stylistic, not annoying
- Some sentences are long. Some aren’t
- Sentences aren’t choppy. Yet they do not meander aimlessly as if length alone were a virtue and there were no particular need to rush to the end and be done with it

*KEY QUESTION:* Can you feel the words and phrases flow together as you read the passage?

**Conventions**
- The writing is clean and polished. It looks proofread.
- Most things are done correctly.
- Careful, controlled use of conventions makes meaning clear and reading easy.
- No BIG erers shout at me frm the pg: Hey!” Pay attenSHUN two me! Fergt IDEAS and VOICE! Think ? abwt, the mistakes!, A lot!!”
- Spelling, punctuation, grammar, capital letters and paragraph indenting: This writer has thoughtfully attended to ALL conventional details.

*KEY QUESTIONS:* How much editing would have to be done to be ready to share with an outside audience?
Six Plus One Traits
(High School)

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.
Student Summary of the Six-Traits
Primary Version

IDEAS
- Does it make sense?
- Narrow, manageable topic
- Sounds like writer knows the topic well
- Fresh spin
- Details, details, details!

ORGANIZATION
- Beginning and ending
- Order makes sense
- Fun to predict, but some surprises, too!
- Similar things go together
- Does not just STOP

VOICE
- Sounds like the person who wrote it
- Personality, pizzazz!
- Flavor, charm, liveliness
- Makes the reader feel something . . . shocked, upset energized
- Individuality
WORD CHOICE
• Using words correctly
• Trying something new
• Verbs!
• Vivid images
• Minimal redundancy

FLUENCY
• Sentences hang together
• Rhythm and flow
• Easy to read aloud
• Short and long sentences
• Varied, purposeful sentence beginnings

CONVENTIONS
• Looks clean, edited polished
• MOST things done correctly
• No BIG, GLARING errors
• Spacing
• Capitals
• Punctuation
• Spelling
STUDENT SUMMARY OF THE SIX-TRAITS
Intermediate Version

Sound IDEAS
• It all makes sense.
• I know this topic well.
• I have included the most interesting details.
• My paper has a purpose.
• Once you start reading, you will not want to stop.

Good ORGANIZATION
• My beginning will interest the reader.
• Everything ties together.
• It builds to the good parts.
• You can follow it easily.
• At the end it feels finished and makes you think.

Individual VOICE
• This really sounds like me!
• I’ve been honest and written what I think and feel.
• Can you feel my commitment to this topic?
• I want you to experience my writing with me.
• I know why I’m writing and who my audience is.
• I bet you’ll want to read this to someone.
• Will the reader feel what I feel?
Powerful WORDS
• This is the best way to say this.
• My words create mind pictures.
• I’ve tried new ways to say everyday things.
• Listen to the power in my verbs.
• Some of the words and phrases linger in my mind.

Smooth FLUENCY
• My sentences begin in different ways.
• Some sentences are short and some are long.
• It just sounds good as I read it aloud – it flows.
• My sentences have power and punch.
• I have “sentence sense.”

Correct CONVENTIONS
• I don’t have many mistakes in my paper.
• I have used capitals correctly.
• Periods, commas, exclamation marks, and quotation marks are in the right places.
• Almost every word is spelled correctly.
• I remembered to indent each paragraph.
• It would not take long to get this ready to share.
Some Frequently Asked Questions. . . .

1. **How long should I spend teaching on each trait?**
   Most teachers spend one or two weeks per trait, but you could spend more or less, depending on how quickly you think students develop an in-depth understanding.

2. **How do I know when students really get it?**
   They can tell the difference between writing that’s strong on a trait and writing that isn’t, and they can tell you *in detail* not only what’s good about the good pieces, but also *exactly* what to do to revise the weaker pieces.

3. **Which trait should I teach first?**
   That’s up to you, too, but most teachers find it makes sense to begin with Ideas. After all, the message is the foundation of everything else. Without something to say, why write? You might go to Voice next (most people think it’s easier to teach than Organization); then cycle back to Organization. Many teachers like to weave Conventions all through the instruction, using examples of real life text to teach this trait. End with Word Choice and Fluency.

4. **How do I begin?**
   Try brainstorming the qualities of good writing. Or, another way to get at the same thing is to brainstorm a list of favorite authors and ask what makes them favorites. Next, you might share what teachers of writing value. Student writers are often surprised and pleased to see that they value much the same things teachers value and that, contrary to many students’ beliefs, teachers really do look for lots more than neatness, commas, and correct spelling. Once you’ve shared these values, it’s easy to take a short step back and say, “Now, for a time, we’ll focus on just ONE trait - - Ideas.

5. **How many papers must students score or discuss, per trait?**
   This is a little like asking, *How much spaghetti do we need to fix?* You’ll know when it’s too much or too little. In the beginning try doing one or two papers per trait.

6. **I’m pretty happy with the way I teach writing now. Do I have to change what I’m already doing?**
   No. Please do not abandon any of the successful activities you’re already sharing with students. The analytical trait model is intended to support, not replace, the writing process approach.

   Remember, when you teach the traits, you’re teaching the criteria that define quality performance. Students who know precisely what is expected – and who can judge for themselves whether expectations have been met – stand a FAR greater chance of succeeding. The traits are a foundation for revision, which for many students is a weak link in the writing process. They may feel comfortable prewriting and drafting, but when it comes time to revise, many say, “What do I do now? Help!”

7. **Do I score students’ papers on all the traits?**
   Score papers on the trait or traits you’ve taught. This means that the first few assignments may receive only one or two scores.
8. What about grades?
Most teachers who use the analytical model prefer to keep a tally of total points earned during the grading period, then base the grade on a percentage of points possible for that period (student earns 40 points out of a possible 45). Of course, other factors such as participation in the writing process or evidence of improvement or effort may play a role, too, depending on how you usually grade students’ work. See Section 3 for more ideas.

9. What if I don’t get through all six traits by the end of the year?
Relax! It is far preferable to spend plenty of time on the first three - - Ideas and Content, Organization, and Voice - - than rush to “cover” all six. Use lots of examples from literature and the writing all around us, score and discuss plenty of papers, and by all means, give students lots of practice revising for each trait you teach.

10. As students move from one trait to another, are they still responsible for the first trait(s) they learned?
Sure. But when you move from Ideas to Voice, as an example, you might want to focus just on voice for a while. Then you can say, “Remember, Ideas are still important. In your next piece of writing, I want you to concentrate on making both Ideas and Voice strong.

11. Is there ever a time when all the traits come together?
Of course. They’re never really separated. It’s just that revision is such a big task, it’s very helpful to student writers if we allow them to break it into manageable chunks. Think of it this way: Swimming is one coordinated activity, too; however, it might help a beginning swimmer to focus just on breathing for a while, then arm strokes, then kicking, etc. Eventually, she has to be able to pull everything together.

12. Suppose I teach middle school and my students have already learned the traits at the elementary school level?
Never fear. There’s always more to learn. Review never hurts - - and some students may be new. Need more of a challenge? Score more difficult, more complex papers. Score papers for three, four, five or all six traits at once. Give students plenty of opportunity to show what they know through skillful revision - - or perhaps a written evaluation of someone else’s work. Keep portfolios. Students can use the traits as a basis for selecting best work or judging their own level of growth.
Ideas and Content
Ideas
the link to instruction

Any activity that allows students to practice . . .

• Prewriting

• Generating ideas from thought/experience

• Borrowing ideas from other writers

• Keeping journals

• Knowing the purpose of writing

• Moving from broad topic to focused theme

• Learning to observe carefully

• Developing thinking skills (comparison, analysis, inference)
• It all makes sense.

• I know this topic well.

• I have included interesting details not everyone would think of.

• My paper has a purpose.

• Once you start reading, you will not want to stop.
## Six Trait Writing Warm-ups

### Trait #1: Ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Follow-up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Write on the board: “Why I Don’t Have My Homework”</td>
<td>List a few possible reasons students could come up with for not having homework in on time. Have students add to the list. Encourage “imaginative” reasons.</td>
<td>Talk about the way imaginative ideas make a topic more “fun”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Write on the board: “Why I’m Late for School”</td>
<td>List a few possible excuses. Have students add to the list – the more imaginative, the better.</td>
<td>Talk about using the imagination to add interest to a simple topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> Write on the board: “My Favorites”</td>
<td>Share with students some of your favorites: places, activities, foods, people, songs, books, etc. Have them create their own lists.</td>
<td>Save the lists in their writing folders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.</strong> Write on the board: “That Makes Me Mad!”</td>
<td>Tell students some things that make you mad and then have them create their own lists. Share ideas.</td>
<td>Save the lists in their writing folders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.</strong> Read aloud Joan Walsh Anglund’s “A Friend is Someone Who Likes You”</td>
<td>Have students list all the different kinds of friends they have or can think of (older, younger, pets, toys, etc.). Talk about the qualities that make a friend.</td>
<td>Save the lists in their writing folders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.</strong> Read aloud Joan Walsh Anglund’s “Love Is”</td>
<td>Talk about the many forms love can have. Have students list all the feelings and acts of kindness they can think of that are expressions of love.</td>
<td>Save the lists in their writing folders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.</strong> Write a nonsense word on the board – i.e… “gerpoltz”</td>
<td>Ask students to write a brief advertisement that would convince someone to buy a gerpoltz. Read ads aloud to one another.</td>
<td>Talk about what makes ads convincing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8.</strong> Tell students: “You have a broken blatnik. What are you going to do about it?”</td>
<td>List on the board all the things students suggest doing for a broken blatnik. Draw attention to the range of suggestions. Ask them what part their imaginations played in their suggestions.</td>
<td>Talk about the use of imagination to fill in the blanks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Read Shel Silverstien’s poem “I Cannot Go To School Today” aloud.</td>
<td>Have the children list all the imaginary ailments they could use to convince their mothers that they couldn’t go to school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Write on the board: “What I’d Like to Change about School”</td>
<td>Tell students some of the things you’d like to change and then have them create their own lists. Share ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Write on the board: 1. What 2nd Graders Know 2. What 6th Graders Know 3. What 9th Graders Know</td>
<td>Ask students which topic they are the most capable of writing about. Ask why. Ask why writing about one of the others would probably be too difficult for them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Write on the board: “Five Good Uses for a Pocket”</td>
<td>Have children each make a list of the five best uses they can think of (limit it to five). Share ideas. Ask students to think about which ideas appealed to them most – and why.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Write on the board: 1. The Scariest Halloween 2. Radishes 3. How to Sharpen a Pencil</td>
<td>Ask students which story they’d want to read. Ask why. Have them suggest titles of stories they wouldn’t want to read. Then list titles of stories they would want to read.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Telling**
My Grandmother was a very brave little girl.

**Showing . . .**
One day when my Grandmother was a little girl she and her friends cut across a pasture on the way home from school. When a bull charged them she turned, got her friends behind her, pulled out her long sewing scissors, and stuck them up the nostrils of the bull. He didn’t bother them any more.


1. **The Rock**
   Students bring a favorite rock to class (it’s OK to find one enroute!) and select a partner. One person from each pair gets one minute to talk about his/her rock – then it’s the other person’s turn to talk for one minute. After talking, students write for two minutes, then share what they have written in pairs, small groups or with the large group (as appropriate). Resource – *Everybody Needs a Rock* by Byrd Baylor.

2. **Popcorn Reminiscence**
   Pop some corn during class. While corn is popping and the sounds and aroma fill the room, ask students to jot down bits of memories they associate with popping corn. At the end, they can write a story relating to popping corn. Or, perhaps they can write “10 Way to Improve the Taste and Texture of Popcorn.” Or how about “Why Does Popcorn Cost so Much at the Movies?” Resource – *The Popcorn Book* by Tomie de Paola.
Organization

the link to instruction
Any activity that allows students to practice . .

- Writing a lead that hooks the reader
- Sequencing in a logical/interesting way
- Getting rid of “deadwood”
- Identifying the turning point
- Connecting ideas to a larger theme
- Linking ideas together for the reader
- Setting up a problem – then solving it
- Crafting a conclusion that ties up loose ends
GOOD ORGANIZATION

- Starts out with a bang!
- Everything ties together.
- It builds to the good parts.
- You can follow it easily.
- At the end it feels finished and makes you think.
## Six Trait Writing Warm-ups

### Trait #2: Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Follow-up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 5 or 6 Scene Sequence Cards</td>
<td>Display the cards out of order. Ask the children what’s wrong with them and what to do to make them make sense. Have someone put them in order and discuss why that’s important.</td>
<td>Talk about the importance of order for understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set of directions for a simple activity (i.e. making a paper airplane) out of order.</td>
<td>Have children read jumbled directions and try to follow them. Ask what’s wrong. Ask what can be done to help. Have students put directions in proper order. Ask why order is important.</td>
<td>Talk about the importance of order when following directions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A large wall map of a community or individual maps for each student.</td>
<td>Ask students to give directions as to how to get from one point (i.e. school) to another (i.e. store). Ask what will happen if directions are not given in the proper order (illustrate “mistakes” on map.)</td>
<td>Talk about the importance of order when giving directions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A simple recipe (ingredients – opt) i.e.. “how to make a peanut butter sandwich” with vague directions.</td>
<td>Have children read the recipe. Discuss how directions could be misunderstood. Opt: Illustrate by making silly sandwiches or have children draw what the sandwich could look like.</td>
<td>Talk about the importance of precise directions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display the following words: before, first, second, third, next, then, last, finally.</td>
<td>Ask students how these words could be used in writing, what kind of writing they could be used in, and why they are important words.</td>
<td>Talk about how to make the order understood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith Viorst’s Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day.</td>
<td>Read aloud. Ask students what kind of order this was written in. Ask why they think it was written this way. Ask if it would be as amusing written in another way. Discuss why or why not.</td>
<td>Talk about the importance of order in organizing writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Activity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Instructions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Several trade books with good beginnings.</td>
<td>Read the beginnings of a few books. Discuss why they think they are or are not good beginnings. Would they want to continue reading? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Several trade books with good endings.</td>
<td>Read the endings of a few familiar books. Discuss why they think they are or are not good endings. How did the endings make them feel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>A large map of the school or individual maps for each child.</td>
<td>Have children give you (a visitor) oral directions for getting from your classroom to the gym (or other location). Trace their directions on the map (or have the class walk them) exactly! Did you end up in the right place – or get locked in the janitor’s closet?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>No preparation.</td>
<td>Have the children give you directions for what to do if you’ve swallowed a bug. Discuss and decide what you should do first, second, third, etc.?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SOME WAYS TO WRITE INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions establish the direction your writing is going to take. A good introduction grabs the readers attention and refuses to let go. But – what’s a good way to begin your writing?
Here are some suggestions:

OPEN WITH A QUESTION:
Have you ever wondered how you’d survive if you found yourself alone in the wilderness?

OPEN WITH AN ANNOUNCEMENT:
This is not a cookbook for the gourmet. These recipes are strictly for the cook on a tight budget.

OPEN WITH A BOLD AND CHALLENGING STATEMENT:
Contrary to what some people think, most of our learning takes place out of school.

OPEN WITH A BOLD AND CHALLENGING STATEMENT:
“You’re going to regret this.” That’s what my best friend Liza said as I got on the roller coaster.

OPEN WITH A RIDDLE OR A PUZZLE THAT THE READER CAN GRAPPLE WITH:
What textbook has no pages, is miles wide, smells like a creek, and has been around for millions of years? That’s right – Outdoor School.

OPEN WITH A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE:
I’m still glad I didn’t cry at the funeral, though I did in my room later.

OPEN WITH HOW YOU FELT:
My hands were sweaty? My teeth wouldn’t quit chattering. Prickly fingers ran up my spine. What would happen next?

SOME WAYS TO WRITE CONCLUSIONS

A conclusion brings your writing to resolution. It helps the reader tie up all loose ends, brings all the separate pieces together, and sometimes even predict the future or anticipates next steps. A good conclusion helps the reader feel or appreciate the importance of what she/he has just read, but it does NOT painstakingly tramp over old ground, re-making points the writer has already drummed into the reader’s head. A good conclusion is like a wise thought – it seems it was always there, inevitable, waiting – yet, the sound is new, fresh.

WHAT’S A GOOD WAY TO END YOUR WRITING?

CLOSE WITH A QUESTION THAT INVOLVES THE READER:
Alfred decides that was the last time he’d ever go on a roundup. And who can blame him?

CLOSE WITH A STATEMENT ECHOING AN IDEA THAT THE STORY/WRITING HAS ALREADY HINTED AT:
The award stated that Ms. Brown was the best teacher in the state – which was no surprise to anyone except, perhaps, Ms. Brown herself.

CLOSE WITH A HINT OF THINGS TO COME (ACTUALLY THE BEGINNING OF A NEW STORY, BURIED WITHIN THIS ONE):
Julie thought she’d better get going. She had over 200 miles to travel, and it was growing dark.

CLOSE WITH A STATEMENT SHOWING THAT SOME THINGS NEVER WILL BE RESOLVED:
We never did find out what happened to Mr. Bickle’s cat. Some things seemed destined to remain a mystery.

CLOSE WITH A PERSONAL COMMENT OR RESPONSE:
Seeing a drop of water under a microscope makes a person look at a river with new eyes.

CLOSE WITH A STRONG STATEMENT SUGGESTING THE FINAL CONCLUSION YOU HOPE YOUR READER WILL DRAW:
How teachers see their students makes all the difference in how students see themselves.
CLOSE WITH AN ENDING THAT LETS THE READER “FILL IN THE BLANKS” A LITTLE:

If children were to stop watching television altogether who knows what the results might be.

We watched Adam walk down the road until he became just a tiny speck and then disappeared altogether into the dust of twilight.

CLOSE WITH A FORCEFUL ARGUMENT, NUDGING THE READER IN A PARTICULAR DIRECTION:

Cruelty to animals must be stopped now.

HINT: DO NOT close your paper or story by saying, “This has been a paper about…” Unless your reader dozed off, he/she already knows what you said. You must leave the reader something to think about. Close with a bang, not a whimper.
## Useful Transitions

### Transitions which can be used to show location:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>above</th>
<th>among</th>
<th>beneath</th>
<th>in front of</th>
<th>on top of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>across</td>
<td>around</td>
<td>beside</td>
<td>inside</td>
<td>outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>against</td>
<td>away from</td>
<td>between</td>
<td>into</td>
<td>over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>along</td>
<td>back of</td>
<td>beyond</td>
<td>near</td>
<td>throughout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alongside</td>
<td>behind</td>
<td>by</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>to the right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amid</td>
<td>below</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>onto</td>
<td>under</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Transitions which can be used to show time:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>about</th>
<th>first</th>
<th>until</th>
<th>soon</th>
<th>then</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>after</td>
<td>second</td>
<td>meanwhile</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at</td>
<td>third</td>
<td>today</td>
<td>afterward</td>
<td>in the meantime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before</td>
<td>prior to</td>
<td>tomorrow</td>
<td>immediately</td>
<td>as soon as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>during</td>
<td>till</td>
<td>yesterday</td>
<td>finally</td>
<td>when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>next week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Transitions which can be used to compare two things:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>into the same way</th>
<th>likewise</th>
<th>as</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>also</td>
<td>like</td>
<td>similarly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Transitions which can be used to contrast things (show differences):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>but</th>
<th>however</th>
<th>on the other hand</th>
<th>although</th>
<th>otherwise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>however</td>
<td>in the meantime</td>
<td>still</td>
<td>even though</td>
<td>counter to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>even so</td>
<td>nevertheless</td>
<td>on the contrary</td>
<td>conversely</td>
<td>as opposed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Transitions which can be used to emphasize a point:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>again</th>
<th>indeed</th>
<th>for this reason</th>
<th>truly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to repeat</td>
<td>with this in mind</td>
<td>in fact</td>
<td>to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emphasize</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Transitions which can be used to conclude or summarize:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>as a result</th>
<th>consequently</th>
<th>accordingly</th>
<th>in short</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>finally</td>
<td>thus</td>
<td>due to</td>
<td>to sum up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in conclusion</td>
<td>therefore</td>
<td>in summary</td>
<td>all in all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Transitions which can be used to add information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>again</th>
<th>another</th>
<th>for example</th>
<th>moreover</th>
<th>finally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>also</td>
<td>and</td>
<td>for instance</td>
<td>further</td>
<td>as well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>additionally</td>
<td>besides</td>
<td>furthermore</td>
<td>along with</td>
<td>together with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in addition</td>
<td>equally important</td>
<td>likewise</td>
<td>next</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Transitions which can be used to clarify:

| that is | put another way | for instance | to clarify |
The sun was setting as the horse person rode back to his cattle place.
Any activity that allows students to practice .

• Helping writers feel safe/accepted
• Noting moments of voice in writing/pictures
• Valuing and requesting diversity
• Rewarding risk—even over success
• Providing opportunities to hear the voices of others
• Writing to someone (letters, posters)
• Asking students to write voice in ... or out
• Looking for Voice in advertising, print, and nonprint resources
• This really sounds like me!

• My reader can tell that I care about this topic.

• This is what I think

• I want you to read this and feel something.

• Aren’t my ideas really terrific?
### Six Trait Writing Warm-ups

#### Trait #3: Voice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Follow-up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tape or CD player. 2 or 3 recordings each of classical and rock and roll selections.</td>
<td>Play a minute of classical and then a minute of R &amp; R. Discuss the differences you can hear. Then play a third selection and ask students to identify the Voice (Classical or R &amp; R)</td>
<td>Talk about how different styles of music employ different Tape or CD player Voices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tape or CD player. 2 or 3 recordings each of two distinctly different female (or male) singers – i.e. Dolly Parton &amp; Whitney Houston, Rod Steward &amp; George Strait.</td>
<td>Play a bit of each singer. Discuss the differences in their voice and style of singing. Then play a third selection and have students explain how they can tell which singer it is.</td>
<td>Talk about how singers have their own individual voices. They don’t all sound alike.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tape or CD player. 2 or 3 recordings each of different instrumental solos – i.e. one flute &amp; one harp, or one piano &amp; one violin.</td>
<td>Play a selection of each instrument. Discuss the differences in the voice of the instrument. Then play a third selection and have students explain how they can tell which instrument it is.</td>
<td>Talk about how each musical instrument has its own individual voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pictures of paintings done by two distinctly different artists – i.e., Picasso &amp; Van Gogh or Rembrandt &amp; Monet</td>
<td>Show students a painting or two by each artist. Discuss the differences. Then show them another painting and have them explain how they can tell which artist painted it.</td>
<td>Talk about how each artist has a distinct “voice” in his works.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Pairs of very different greeting cards – i.e. two Far Side cards and two sympathy cards</td>
<td>Show children one of each and discuss differences. Show them a third card and have them identify which “kind” it is. Discuss how they can tell.</td>
<td>Point out that each kind of greeting card has a voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Display a variety of greeting cards.</td>
<td>Have children compare the cards – what makes them different? Ask why different types of cards are appropriate for different occasions or different people: for a good friend’s birthday or great-grandmother’s, for a holiday or a death.</td>
<td>Talk about the need for different voices for different occasions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two brief selections from age directed writing – i.e. a young child’s book and an adult novel.</td>
<td>Read a bit of each and ask what the difference is – and how you can tell which is meant for which.</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Two brief selections from different types of writing – i.e. an encyclopedia &amp; a mystery story</td>
<td>Read a paragraph or two from each. Discuss the difference in voice used by the authors. Why is each important? Which is more fun to listen to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Brief selections from two distinctly different children’s authors – i.e. Dr. Seuss &amp; R.L. Stein, or Jack Prelutsky and Arnold Lobel</td>
<td>Read a bit of each author and discuss the differences in voice. Then read a third selection and have the students explain how they can tell which author it is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Two student selections (from your collection) one without much Voice and one high in Voice.</td>
<td>Ask students which one sounds more like someone talking to them. Ask which is more interesting to read. Discuss why.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Three brief selections (from your collection) one without much Voice, one with moderate Voice, one high in Voice.</td>
<td>Ask children which is which. Ask them to compare and contrast. Ask them to think about their own Voice – how they’d like their writing to sound.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Word Choice
Any activity that allows students to practice . . .

- Building vocabulary through reading — anything and everything
- Brainstorming: How else could you say it?
- Learning to use resources — traditional and electronic software
- Putting “tired” words to rest
- Playing with language, dialects, formal and informal word usage
- Building power in verbs
- Practicing precision — more for less
POWERFUL WORDS

• This is the best way to say this.
• I can picture it!
• My words are new ways to say everyday things.
• Listen to the power of my verbs.
• Some of the words linger in my mind.
• It is easy to read aloud.
## Trait #4: Word Choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Follow-up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Write “loud” words – i.e. KABOOM! CRASH! ROARING, THUNDERING, EARSPLITTING!</td>
<td>Ask students for other “loud” words to add. Have students write down the five “quietest” or “softest” words they can think of. Have them share these words and list them on the board.</td>
<td>Talk about how words can convey the sound of things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Write descriptive words for how a pillow feels – i.e. fluffy, puffy, billowy, cushiony, etc.</td>
<td>Ask students for other words to add. Then have them write down 5 words that describe the feeling of mud. Have them share words and list on board.</td>
<td>Talk about how words can convey the feel of things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Write words that evoke smells – i.e. popcorn, brownies, roses</td>
<td>Have students list other words that describe pleasant smells. Then have them list words that describe unpleasant smells (sour milk, garbage, burned toast, etc.) See how many they can come up with.</td>
<td>Talk about how words can describe specific smells.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Write words that describe tastes – i.e. chocolaty, salty, tangy</td>
<td>Have students add other words that describe pleasant tastes. Then have them list words that describe unpleasant tastes (sour, burnt, HOT, etc.)</td>
<td>Talk about how words can describe specific tastes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Display pictures of two very different scenes – i.e. one city &amp; one country, or one mountain and one seashore.</td>
<td>Have students list other objects they see in the first picture and words that describe them. Then have them list words that describe what’s in the other scene. Compare similarities and differences.</td>
<td>Talk about how words can describe what you see.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Write the word “walking”</td>
<td>Ask students to help you make a list of all the ways someone or something could be walking (marching, scuffling, stomping, dawdling, etc.) Now add adverbs (hurriedly, leisurely, angrily, etc.) Compare these verb/adverb combinations with the simple word “walking”. Is there a difference in what you “see”?</td>
<td>Talk about how specific words can give you a clearer picture of what’s happening.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.</strong> Display a few pictures with captions (from books or magazines)</td>
<td>Display another picture without a caption.</td>
<td>Have students make up descriptive captions for the picture. Share captions. Discuss which make the picture seem more interesting and why.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8.</strong> Have several different kinds of catalogs. (i.e. – J.C. Penney, J. Peterman, L.L. Bean)</td>
<td>Read the descriptions of similar articles. Ask students which they would be more likely to buy.</td>
<td>Talk about the importance of word choice in advertising messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9.</strong> Write on the board: “Tired Words”</td>
<td>List a few overused words that “need a rest” i.e. – nice, fun, big, really, etc. Have children suggest alternate words that could be used instead of these. List them next to the tired words.</td>
<td>Point out how much more expressive the new words can be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10.</strong> Write on the board: “My Favorite Words”</td>
<td>List some of your favorite (expressive) words. Have each student begin their own list. Share words.</td>
<td>Keep lists in writing folders to refer to and add to.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I Love the Look of Words

Popcorn leaps, popping from the floor of a hot black skillet and into my mouth.
Black words leap, snapping from the white page, rushing into my eyes. Sliding into my brain which gobbles them the way my tongue and teeth chomp the buttered popcorn.

When I have stopped reading, ideas from the words stay stuck in my mind, like the sweet smell of butter perfuming my fingers long after the popcorn is finished.

I love the book and the look of words the weight of ideas that popped into my mind I love the tracks of new thinking in my mind.

Maya Angelou
“VERBS WITH VERVE”
Adapted from *The Play of Words* by Richard Lederer

Suppose you write

“No,” she *said* and *left* the room.

Grammatically, there is nothing wrong with this sentence. But because the verbs *say* and *leave* are among the most colorless and general in the English language, you have missed the opportunity to create a vivid word picture. Consider the alternatives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAID</th>
<th>LEFT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>apologized</td>
<td>jabbered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asserted</td>
<td>minced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blubbered</td>
<td>mumbled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blurted</td>
<td>murmured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boasted</td>
<td>shrieked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cackled</td>
<td>sighed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commanded</td>
<td>slurred</td>
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<tr>
<td>drawled</td>
<td>snapped</td>
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<tr>
<td>giggled</td>
<td>sobbed</td>
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<tr>
<td>goaded</td>
<td>whispered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gurgled</td>
<td>whooped</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>backed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bolted</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bounded</td>
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<td></td>
<td>crawled</td>
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<td>darted</td>
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<td>flew</td>
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<td></td>
<td>hobbled</td>
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<td></td>
<td>lunched</td>
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<td></td>
<td>marched</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>marched</td>
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<td></td>
<td>plodded</td>
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<td></td>
<td>pranced</td>
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<td></td>
<td>sauntered</td>
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<td></td>
<td>skipped</td>
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<td>staggered</td>
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<td>stamped</td>
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<td>stole</td>
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<td></td>
<td>strode</td>
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<td></td>
<td>strutted</td>
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<td></td>
<td>stumbled</td>
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<td></td>
<td>tiptoed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wandered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                | whirled

OTHERS?

If you had chosen from among these vivid verbs and had crafted the sentence "No," she *sobbed* and *stumbled out of the room*, you would have crafted a powerful picture of someone quite distraught.

Here are brief descriptions of twenty different people. Choosing from your two lists for said and left, fill in the blanks of the sentence.

“No,” s/he ______________ and __________ the room.

1. an angry person
2. a baby
3. a braggart
4. a child
5. a clown
6. a confused person
7. a cowboy/cowgirl
8. someone crying
9. a drunkard
10. an embarrassed person
11. a frightened person
12. a happy person
13. a happy person
14. someone in a hurry
15. an injured person
16. a military officer
17. a sneaky person
18. a timid person
19. a tired person
20. a witch
Sentence Fluency
Sentence Fluency
the link to instruction

Any activity that allows students to practice . .

• Developing an ear by reading aloud — literature, journalism, poetry, whatever

• Practicing free-writing to make writing flow

• Using choral reading to hear phrasing

• Writing poetry

• Playing with sentences: beginning different ways revising problem sentences working toward parallel structure building sentence length and variety
SMOOTH FLUENCY

• My sentences begin in different ways.

• Some sentences are short and some are long.

• It just sounds good as I read it.

• My sentences have power and punch.
## Trait #5: Sentence Fluency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Follow-up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A selection from a basal preprimer and a selection from a good anthology</td>
<td>Read each aloud. Ask which is more enjoyable to listen to. Ask why. (direct discussion toward choppy vs. smooth)</td>
<td>Point out how adding some longer sentences makes the selection read smoother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A few limericks</td>
<td>Read the limericks aloud. Ask what makes them fun to listen to and read.</td>
<td>Talk about how writing can “flow” easily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A few nursery rhymes (display on overhead or have copies for each child)</td>
<td>Read the rhymes chorally. Ask what makes them easy to read aloud together. Emphasize the flow.</td>
<td>Talk about how words can fit together in an easy way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Display a selection (from your collection) full of sentence fragments.</td>
<td>Ask students what’s wrong with the selection. Then ask them to help you rewrite the selection making complete sentences. Read it aloud and have the children compare the way it sounded before and after.</td>
<td>Talk about the importance of sentence structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Display a selection full of short (3 and 4 word) sentences – i.e. We came home. We ate cookies. We play games … etc.</td>
<td>Write on the board: “After school, we rode our bikes home and shared a plate of homemade chocolate chip cookies. Then we decided to play a quick game of Chinese Checkers followed by our favorite, Monopoly.” Ask students which sounds better and why.</td>
<td>Talk about ways to make sentence flow better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Display a sentence with too many adjectives or too long a listing of objects.</td>
<td>Ask students to help you rewrite the sentence as two or three more manageable sentences. See if these read more easily.</td>
<td>Point out the need not to cram too much into one sentence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Display an example of good sentence fluency (from your collection).</td>
<td>Have children count the words in each sentence. Ask them what they notice about the sentence</td>
<td>Talk about the need to vary sentence length.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Display an example of poor sentence fluency (from your collection).</td>
<td>Ask children to help you rewrite it, varying sentence lengths. See if that improves it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Display a selection (from your collection) in which many of the sentences begin in the same way.</td>
<td>Ask students what they notice. Ask them how it could be improved. Ask them to help you rewrite it. Compare how the two versions sound when read aloud.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Display a selection (from your collection) of an “endless sentence”. (and, and, and …)</td>
<td>Ask students what’s wrong with it and then ask for suggestions as to how to break it up into manageable sentences. Ask why it’s important in good writing not to go on and on and on.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Any activity that allows students to practice . . .

- Identifying reason for editing
- Understanding the difference between revision and editing
- Keeping editing in proportion – ideas come first
- Learning/using editing symbols
- Thinking like an editor
- Developing a proofreader’s eye
- Letting students be their own editors
- Providing resources, time, support
CORRECT CONVENTIONS

• I don’t have many mistakes in my paper.

• I have used capitals correctly.

• Periods, commas, exclamation marks, and quotation marks are in the right places.

• Almost every word is spelled correctly.

• I remembered to indent each paragraph.

• It would not take long to get this ready to publish.
when spelling error
.lastName  indent (paragraph)
that not needed
^ add
^ add a comma
^ add quotation marks
© add a period
≡ capitalize
/ make a small letter
∧ reverse order
R/O run on sentence
INC incomplete
? confusion - not clear
\ take out

TEACHING GRAMMAR WITHOUT USING A TEXTBOOK
DOL
In mini-lessons, teach aspects of grammar using student writing as your guide. Be sure students know the copyediting symbols.

Contract with students, agreeing to write or edit what they have learned. The contract means they are responsible for what they have learned and must apply it.

Name That Gerund: A Quiz Show: 
Collect problem sentences from students’ work. Put into a hat. Group students. Waiting groups become the audience. Select a moderator and a judge. Determine a scoring strategy. (Ex.: One point for rewriting the sentence correctly and one point each for each problem the team can name by its correct grammatical term. Play!)

Down writing/up writing: Take a simple eleven word sentence, revise it by adding as many words as possible without changing the meaning.

Sentence Shrinking: Find a wordy, boring piece of writing and rewrite. Shrink the syllable and word count.

One-syllable writing: Write a description of a place using only one syllable words.

Long sentence, short sentence: Use to teach sentence fluency. Write about a dramatic moment in a horror story when the character is about to discover something scary. Begin writing with one or two long sentences and end paragraph with three short sentences.

The adjective is the enemy of the noun. (Voltaire) Teach the power of strong nouns and verbs. Cross out every adjective and adverb in the sentence. Revise by finding stronger verbs and nouns.

War on prepositions: Circle all prepositions in the piece of writing. Rewrite sentences without the prepositional phrases.

Search and Destroy Intensifiers: Edit out words that are not crucial, words like very, really, extremely, etc.

To be or not to be…: Rewrite sentence changing the passive voice to the active voice.

Fighting introductory clutter: Get rid of useless words often found at the beginning of sentences.

Barry Lane, After the End: Teaching and Learning Creative Revision. Heinemann, Portsmouth, NH. 1993

Teacher – friendly
Scoring Guides, Rubrics and Grading

What am I forgetting?
Let’s see…
I’ve got my red pen
I’ve got the students’ papers
I’ve got the rubrics
Where the heck’s my coffee?!

6 + 1 TRAITS
of Analytic Writing Assessment Scoring Guide (Rubric)

WOW!
Exceeds expectations

5 STRONG:
shows control and skill in this trait;
many strengths present

4 COMPETENT:
on balance, the strengths outweigh the weaknesses; a small amount of revision is needed

3 DEVELOPING:
strengths and need for revision are about equal; about half-way home

2 EMERGING:
need for revision outweighs strengths; isolated moments hint at what the writer has in mind

1 NOT YET:
a bare beginning; writer not yet showing any control

• IDEAS
• ORGANIZATION
• VOICE
• WORD CHOICE
• SENTENCE FLUENCY
• CONVENTIONS
• PRESENTATION

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon

STEP BY STEP
TEACHING TRAITS
USING SAMPLE PAPERS

1. Make overheads of sample papers. Hand out hard copies too, if you wish, but use an overhead anyway.

2. Read each paper ALOUD. Papers play differently to the eye and ear.

3. Discuss ONE trait at a time. This keeps students from making overly general comments, e.g., “It was a pretty good paper,” or “This paper needs work.”

4. Encourage students to be very specific, expansive, and articulate in their comments. What is “pretty good” about the paper? What “needs work?”

5. Return to a paper, to discuss another trait. Just because you’ve rated “My Cats” for Ideas doesn’t mean you shouldn’t also later score it for Organization, Voice, etc.

6. Ask students to score papers individually first, and to write their scores down on paper. Then, ask them to discuss their scores with a partner or in a small group (3 or 4), and to resolve discrepancies by using a scoring guide.

7. Following small-group (or paired) discussions, you can have a large-group (whole class) discussion of a paper, if you wish. Wait till everyone has voted to tell them how you would score the paper.

8. Put scores up on a chart or overhead. This lets students visually see where their own scores fall relative to those in the class as a whole.

   Scoring Guide Used by Teachers and Students
### Ideas and Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Just Beginning</th>
<th>3 On My Way</th>
<th>5 Exactly What I Intended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Just beginning to figure out what I want to say.</td>
<td>Some really good parts, some not there yet.</td>
<td>My writing is focused, clear, and specific.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

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

- 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.

- Some of the things I say are new, but other things everybody 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.
- Sometimes I was very clear about what I meant, but at other times it was still fuzzy.

- I know a lot about this topic, and when someone else reads it, they’ll find 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 or story?”

**Scoring Guide Used by Teachers and Students**

**For**
## Organization

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

### Scoring Guide Used by Teachers and Students

**For**
# Voice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>3</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Just Beginning</strong></td>
<td><strong>On My Way</strong></td>
<td><strong>Exactly What I Intended</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not Yet Me</strong></td>
<td><strong>Individuality Fades</strong></td>
<td><strong>Individual and Powerful</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **I’m not comfortable sharing what I truly think and feel yet.** | **What I truly think and feel sometimes shows up.** | **My paper has lots of personality. It sounds different from the way anyone else writes.** |

- 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.  
- 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.  
- 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.”

- Although readers will understand what I mean, it won’t make them feel like laughing, crying, or pounding the table.  
- My writing is right on the edge of being funny, exciting, 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.

- 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!

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**Scoring Guide Used by Teachers and Students**

**For**
## Word Choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Just Beginning</strong>&lt;br&gt;Confusing, Misused Words and Phrases Abound</td>
<td><strong>On My Way</strong>&lt;br&gt;Correct but Not Striking</td>
<td><strong>Exactly What I Intended</strong>&lt;br&gt;Extremely Clear, Visual and Accurate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

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

- 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 applied correctly.
- Over and over I use the same words.
- 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 very specific. Instead of saying, “The sun went down” I should have said, “The sun sagged into the treetops.” Clearer, juicier details were needed!
- There are many tired out clichés (“Bright and early” “Quick as a wink”) as there are new, fresh and original phrases.
- 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 my energetic verbs!
- Some of the words and phrases are so vivid that the reader won’t be able to forget them.

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Scoring Guide Used by Teachers and Students For
**Sentence Fluency**

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

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**Scoring Guide Used by Teachers and Students**

For
### Conventions

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

### Experimenting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Voice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses scribbles for writing</td>
<td>Ability to order or group not yet present</td>
<td>Communicates feeling with size, color, shape, line in drawing or letter imitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictates labels or a story</td>
<td>No sense of beginning or end</td>
<td>Work is similar to everyone else’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shapes that look like letters</td>
<td>Connections between ideas are confusing</td>
<td>Unclear response to task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line forms that imitate text</td>
<td>Experiments with beginnings</td>
<td>Awareness of audience not present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writes letters randomly</td>
<td>Begins to group like words/pictures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures are supported by some words</td>
<td>Transitions or evidence of sequencing are haphazard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Emerging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Voice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some recognizable words present</td>
<td>No title (if requested)</td>
<td>Hints of voice present in words and phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labels pictures</td>
<td>Experiments with beginnings</td>
<td>Looks different from most others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses drawings that show detail</td>
<td>Begins to group like words/pictures</td>
<td>Energy/mood is present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures are supported by some words</td>
<td>Transitions or evidence of sequencing are haphazard</td>
<td>Treatment of topic predictable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Audience is fuzzy – could be anybody, anywhere</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Developing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Voice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attempts a story or to make a point</td>
<td>A title is present (if requested)</td>
<td>Expresses some predictable feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration supports the writing</td>
<td>Limited transitions present</td>
<td>Moments of individual sparkles, but then hides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning of the general idea is recognizable/understandable</td>
<td>Beginning but no ending except “The End”</td>
<td>Repetition of familiar ideas reduces energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some ideas clear but some are still fuzzy</td>
<td>Attempts at sequencing and transitions</td>
<td>Awareness that the writing will be read by someone else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reader has limited connection to writer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Capable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Voice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing tells a story or makes a point</td>
<td>An appropriate title is present (if requested)</td>
<td>Writing is individual and expressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration (if present) enhances the writing</td>
<td>Transitions transitions from sentence to sentence</td>
<td>Individual perspective becomes evident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea is generally on topic</td>
<td>Beginning works well and attempts an ending</td>
<td>Personal treatment of a standard topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details are present but not developed (lists)</td>
<td>Logical sequencing</td>
<td>Writes to convey a story or idea to the reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Key ideas begin to surface</td>
<td>Attempts non-standard point of view</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Experienced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Voice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presents a fresh/original idea</td>
<td>An original title is present (if requested)</td>
<td>Uses text to elicit a variety of emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic is narrowed and focused</td>
<td>Transitions connect main ideas</td>
<td>Takes some risks to say more than is expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops one clear, main idea</td>
<td>The opening attracts</td>
<td>Point of view is evident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses interesting, important details for support</td>
<td>An effective ending is tried</td>
<td>Writes with a clear sense of audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer understands topic well</td>
<td>Easy to follow</td>
<td>Cares deeply about the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Important ideas stand out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Writes letters in strings
- Imitates word patterns
- Pictures stand for words and phrases
- Copies environmental print

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

- 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

- 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

- 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

- Sentences fluency
  - Mimics letters and words across the page
  - Words stand alone
  - Patterns for sentences not evident
  - Sentence sense not yet present

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

- 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

- 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

- 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
  - 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

- 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

- 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

- Conventions
  - Transitional spelling on less frequent words (MONSTUR, HUMUN, CLOSD, etc.)
  - Spelling of high frequency words usually correct
  - Capitals at the beginning of sentences and variable use of 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

- 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
Conventions

Please check:
Did I use capital letters in the right places?
Did I use periods and question marks?
Is it easy to read my spelling?
Did I use paragraphs?

Idea

Did I try hard to make it interesting?
Do I know enough about my topic?
Is my message clear?
Voice

Does this writing sound like me?
Did I say what I think and feel?
Will my reader be interested?

Word Choice

Did I use words I love?
Do my words make sense?
Did I try not to repeat words too many times?
ANALYTICAL SCORING
GUIDE - OPTION I

I. IDEAS AND CONTENT

5 This paper is clear, focused, and interesting. It holds the reader’s attention. Relevant anecdotes and
details enrich the central theme or story line. Ideas are fresh and original.

- The writer seems to be writing from experiences and shows insight: a good sense of how events unfold, how
  people respond to life and to each other.
- Supporting, relevant, telling details give the reader important information that he or she could not personally
  bring to the text.
- The writing has balance: Main ideas stand out.
- The writer seems in control and develops the topic in an enlightening, entertaining way.
- The writer works with and shapes ideas, making connections and sharing insights.

3 The paper is clear and focused, even though the overall results may not be captivating. Support is
attempted, but it may be limited, in substantial, too general, or out of balance with the main ideas.

- The writer may or may not be writing from experience but, either way, has difficulty going from general
  observations to specifics.
- The reader can often second-guess the plot or the main points of the text.
- Ideas, though reasonably clear, often tend toward the mundane; the reader is not sorry to see the paper end.
- Conclusions or main points seem to echo observations heard elsewhere; only on occasion do they seem to
  reflect the writer’s own thinking.
- Supporting details tend to be skimpy, general, or predictable.
- The writer is beginning to define the topic but isn’t there yet.

1 The paper lacks a central idea or purpose, or forces the reader to make inferences based on very sketchy
details.

- Information is very limited or simply unclear
- Details do not ring true; they evolve from clichés, platitudes, or stereotypes.
- Attempts at development may be minimal or may clutter up the text with random thoughts from which no
  central theme emerges.
- The writer had not begun to define the topic in any meaningful or personal way.

II. ORGANIZATION

5 The organization enhances and showcases the central idea or theme. The order, structure, or presentation is
compelling and moves the reader through the text.

- Details seem to fit where they’re placed; sequencing is logical and effective.
- An inviting introduction draws the reader in, and a satisfying conclusion leaves the reader with a sense of
  resolution.
- Transitions are smooth and weave the separate threads of meaning into one cohesive whole.
- Organization flows so smoothly that the reader hardly thinks about it.

3 The reader can readily follow what’s being said, but the overall organization may sometimes be ineffective
or too obvious.

- The introduction and conclusion are recognizable, though not so well crafted as the reader might wish.
- Placement or relevance of some details leaves the reader occasionally confused.
- The paper sometimes moves along at a good pace but at other times bogs down in trivia or speeds along too
  rapidly.
- Transitions sometimes work well; at other times, connections between ideas seem unclear.
- Despite problems, the organization does not seriously get in the way of the main point or storyline.

1 Organization is haphazard and disjointed. The writing lacks direction with ideas, details, or events strung
together helter-skelter.

- There is no clearly identifiable introduction or conclusion.
- Transitions are very weak, leaving connections between ideas fuzzy, incomplete, or bewildering.
- Noticeable gaps in information confuse and confound the reader.
- Pacing is consistently awkward, so that the reader feels either mired down in trivia or rushed along at a
  breathless pace.
- Lack of organization ultimately obscures or distorts the main point.
III. VOICE
5 The writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that is individualistic, expressive, and engaging. Clearly, the writer is involved in the text and is writing to be read.
   • The paper is honest and written from the heart. It has the ring of conviction.
   • The language is natural yet provocative; it brings the topic to life.
   • The reader feels a strong sense of interaction with the writer and senses the person behind the words.
   • The projected tone and voice clarify and give flavor to the writer’s message.

3 The writer seems sincere but not fully involved in the topic. The result is pleasant, acceptable, sometimes even personable, but not compelling.
   • The writer seems to weigh words carefully, to keep a safe distance between writer and reader, to avoid risk, and to write what he or she thinks the reader wants.
   • The writing tends to hide rather than reveal the writer.
   • The writing communicates in an earnest but fairly routine manner, and only occasionally amuses, surprises, delights, or moves the reader.
   • Voice may emerge strongly on occasion, only to shift or to disappear in a line or two later behind a façade of general, vague, or abstract language.

1 The writer seems wholly indifferent, uninvolved, or dispassionate. As a result, the writing is flat, lifeless, stiff, or mechanical. It may be (depending on the topic) overly technical or jarganistic.
   • The reader has no sense of the writer behind the words and no sense of a real desire on the part of the writer to communicate.
   • The reader seems to speak in a kind of monotone that flattens all potential highs or lows of the message.
   • The writing communicates on a functional level, at best, without moving or involving the reader at all.
   • Delivery is so consistently flat that the reader may find it hard to focus on the message even when the wording seems reasonably clear and correct.

IV. WORD CHOICE
5 Words convey the intended message in an interesting, precise, and natural way. The writing is full and rich, yet concise.
   • Words are specific and accurate; they seem just right.
   • Imagery is strong.
   • Powerful verbs give the writing energy.
   • Vocabulary may be striking, but it’s natural, and never overdone.
   • Expression is fresh and appealing; slang is used sparingly.

3 The language is quite ordinary, but it does convey the message. It’s functional, even if it lacks punch. Often, the writer settles for what’s easy or handy, producing a sort of “generic paper” stuffed with familiar words and phrases.
   • The language communicates but rarely captures the reader’s imagination.
   • The writer rarely experiments with language; however, the paper may have some fine moments.
   • Attempts at colorful language often seem overdone, calculated to impress.
   • Images lack detail and precision.
   • Clichés, redundancies, and hackneyed phrases are common.
   • A few key verbs may liven up, but equally often, abstract, general, or flat language robs the text of power.

1 The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary, groping for words to convey meaning. Often the language is so vague and abstract, or so redundant and devoid of detail, that only the broadest, most general sort of message comes through.
   • Words are consistently dull, colorless, or abstract.
   • Monotonous repetition or overwhelming reliance on worn, threadbare expressions repeatedly clouds or smother the message.
   • Often words simply do not fit the text. They seem imprecise, inadequate, or just plain wrong.
   • Imagery is very fuzzy or absent altogether; the test is “peopled” only with generalities.
   • Verbs are weak and few in number; is, are, was, were dominate.

V. SENTENCE FLUENCY
5 The writing has an easy flow and rhythm when read aloud. Sentences are well built, with consistently strong and varied structure that makes expressive oral reading easy and enjoyable.
   • Sentence structure reflects logic and sense, helping to show how ideas relate. Purposeful sentence beginnings guide the reader readily from one sentence to another.
   • The writing sounds natural and fluent; it glides along with one sentence flowing effortlessly into the next.
• Sentences display an effective combination of power and grace.
• Variation in sentence structure and length adds interest to the text.
• Fragments, if used at all, work well.
• Dialogue, if used, sounds natural.

3 Sentences tend to be mechanical rather than fluid. The text hums along efficiently for the most part, though it may lack a certain rhythm or grace, tending to be more pleasant than musical. Occasional awkward constructions force the reader to slow down or reread.
• Connections between phrases or sentences may be less fluid than desired.
• The writer shows good control over simple sentence structure but variable control over complex syntax.
• Sentences sometimes vary in length or structure, but, for the most part, the writer falls into a pattern and sticks with it.
• Fragments, if used, sometimes seem the result of oversight.
• Sentences, though functional, often lack energy.
• Some parts of the text invite expressive oral reading; others may be a bit stiff.

1 The paper is difficult to follow or to read aloud. Sentences tend to be choppy, incomplete, rambling, irregular, or just very awkward.
• Nonstandard English syntax is common. Word patterns are often jarring, irregular, and far removed from the way people usually write or speak.
• Sentence structure does not generally enhance meaning. In fact, it may obscure meaning.
• Many sentences seem disjointed, awkward, confused, or nonsensical.
• Word patterns may be monotonous (e.g., subject-verb or subject-verb-object).
• The text does not invite, and may not even permit expressive oral reading.

VI. CONVENTIONS
5 The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (e.g., grammar, capitalization, punctuation usage, spelling, paragraphing) and uses them effectively to enhance readability. Errors tend to be so few and so minor that the reader can easily skim right over them unless specifically searching for them.
• Paragraphing tends to be sound and to reinforce the organizational structure.
• Grammar and usage are correct and contribute to clarity and style.
• Punctuation is smooth and guides the reader through the text.
• Spelling is generally correct, even more difficult words.
• The writer may manipulate conventions – particularly grammar – for stylistic effect.
• The writing is sufficiently long and complex to allow the writer to show skill in using a wide range of conventions.
• Only light editing would be required to polish the text for publication.

3 Errors in writing conventions, while not overwhelming, begin to impair readability. While errors do not block meaning, they tend to be distracting.
• Paragraphing sometimes runs together or begins in the wrong place.
• Terminal (end-of-sentence) punctuation is almost always correct; internal punctuation, however, may be incorrect or missing altogether.
• Spelling is usually correct, or reasonably phonetic, on common words.
• Problems with usage are not severe enough to distort meaning.
• The writer may show reasonable control over a very limited range of conventions, but the text may be too simple or too short to reflect real mastery of conventions.
• Moderate editing would be required to polish the text for publication.

1 Numerous errors in usage, sentence structure, spelling, or punctuation repeatedly distract the reader and make the text difficult to read. In fact, the severity and the frequency of errors tend to be so overwhelming that the reader finds it very difficult to focus on the message and must reread for meaning.
The writer shows very limited skill in using conventions.
• Basic punctuation (including terminal punctuation) tends to be omitted, haphazard, or incorrect.
• Spelling errors are frequent, even on common words.
• Paragraphing may be highly irregular, absent altogether, or so frequent (every sentence) that it bears no relation to the organization of the text.
• Extensive editing would be required to polish the text for publication.
## Analytical Scoring Guide – Option II

### Six Trait Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideas: The heart of the message, the content of the piece, the main theme, with details that enrich and develop that theme.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **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 go beyond the obvious.  
C) Reasonably accurate details.  
D) Writing from knowledge or experience; ideas are fresh and original.  
E) Reader’s questions are anticipated and answered.  
F) Shows insight. |
| **5** The organizational structure of this paper enhances and showcases the central idea or theme of the paper; includes a satisfying introduction and conclusion.  
A) An inviting introduction draws the reader in; a satisfying conclusion leaves the reader with a sense of closure and resolution.  
B) Thoughtful transitions.  
C) Sequencing is logical and effective.  
D) Pacing is well controlled.  
E) The title, if desired, is original.  
F) Flows so smoothly, the reader hardly thinks about it. |
| **5** The writer of this paper speaks directly to the reader in a manner that is individual, compelling, engaging, and has personality.  
A) The reader feels a strong interaction with the writer.  
B) The writer takes a risk.  
C) The tone and voice give flavor and texture to the message and are appropriate for the purpose and audience.  
D) Narrative writing seems honest, personal. Expository or persuasive writing reflects a strong commitment to the topic. |
| **3** The writer is beginning to define the topic, even though development is still basic or general.  
A) The topic is fairly broad.  
B) Support is attempted.  
C) Ideas are reasonably clear.  
D) Writer has difficulty going from general observations to specifics.  
E) The reader is left with questions.  
F) The writer generally stays on topic. |
| **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.  
B) Transitions often work well.  
C) Sequencing shows some logic, yet structure takes attention away from the content.  
D) Pacing is fairly well controlled.  
E) Organization sometimes supports the main point or story line. A title (if desired) is present. |
| **3** The writer seems sincere, but not fully engaged or involved. The result is pleasant or even personable, but not compelling.  
A) The writing communicates in an earnest, pleasing manner.  
B) Only one or two moments here or there surprise, delight, or move the reader.  
C) Writer weighs ideas carefully and discards personal insights in favor of safe generalities.  
D) Narrative writing seems sincere; expository or persuasive writing lacks consistent engagement.  
E) Emerges strongly at some places, but is often obscured behind vague generalities. |
| **1** The paper has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. The reader must make inferences based on sketchy or missing details.  
A) The writer is still in search of a topic.  
B) Information is limited or unclear or the length is not adequate for development.  
C) The idea is a simple restatement or a simple answer to the question.  
D) The writer has not begun to define the topic.  
E) Everything seems as important as everything else.  
F) The text may be repetitious, disconnected, and contains too many random thoughts. |
| **1** The writing lacks a clear sense of direction.  
A) No real lead.  
B) Connections between ideas are confusing.  
C) Sequencing needs work.  
D) Pacing feels awkward.  
E) No title is present (if requested).  
F) Problems with organization make it hard for the reader to get a grip on the main point or story line. |
| **1** The writer seems indifferent, uninvolved, or distanced from the topic and/or the audience.  
A) Writer speaks in a kind of monotone.  
B) Writing is humdrum and “risk-free.”  
C) Writer is not concerned with audience; writer’s style is a complete mismatch for the intended reader.  
D) Writing is lifeless or mechanical.  
E) No point of view is reflected. |
<p>| <strong>Key Question:</strong> Did the writer stay focused and share original and fresh information or perspective about the topic?? |
| <strong>Key Question:</strong> Does the organizational structure enhance the ideas and make it easier to understand? Or does it overpower the ideas like too much perfume |
| <strong>Key Question:</strong> Would you keep reading this piece if it were longer? MUCH longer? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Choice: The use of rich, colorful, precise language that moves and enlightens the reader.</th>
<th>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.</th>
<th>Convention: The mechanical correctness of the piece; spelling, grammar and usage, paragraphing, use of capitals, and punctuation.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>⑤ Words convey the intended message in a precise, interesting, and natural way. A) Words are specific and accurate. B) Words and phrases create pictures that linger in your mind. C) The language is natural and never overdone. D) Striking words and phrases often catch the reader’s eye. E) Lively verbs, precise nouns and modifiers. F) Precision is obvious.</td>
<td>⑥ The writing has an easy flow, rhythm and cadence. Sentences are well built. A) Sentences enhance the meaning. B) Sentences vary in length as well as structure. C) Purposeful and varied sentence beginnings. D) Creative and appropriate connectives. E) The writing has cadence.</td>
<td>⑤ The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, usage, paragraphing) A) Spelling is generally correct. B) Punctuation is accurate. C) Capitalization skills are present. D) Grammar and usage are correct. E) Paragraphing tends to be sound. F) The writer may manipulate conventions for stylistic effect; and it works!</td>
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<tr>
<td>⑥ The language is functional, even if it lacks much energy. A) Words are adequate and correct in a general sense. B) Familiar words and phrases communicate. C) Attempts at colorful language. D) Passive verbs, everyday nouns and adjectives, lack of interesting adverbs. E) The words are only occasionally refined. F) The words and phrases are functional with only a moment or two of sparkle.</td>
<td>⑥ The text hums along with a steady beat, but tends to be more pleasant or businesslike than musical. A) Sentences get the job done in routine fashion. B) Sentences are usually constructed correctly. C) Sentence beginnings are not ALL alike; some variety is attempted. D) The reader sometimes has to hunt for clues. E) Parts of the text invite expressive oral reading; other may be stiff, awkward, choppy, or gangly.</td>
<td>③ The writer shows reasonable control over a limited range or standard writing conventions. A) Spelling is usually correct or reasonably phonetic on common words. B) End punctuation is usually correct. C) Most words are capitalized correctly. D) Problems with grammar and usage are not serious. E) Paragraphing is attempted. F) Moderate (a little of this, a little of that) editing.</td>
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<td>⑦ The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary. A) Language is vague B) “Blah, blah, blah” C) Words are used incorrectly. D) Limited vocabulary, misuse of parts of speech. E) Jargon or clichés, persistent redundancy. F) The words just don’t work in this piece.</td>
<td>⑦ The reader has to practice quite a bit in order to give this paper a fair interpretive reading. A) Sentences are choppy, incomplete, rambling, or awkward. Phrasing does not sound natural. B) No “sentence sense” present. C) Sentences begin the same way. D) Endless connectives. E) Does not invite expressive oral reading.</td>
<td>⑦ Errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, usage and grammar and/or paragraphing repeatedly distract the reader and make text difficult to read. A) Spelling errors are frequent. B) Punctuation missing or incorrect. C) Capitalization is random. D) Errors in grammar or usage are very noticeable. E) Paragraphing is missing. F) The reader must read once to decode, then again for meaning.</td>
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Key Question: Do the words and phrases create vivid pictures and linger in your mind?

Key Question: Can you FEEL the words and phrases flow together as you read it aloud?

Key Question: How much editing would have to be done to be ready to share with an outside source?

- A whole lot? Score in the 1-2 range.
- A moderate amount? Score in the 3 range.
- Very little? Score in the 4-5 range.
What the Scores Mean

Level 5
Writing with Purpose & Confidence
Making it individual
Fine tuning
Creating writing that speaks to an audience

Level 4
Closing In
Revising with purpose
Adding detail
Feeling it come together
Expanding the vision

Level 3
Developing
Taking control
Acting on the possibilities
Getting a solid foothold
Knowing where it’s all headed

Level 2
Emerging
Making discoveries
Creating some possibilities

Level 1
Beginning
Searching, exploring
Getting something on paper

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES GUIDE
Score of “5”

Strengths outweigh the weaknesses

Scores “3”

Strengths and weaknesses evenly balanced

“1”

Weaknesses out weight the strengths

W = Weaknesses
S = Strengths
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Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
Student’s Name:________________

Writing Assessment Rubric

1. Ideas & Content
   - clear central idea/purpose
   - obvious knowledge of subject
   - details enhance central idea
   - presented in captivating way

2. Organization
   - helps develop central idea
   - well-developed paragraphs
   - flows smoothly
   - clear beginning and ending
   - good use of transitions

3. Effective Word Choice
   - strong action verbs
   - lively vocabulary
   - uses figurative language
   - limits use of clichés and slang

4. Voice, Tone, Flavor
   - writer’s enthusiasm apparent
   - interest feels honest
   - writer’s personality apparent

5. Sentence Fluency
   - varied sentence length
   - varied sentence beginnings
   - sentences have power & punch

6. Writing Conventions
   - correct usage
   - correct punctuation
   - correct spelling
   - correct capitalization

Total:________________

Grade:__________

Comments:
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Writing Traits</th>
<th>Ask Yourself</th>
<th>#1</th>
<th>#2</th>
<th>#3</th>
<th>#4</th>
<th>#5</th>
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<td>Ideas</td>
<td>Is this paper clear and interesting? Can the reader follow the meaning?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>A little bit</td>
<td>Yes, and the story is fairly clear and focused</td>
<td>Yes, easily and in an interesting way</td>
<td>Yes, and the story includes intriguing details, purpose, and balance</td>
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<td>Organizatio n</td>
<td>Is it organized? Is there an introduction, middle, and conclusion?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Yes, there is a beginning, middle and end</td>
<td>Yes, very well organized</td>
<td>Everything ties together with a very effective introduction and conclusion</td>
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<td>Voice</td>
<td>Can the reader tell what you are feeling? Do you share your thoughts?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>A little, but it is pretty fuzzy</td>
<td>Yes, but not consistently</td>
<td>Yes, and it keeps the reader’s interest and tells what the writer thinks and feels</td>
<td>Story grabs the reader’s interest; uniquely shares thoughts, feelings, and personality.</td>
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<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>Is the vocabulary interesting?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Limited vocabulary with no descriptive language</td>
<td>Yes, it is interesting</td>
<td>Yes, very interesting</td>
<td>Fascinating vocabulary; figuratively language, similes, and metaphors</td>
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<td>Sentence Fluency</td>
<td>Are the sentences correctly formed and varied?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Sentences are choppy and incomplete; run-on sentences</td>
<td>Yes, the sentences are correctly formed</td>
<td>Yes, and varied somewhat</td>
<td>Well developed and varied sentences</td>
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<td>Conventions</td>
<td>Are there many errors in spelling, punctuation, or capitalization?</td>
<td>Yes, many</td>
<td>Yes, some</td>
<td>A few, but they don’t detract from the story</td>
<td>Very few</td>
<td>Almost none</td>
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### Six+1 Traits Score Sheet

**STUDENT:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>IDEAS</th>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>VOICE</th>
<th>WORD CHOICE</th>
<th>SENTENCE FLUENCY</th>
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</table>
STUDENT-FRIENDLY RUBRICS

Let's see...
I've got my books
I've got my papers,
I've got my
dinosaur-friendly
criteria

... I'm Ready!!!
STUDENT SUMMARY VERSION OF THE SIX-TRAITS

SOUND IDEAS
- It all makes sense.
- I know this topic well.
- I have included the most interesting details.
- My paper has a purpose.
- Once you start reading, you will not want to stop.

GOOD ORGANIZATION
- My beginning will interest the reader.
- Everything ties together.
- It builds to the good parts.
- You can follow it easily.
- At the end it feels finished and makes you think.

INDIVIDUAL VOICE
- This really sounds like me!
- I’ve been honest and written what I think and feel.
- Can you feel my commitment to this topic?
- I want you to experience my writing with me.
- I know why I’m writing and who my audience is.
- I bet you’ll want to read this to someone.
POWERFUL WORDS

• This is the best way to say this.
• My words create mind pictures.
• I’ve tried new ways to say everyday things.
• Listen to the power in my verbs.
• Some of the words and phrases linger in my mind.

SMOOTH FLUENCY

• My sentences begin in different ways.
• Some sentences are short and some are long.
• It just sounds good as I read it aloud – it flows.
• My sentences have power and punch.
• I have “sentence sense.”

CORRECT CONVENTIONS

• I don’t have many mistakes in my paper.
• I have used capitals correctly.
• Periods, commas, exclamation marks, and quotation marks are in the right places.
• Almost every word is spelled correctly.
• I remembered to indent each paragraph.
• It would not take long to get this ready to share.
PRESENTATION

5 This is pleasing to the eye. The form and presentation enhances understanding.
→ If handwritten, the slant, letter formation, size, and spacing are uniform and easy to read.
→ If word-processed, fonts and font sizes invite the reader in.
→ There’s just the right balance of text and white space.
→ Markers (titles, side heads, page numbering, bullets) help make the information clear to the reader.
→ If used, illustrations, charts, graphs, maps, tables, etc. support and clarify important information.

3 My message gets through in this format.
→ Handwriting is readable, although some parts may be easier to read than others.
→ Experimentation with fonts and font sizes is sometimes successful, sometimes fussy, busy, or cluttered.
→ Consistent spacing is used, but there may have been a better choice (e.g., single, double, or triple spacing) for spacing and/or margins.
→ Markers are not used to their fullest potential.
→ Limited connection between text and visuals.

1 The message is garbled due to problems with the presentation of the text.
→ Text is difficult to read and understand.
→ Wild use of fonts and font sizes distracts the reader.
→ The spacing is random and confusing.
→ There may be little or no white space.
→ There are no markers to guide reader; may be misleading.

The Student Friendly Guide to Writing With Traits

Adapted by Deborah Iwen
6th Grade teacher
Kent, Washington

Note: Several different versions of the Student Friendly Guide are available from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. If you are interested in ordering a set, please call their Document Reproduction Service at (503) 275-9519
**IDEAS AND CONTENT**

5 It’s clear, focused, and jam-packed with details.
→ You can tell I know a LOT about this topic.
→ My writing is bursting with interesting tidbits.
→ My topic is small enough to handle.
→ Every point is clear.
→ The paper “shows” --- it doesn’t tell.

3 It has its intriguing moments, but it could use some details.
→ I know just enough to write.
→ Some of my details are too general.
→ My topic might be a little too big to handle.
→ Now and then it grabs your attention.

1 I’m just figuring out what I want to say.
→ I just don’t know enough about this topic yet.
→ It’s hard to picture anything.
→ I’m still thinking on paper – looking for an idea.

**CONVENTIONS**

5 I made so few errors, it would be a snap getting this ready to publish!
→ Caps are in the right places.
→ Great punctuation – grammar too!
→ Spelling to knock your socks off.
→ Paragraphs are indented – you gotta love it.

3 Some bothersome mistakes show up when I read carefully.
→ Spelling’s correct on SIMPLE words.
→ Caps are mostly there.
→ Grammar’s O.K., though not award-winning.
→ Yeah, you might stumble over my innovative punctuation.
→ Reads like a first draft, all right.

1 Read it once to decode, then again for meaning.
→ Mistakes make the going rough.
→ I’ve forgotten some CAPS – others aren’t needed
→ Look out for spelling mistakes.
→ Want the truth? I didn’t spend much time editing.
VOICE

5 I’ve put my personal stamp on this paper!
   → My paper shines with personality.
   → The writing is lively and engaging.
   → I speak right to my readers.
   → The writing rings with confidence.

3 What I truly think and feel shows up sometimes.
   → You might not laugh, cry or pound the table.
   → Right on the edge of finding its own voice.
   → My personality pokes through here and there.
   → Pleasant and friendly but cautious.

1 I’m not comfortable letting the real me show through.
   → It could be hard to tell who wrote this.
   → I kept my feelings in check.
   → Safe and careful – that’s my paper.
   → Audience? What audience?

SENTENCE FLUENCY

5 My sentences are clear, varied, and a treat to read aloud!
   → Go ahead – read it aloud. No rehearsal necessary!
   → Sentence variety is my middle name.
   → Deadwood has been cut.
   → Smooth as a ski run in December.

3 My sentences are clear and readable.
   → Pretty smooth & natural – with just a bump or two.
   → Some sentences could merge; some need to be cut in two.
   → A little deadwood – but it doesn’t bury the good ideas.
   → Yeah, I got into a rut with those sentence beginnings

1 I have to admit, it’s a challenge to read aloud!
   → You might have to stop or re-read to make sense out of this.
   → It’s hard to tell where one sentence stops and the next begins.
   → Bumpity, bump, bump, bump.
5 I picked just the right words to express my ideas and feelings.
   → Every word seems exactly right.
   → Colorful, fresh and snappy – yet nothing’s overdone.
   → Accurate and precise: that’s me!
   → Vivid, energetic verbs enliven every paragraph.

3 It might not tweak your imagination, but hey – it gets the message across.
   → It’s functional, but it’s not a stretch for me.
   → Okay, so there’s a cliché here and there.
   → You’ll find some originality, too!
   → I might have over-utilized my thesaurus…

1 My reader is likely to ask, “Huh?”
   → I’m a victim of vague wording and fuzzy phrasing.
   → It’s hard to picture what I’m talking about.
   → Maybe I misused a word or two…
   → Some redundant phrases might be redundant.

5 Clear and compelling direction makes reading a BREEZE.
   → My beginning gets you hooked.
   → Every detail is in the right place.
   → You won’t feel lost.
   → My paper ends at just the right spot -- and it leaves you thinking.

3 You can follow it pretty well.
   → I have a beginning.
   → Most details fit where I put them.
   → The paper has an ending, but it needs some work.

1 Where are we headed?
   → You could get dizzy trying to follow this.
   → Beginning?  Oops…
   → My ideas seem scrambled, jumbled, confusing – even to me.
      It doesn’t have a real ending.  It just stops.
THE GREAT GRADING DEBATE

Look around you. That’s just the beginning of how many different grading practices there are among teachers and other professional educators! Even schools and programs who profess to have “consistent grading policies” secretly admit to the reality of differences in handling the every day business of assessing work, accumulating grades, and averaging scores for reporting. Who among us hasn’t yearned for “Mrs. Teawalter” who is known to give the easy “A” or groaned in frustration upon hearing they would be in Mr. Spohn’s “I have never given an “A” in this course and I never will”- class.

There are no packaged answers that meet the grading needs of every student and every teacher and every school across the country. But, there are some issues of honesty, accuracy, reliability, and fairness that can be addressed head on. Consider the following list as you reflect upon the best way to communicate progress to your students….

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADING</th>
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<td><strong>Do</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>* Have a clear vision of what successful performance looks like – see sample papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Share the criteria with students – see scoring rubrics</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Treat students fairly and equitably based on their performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Keep achievement scores from effort</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Provide opportunities to change/revise work before final evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Have enough grades that the final is a fair and accurate representation of learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUGGESTIONS FOR SCORING AND GRADING, USING THE 6-TRAIT MODEL

1. Don’t score and/or grade every trait every time. Score and/or grade only those traits you have taught. For example, if you just finished a lesson or focus activity on voice, score the student papers only for that trait. You can build over time. If you work on Ideas, and then Organization. Tell students, prior to writing, that you will be looking for their best work on both of those traits.

2. Score those traits that are the most helpful to get feedback based on the assignment. For example, in a science piece on the life cycle of a frog, Ideas, Organization, and perhaps the use of specific vocabulary (Word Choice) may be the most important. In a memoir, the ideas and voice may be primary traits. You can decide which traits are the most important to score and respond to depending on content, purpose and audience.

3. Try to use the actual language of the scoring guide rather than numbers to evaluate student performance. One focused comment such as “Your paper has a focused, narrowed topic with many relevant supporting details” has the same meaning as a “5” in the trait of Ideas. Ultimately, it is the language of the traits which makes the assessment feedback meaningful and allows students to make writer’s decisions about what to do next. Remember that the numbers by themselves don’t mean anything. They only are effective when a student knows the language of the criteria to associate with that number. Reinforce the meaning of the criteria at different levels as often as you can!

Ruth Culham, Assessment and Accountability, NWREL, May, 1997
Are you required to give letter grades?

Formulas for converting 6-Trait Scores to letter grades

Why can’t I do what I usually do?
Many teachers who use the 6-Trait model in the classroom realize that assigning a percentage or letter grade to 6-Trait scores can be frustrating. Why doesn’t the common practice of obtaining a percentage of points earned from the total yield a letter grade representative of student achievement on the 6-Trait scale? Remember, on the 6-Trait scale, a 3 represents a mid-level score. In the traditional grade-letter or percentage system the mid-level score is usually a C, or between 70 and 80 percent. If we try to convert a 3 directly to a percentage by dividing it by 5 (remember there are 5 possible points per trait scored) the result is 60 percent, or a low D on the traditional scale.

How do I change a 3 to a C?
An easy way of thinking about 6-Trait scores in a traditional grading system is to relate the five possible scores per trait to the five letter grades. If a score of 5 (out of 5) is an A, 4 is a B, 3 is a C, 2 is a D, and 1 is an F, we have a system! This system works fine if you are grading one sample on the single trait, but when grading multiple traits on one sample it is best to add the scores and divide by the number of traits scored. For example, if the student received a 3 in ideas, a 4 in word choice and a 5 in convention the total (3 + 4 + 5) = 12. Then 12 ÷ 3 (# of traits scored) = 4. A “4” grade equivalent is approximately a B / 85%.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>6-Trait Score:</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter Grade</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Score</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>55</td>
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</table>

How do I change total points accumulated over a marking period into a percent?
By assigning each 6-Trait score a percentage grade we can average a student’s cumulative score across writing sample, regardless of the number of traits scored for each sample. A simple calculation takes scores for any number of traits, across multiple samples, and converts them to a single percentage grade:

\[
\text{Percentage Grade} = 50 \left( \frac{\text{Sum of Points Earned}}{\text{Sum of Points Possible}} \right) + 45
\]

Using this simple formula, we can convert an accumulation of 6-Trait scores into a single percentage grade. Remember that the percentage grades resulting from this system will range from 55 percent to 95 percent! If a student received 5 out of 5 points on every trait on every paper, they will receive a 95 percent. Therefore, we should interpret the percentage grade in terms of the letter grade it represents (which are arbitrary, not fixed, and may vary according to your judgment.)

I teach writing, not math! How do I do this?
For those of us who learn by example here is a short sample of how to use this system. The sample shows accumulated scores for two students across a grading period involving four assignments. The top row of the grid shows the total points possible for each assignment. Two assignments are only rated on a subset of the 6-Traits and hence have fewer than the maximum of 30 points (5 points for each of the 6-Traits).
Tom will receive an English grade based on his Word Choice and Sentence Structure.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(3 traits scored)</th>
<th>(5 traits scored)</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points Possible</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pat’s Scores</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris’ Scores</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
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To convert the scores to a grade, we will use the formula discussed on the previous page. For Pat’s scores, insert the total number of points earned (94) and the total points possible (100) into the formula as shown below:

$$\text{Pat’s Percentage Grade} = \left[ \frac{50 \left( \frac{94}{100} \right) + 45}{50} \right] = \left[ 47 + 45 \right] = 92\% = \text{Solid A}$$

Over the grading period Pat’s grade works out to be 92 percent, which is very high (remember the maximum is 95%) and should be a solid A.

For Chris’ scores do the same, inserting the total number of points earned (64) and the total number of points possible (100):

$$\text{Chris’ Percentage Grade} = \left[ \frac{50 \left( \frac{64}{100} \right) + 45}{50} \right] = \left[ 32 + 45 \right] = 77\% = \text{Solid C}$$

Chris’ grade works out to be 77 percent, which is slightly above the mid-point (75 percent is equivalent to a 3 on the 6-Trait scale) and represents a solid C.

Using the system shown here, can convert any cumulative set of 6-Trait scores into an equivalent percentage grade and therefore an overall letter grade.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon
Sample Papers......

These samples are provided as a starting point. Collect additional writing samples to assist in teaching the six traits.

Read, Score, and Discuss

Use these papers as either a teaching tool or for guidance in scoring.

When using sample papers, one suggested method is to display the writing sample on an overhead projector. Avoid showing the actual scored traits shown at the end of the piece. Read and discuss the sample and record the students suggested scores. Compare students’ scores with actual scores.
Think of a place that is so special to you that you just love thinking about it. It might be as big as a city, or as small as one corner of the room. Tell one story that comes to mind when you think of this place. (Follow 2 part directions.)

My bed. I feel comfortable in my bed and I fall asleep in it. I see white. When I feel on my light, my bed shines up. It has 2 beds on it. One up, one down.

3rd Grade

<table>
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<tr>
<th>IDEAS</th>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>VOICE</th>
<th>WORD CHOICE</th>
<th>SENTENCE FLUENCY</th>
<th>CONVENTIONS</th>
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Think of a place that is so special to you that you just love thinking about it. It might be as big as a city, or as small as one corner of the room. Tell one story that comes to mind when you think of this place. (Follow 2 part directions.)

My favorite place to be is a tree fort.

My tree fort has books in it and chairs. It is a big tree fort out in my back yard. My friends like it so much I listen to my radio. I read books in it. My tree fort has a lot of pictures. I drew some.

Over
I have two clocks in my tree fort. I have three windows. It is blue and green. I just told you about my tree fort.

3rd Grade

- Good ideas
- Boring, word choice poor
- Not developed
- Conventions good
- Weak ending

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Think of a place that is so special to you that you just love thinking about it. It might be as big as a city, or as small as one corner of the room. Tell one story that comes to mind when you think of this place. (Follow 2 part directions.)

at my grandpa's ranch, we ride motorcycles. When we ride them in the stream it feels like you're going to get bucked over the handle bars, but you won't if you keep good balance.
Think of a place that is so special to you that you just love thinking about it. It might be as big as a city, or as small as one corner of the room. Tell one story that comes to mind when you think of this place. (Follow 2 part directions.)

**A Sea of Memories**

The place I love and miss the most is the ocean. My family used to own a sailboat so each summer my dad, mom, sister, and I would sail up to Canada. One summer my dad had me take a swim test. If I passed my dad would know that I was ready to start working on some of the more dangerous parts of the sailboat.

The day of the test came. I stood at the stern waiting for my signal to jump. My goal was to swim to the other end of the boat. I stared down at my reflection in the water. A ghost whose face possessed an emotion stared back at me. My father’s voice shattered the silence as if it were made of glass. “GO!” he shouted. I dove into the ocean, the water which knew all of my
Droplets grew into the sky and acted as prisms. I felt the cool water rush past me only to be replaced by more. To some reason whenever I’m in the water, I feel free, as if all of my burdens have been washed away. Just as these thoughts were running through my mind, I realized that I had made it.

I love to swim, but it’s just not the same in a pool. The distance you swim in a pool is limited. But in the ocean, you can swim until you reach the ceiling sky.

5th Grade

- Makes attempt to use figurative language
- Similes
- Good use of higher level vocabulary – (stern of boat-)(reflection)(possessed)(undiscovered emotion) word choice
- Paragraphing
- Spelling

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I like my grandma’s dog. She is funny and crazey. I like my dog. She is cool. Her fur is wearm as a fireplace. I love her. I like her. And she like me to. I like my grandma’s dog more than my Dad. And she like’s me more than my grandma. She is fun and weird I love her. And she love’s me too. She is nice and friendly. And she is prite. Sometimes my grandma get’s mad at my dog.
Think of a place that is so special to you that you just love thinking about it. It might be as big as a city, or as small as one corner of the room. Tell one story that comes to mind when you think of this place. (Follow 2 part directions.)

**Flying, Flipping, and Spinning** That is what everyone was doing when I first saw this place. It was enormous—it was the size of a building. Suddenly, when I stepped into the park, I felt so nervous because everyone was so good and I was so bad. But my friend said don't worry, it just takes time. Even I did. I made some new friends and I learned some new tricks, such as a spin, a somersault, and a flip. My friend and I went to have lunch, then we went back for another hour. But then it was time to go out since then I have grown to like skateboarding.

6-8th Grade

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<th>IDEAS</th>
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Think of a place that is so special to you that you just love thinking about it. It might be as big as a city, or as small as one corner of the room. Tell one story that comes to mind when you think of this place. (Follow 2 part directions.)

The special place is a place where there are 5,000 people and they get along. There is no pollution, it is mostly sunny and blue skies and some clouds. The place is called Happy Land. The place has green grass, the trees are tall, and the food does not cost a lot of money. There are crafts and everyone has a job. There is snow. The place has lots of things to do like hunting, fishing, swimming, hiking, sports. The movies are really funny.

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7th Grade

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Think of a place that is so special to you that you just love thinking about it. It might be as big as a city, or as small as one corner of the room. Tell one story that comes to mind when you think of this place. (Follow 2 part directions.)

My special place.
A place that is so special to me would have to be my family room. It has one couch, two chairs and a piano. Every time I think of this place, it makes me feel happy and lucky that I have a very wealthy and joyful family. Our family room is full to the brim with love and fun. We feel happy and at home in the family room all day, all year. When I'm sad and when I think of this place, it helps me feel better. Sometimes I only want my mom or dad there to talk to me. That's my special place in my life.

6th Grade

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Think of a place that is so special to you that you just love thinking about it. It might be as big as a city, or as small as one corner of the room. Tell one story that comes to mind when you think of this place. (Follow 2 part directions.)

I have only been to the Sunflower field once, but my memory of it is so clear, so perfect. You see, the Sunflower field is a large amount of land covered in tall beautiful sunflowers. If you lay down in them, you can hardly see the sky.

When I got to the Sunflower field I could hardly move. I felt like every individual flower was looking out at me, trying to tell me its own special secret. I could hardly wait to look around inside, but of course with every exciting and thrilling story there’s always a problem. The Sunflower field was across the street and our little car had only stopped for gas. “Dad, dad” I screamed, can I go in there? My father replied with a simple shrug that could only mean one thing: No! I was heartbroken, but as a good girl would do I waited patiently in the car. About eight minutes later he appeared at the door and said, “OK, I guess we can go.” I was thrilled! I jumped out of the car and almost ran right into the middle of the street. We soon climbed over the fence.
and entered what seemed to be a palace of
green archways and glowing yellow faces.
I will never forget that day when
I walked into the Sunflower field. I
hope I will visit it again someday, but
even if I don't, I will always remember it
and think about it.

6th Grade

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My T-Shirt slogan would say “Skateboarding, What a life to live.” I would choose this slogan because skateboarding is one of my favorite hobbies.

I learned skateboarding from one of my old best friends. He taught me tricks and gave me my first skateboard.

I met another friend who has this big half-pipe, a ramp. I go to his house and ride on his ramp and learn new tricks.

Now I just ride in the streets and do tricks.
**My Best Thing**

The thing I am best at is science. And the way I learned it is through hard work, concentration, studying, and the ability to think hard. It takes a lot of research and observation to truly make it stay in your mind. You also have to be patient for this kind of activity, because no one gets an experiment right on the first time. So that means test after test until you get it right.

When you get into science you have got to keep the bad things in mind such as: all the stress, taking your job home, the sleepless nights, and the chances of dying from your own experiment.

I think that science is the best job field to get into, because it is high paying, interesting and filled with entertainment. In this job field there is always something new to do. One day I'll be in the science field, and I'll be famous.

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**LOW EXPOSITORY**

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**Grades 9-12**

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I do something each day that most people detest: the very thought of doing. I write. Writing, for me, is a way to talk to the world, to release ideas and be able to share them with the world. I write fiction, and to me there are three different types that fiction shows itself in: novels, poems, and short stories. All three are different, and require different tactics to accomplish. For now, I will describe what it is like to work on a novel.

It’s the idea that triggers it all. The idea of a good plot, well rounded characters, and a good conflict, show it self in a variety of ways. For example, the idea can come from an inspiration. There have been several times that I have looked at a poster, and taken an idea for a plot from it. Dreams can sometimes inspire ideas as well. They can be as far out and different as posters, but sometimes they can be more real, because they are a part of you. Real life events, like things seen on the news, or a strange event that happened during the day, can trigger the thought, “But what if this had happened?”

When I am ready to write, I put the events of the book through my mind to be judged on interest level and creativeness. If it lacks anything, I add thoughts and ideas until the plot is acceptable to me. Before, I put actual words on paper, however, I make sure that a dictionary, thesaurus, and research notes are close at hand to be looked at from time to time. No novel, or at least a well-written novel, can be done without research. Without research, the idea can be proven faulty, which can ruin the entire storyline.

When I have all of this intact, I begin my actual writing. My first thought is to get words down on paper, which helps to solidify the idea, before I go to a computer. I tend to do a lot of what I call “paper writing” after tests or in the last few minutes of class. Sometimes, I have a chance to write at home. Then, I prefer to write when it’s either very early, or very late in the day. This is the time when no one is around, and I can listen to my music and write without any distractions. The same circumstances prevail when it is time to write a final draft on the computer. I like to work in an atmosphere that I have created, unmarred by anyone or anything else. To me, writing is fun. There are definite rewards if you can get your works published. Even if you don’t, though, it is a good hobby to widen your vocabulary and your interests. It helps to let out the person inside of you, and get the sense of, “I am me.” Often times, that sense is all we want in life.

**HIGH EXPOSITORY**

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This place that I'm thinking of is very smooth, soft and sometimes a little annoying. This place I worship is sandy, has a lot of water and has plenty of aquatic life. The smell is like no other such as a fresh scent, crashing of waves or sparkles off the water. Crabs crawling in crevices in rocks.

If you don't know what my favorite spot is by now, then I feel sorry for you because your missing out. If you visit into just relaxing on the beach there is plenty of sports such as volleyball, frisbee, jet skiing and water boarding. I just wish I could be there everyday. The main reason I like this place is because of animals, like when I went to visit the Oregon coast me and my sister played with crabs all the time. Also we went deep sea fishing and caught an octopus, another enjoyment of mine is eating the seafood.

LOW NARRATIVE

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“Ready about, heeling astern!” my older brother shouted over the howling wind as he pushed rudder away from him. I quickly grabbed the stays for the jib sheet and pulled it tight while we made our final tack into the landing.

“Yeah!” I shouted. “That was one of the best wind I’ve seen here.” I pondered on that for a moment and finished with a chuckle. “You know, with my vast experience of sailing here.”

I was twelve years old at the time, and I felt as if I knew everything there was to know about sailing the Fireball, the ship my grandfather had built. When we finished pulling the boat onto shore, we hurried in to our cabin, just a few yards away from the shores of Bear Lake. There we found the best baking plate of spaghetti that I have ever seen.

“Boy, boys, looks like you were kind of beat out there. Wasn’t the wind big enough for you?” my father mused with a sly smile on his face.

My brother and I broke out at once, stopped and started again. Finally, my brother pushed me aside and regarded my father with a slightly over-exaggerated story of how we almost starved her. My dad laughed and said it was time for dinner. As my father was saying grace, my brother and I looked up at each other and
The next morning, I awoke with a start from dreams of sailing and found my brother's bed empty. Smelling a delicious aroma wafting down from upstairs, I rushed up to see what it was. My mom had just pulled some blueberry muffins out of the oven. I looked out the window and saw the giant sail of the Fireball being hoisted up the mast. With my stomach growling from hunger, I was torn and couldn't decide whether to go sailing, or feast upon freshly made blueberry muffins.

"Let's go!" I yelled as I strapped my life jacket on.

"It looks fit to blow us away if we don't hurry!" I took one last sidelong glance towards the kitchen window where I saw my smiling mother, and then pushed out onto the glistening lake. The wind caught the sail immediately and we took off like a bullet. "One more beautiful day in a mountain-lake paradise," I said to myself as we sailed towards the rising sun.

**HIGH NARRATIVE**

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Grades 9-12

I walk up the hill with my friends, then turn into our cul-de-sac, go to the front door, put the key in the lock, turn, and step in. The house breathes a kind of spooky hello as I set my books down and go to the kitchen where the inevitable note is waiting: “Have a snack. Be home soon. I love you.” As I’m munching cookies, I think how I’d like to go out and shoot a few hoops if I had someone to do it with. You can play Nintendo by yourself, but it isn’t the same. So I forget that for now. I should be doing my Spanish homework anyway. Too bad I don’t have an older brother or sister to help conjugate all those dumb verbs... I could call a friend, sure, but if I had a brother or sister, I’d have a built-in friend.

While I’m feeling so sorry for myself, I hear my friends Denise and Kevin across the street. She’s screaming bloody murder because he is throwing leaves in her hair and threatening to put a beetle in her backpack. She has just stepped on his new Nikes. I do not have these squabbles. I guess the big advantage, if you call it that, to being an only child is my room is my own, nobody “borrows” my CDs or my books or my clothes. I also get a bigger allowance than I probably would if I had siblings. My parents take me everywhere, from the mall to the East Coast. Maybe they wouldn’t if they had other kids. (On the other hand, it would be more fun going if I had someone my own age.)

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### Being An Only Child:

*Some Advantages and Disadvantages*

There are many advantages and disadvantages to being the only child in the family. I will list both the advantages and disadvantages.

I will start with the advantages of being the only child. When you are the only child, you get all the attention. You are allowed to do more adult things than if you have a brother or sister. You get your own room and lots of privacy. There is no older brother or sister bossing you around.

Now I will tell you about the disadvantages of being an only child. Quite often, you feel bored because of lack of things to do. For instance, let’s say it is summer vacation and you would like something to do but no one is around. If you had a brother or sister, you would have someone to do things with. These are just some of the many disadvantages of being an only child.

So, as you can see, being an only child has its advantages and disadvantages. Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages? It is up to you.

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All these great advantages are over shadowed by one big disadvantage, though, and it’s the main reason I would change things if I could. When you are an only child, your parents depend on you to be the big success all the time. You are their big hope, so you cannot fail. You have to be good at sports, popular, and have good grades. You need a career goal. You have to have neat hair and clothes that look pressed. You have to have good grammar, clean socks, good breath, and table manners. If you’ve ever felt jealous of somebody who is an only child, don’t. It’s a lot of pressure. I often wish for a little screw-up brother my parents could worry about for a while.

So—while having a neat room with nothing disturbed is great, I’d take a brother or sister in a minute if I could. The big irony is, if I had that mythical brother or sister, I would probably be wishing myself an only child again the first time my baseball shirt didn’t come back or my stereo got broken. Life is like that. What you don’t have always seems to be the thing you want.
Stage 1: Readiness

The student

♥ Scribbles
♥ Notices print in the environment
♥ Shows interest in writing tools
♥ Likes to make marks on paper
♥ Begins to recognize the power of print
♥ Likes listening to stories, poems, etc.
♥ Begins connecting writing/pictures with self-expression
♥ Likes expressing himself/herself orally
Stage 2: Drawing

The student

♥ Draws pictures with recognizable shapes
♥ Captures more feeling in art through motion, color, facial expressions
♥ Enjoys dictating or recording stories, poems, etc.
♥ May dictate or record stories to accompany pictures
♥ Begins labeling and using titles
♥ Plays with words and letters
♥ Feels confident to “write by myself”
♥ Enjoys writing
♥ Adds details that might have been overlooked earlier
♥ Uses words or pictures to express personal feelings

I lu mom n Dad
The student
♥ Feels more confident imitating environmental print
♥ Writes more
♥ Experiments with letters and rudimentary words
♥ Attempts longer expressions (two or more words)
♥ Shows more awareness of conventions of print: spaces between words, spaces between lines, use of capital letters, up-down orientation, left-right orientation, use of punctuation
♥ Begins using some capital letters, though not necessarily appropriately placed
♥ Begins to experiment with punctuation, though not necessarily appropriately placed

me and my horsi.

I can lift my horsi fee. I can ride Him.
I can kick Him. I Love Him. I think He
Is neat. I can go behind Him.

Emily
Grade 1

The Werewolf

It was Halloween night. It was dark. It was scary. Everybody had to stay in their houses.

There was a werewolf. He liked to suck blood. He was all hairy and ugly. He snuck in a house.
The next day the police found the house a mess. They finally found a lady in the house. She had a long scratch on her back and she was all shriveled up. Then, as fast as a flash, the werewolf grabbed one of the police and dragged him under the bed. Then he sucked his blood.

The other police ran to get help. This time he came back with a whole troop of police. They searched the house. They found no sign of the werewolf or the policemen.

It was very late so they went to bed.

Stage 5: Expanding & Adding Detail

The student

- May write a detailed paragraph or more
- Experiments with different forms: lists, recipes, how-to papers, all-about essays, stories, poems, descriptions, journals, notes
- Begins using some conventions (spaces between words, capitals, periods, title at the top) with growing consistency
- Shows increasing understanding of what a sentence is
- Adds more detail to both pictures and text
- Expresses both ideas and feelings purposefully and forcefully through pictures and text
- Shows increasing confidence experimenting with inventive spelling - especially if encouraged
- Shows vocabulary - especially if inventive spelling is encouraged
- Increasingly uses writer’s vocabulary to ask questions or discuss own writing – especially if traits are taught

Teaching Traits to Primary Writers

Six Important Tips
1. DON'T WORRY ABOUT NUMBERS.

The key to good assessment at this level is watching for signs of development. Describe what you see – but don’t worry about putting a number on it. Language tells more than numbers. Consider using a developmental continuum as a checklist to document growth and keep a running record of expanding skills. The time to begin using numbers is when students themselves can begin to interpret what those numbers mean.

2. HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP A WRITER'S VOCABULARY.

Use every opportunity you can to refer to “clear ideas”, “strong feelings” (Voice), “an interesting way to begin [or end]” (Organization), “words that help you picture things in your mind,” etc. Use the language of the traits to talk about books and other writings you share aloud, to respond to students own work, and to talk about your own writing. Help your students begin to think like writers. Give them a working vocabulary for talking to each other and to you about their writing.

3. SEE WHAT IS THERE, NOT WHAT’S MISSING.

Look for what’s there, not what’s missing. You cannot appreciate too deeply. You cannot enjoy too much. Every writer wants his or her work valued. Learn to see the real growth that lies within each child’s efforts, see the intelligence behind the “errors,” and your responses will be both genuine and encouraging. Do not fret over what isn’t happening yet. It
will come when the time is right. So-called “mistakes” are often the beginnings of development.

4. READ, READ, AND READ SOME MORE.

Use the language all around you as a way of discussing what works and doesn’t work in writing. Talk about the books you read aloud. What do you or your students like or dislike? What don’t you like? Why? Link your comments to the traits. . . “Did you ever notice how some books have the power to make you want to keep reading? You just can’t stop? There’s a word for that kind of power - it’s called VOICE.” Use poetry, letters from friends, articles from the newspaper, directions you get with your new blender, letter from a friend, a set of written directions to a place you’ve never been (could you really find it?), descriptions of shows in TV GUIDE, recipes, menus, pamphlets from the veterinarian or dentist’s office. Bits and pieces from everywhere. Some good, some not so good. Read them and talk about them so that students begin to notice some writing is a lot better than other writing.

Reading aloud

Is not a cure-all. Not quite. But it is such a wonderful antidote for turning on turned-off readers and brightening up dull writing that I feel it’s worthwhile to plead again for its regular occurrence in every classroom... That is why I’m closing these particular remarks in an attitude of application, begging for teachers to read aloud, once more, with feeling, every day of their classroom lives.

Mem Fox
Radical Reflections, p. 70
5. MODEL REVISION, BUT DON’T DEMAND IT.

When you’re modeling on a story or essay of your own, read it aloud to the class. Talk about your plans for revision. You might say, “I’m not happy with the ideas yet. I think I need to say more about why I was so frightened of the dog. I don’t think a reader can tell that from my story, do you?” That’s enough. Just suggest gently that revising is something writers do. Be sure to share the revised version, too – but don’t imply you’ve “fixed it.” Students need to understand that revision is “seeing it again,” bringing it into focus, zeroing in on the details a quick glance misses, or sometimes, expanding the original idea because you just think of more details the next time around, or you think of something else your audience/reader will need or want to know.

Revision is not for the incompetent.
On the contrary,
REVISION IS FOR THINKERS!

6. TAKE A BROAD VIEW OF WRITING.

Scribbles are imitative, and show that students recognize the importance and value of writing. Pictures are valid forms of communication (and become extraordinarily sophisticated in the hands of writers/artists who continue to use them). Primary students learn to be writers by being listeners first, hearing and responding to stories and to many other kinds of text as well. Acknowledge their ability to listen critically, and to share back what, specifically, has moved them or given their imaginations a little nudge.

As teachers, we place great emphasis on letters and words as we eagerly await the emergence of the young writer. In doing so, we often overlook the value of drawing as a composing process. We need to look more closely, to ask questions, to listen – even if there are yet no words to the story.
Let them put their thinking skills to work in planning writing with you. Planning is a form of writing, too, even when you’re the only one holding the pencil! Write letters, memos, reminder lists, thank you notes. Engage them in the design process. Discuss content. Choose words together. Talk about length, beginnings, endings, questions your audience will have. Illustrate some things you write together (a great way to build skills in both ideas and organization!).

Writing Genres

1. Telling a Story: Narrative Writing
   - A story recreates an experience, real or imagined.
   - Four elements are usually key: (1) the characters who in the story; (2) the place where it all happens; (3) the events, big and small, that are central to the plot and (4) the conflict, problem, or question that provides a reason for telling the tale.

2. Observing and Reporting: Expository Writing
   - Expository writing is meant to inform first—but often to entertain as well.
• From the most successful expository writing, the reader learns something new and has no trouble paying attention.
• Draws information from his or her own experiences and other resources, such as books, films, interviews, etc.

3. Constructing an Argument: Persuasive Writing
• The writer crafts an argument and defends it from presented evidence.
• The writing is clear, compelling, well supported, lively, and opinionated without relying solely on opinion.
• The purpose is to influence the readers’ thinking.

Building Skills
In the Traits

One: Let’s begin by acknowledging that the single most important thing to “build” in primary writers is a sense of joy in writing. Nothing replaces that. At the same time, success builds confidence – and confidence feels good.
Success equals Joy.

Point two: The following activities are suggestions for building. You don’t have to do these very activities to build students’ skills. Far from it. These are just guidelines to get you started. Please add your own successful activities to this list – and keep it growing!

Ideas

What you’re going for

♥ Awareness of details
♥ Ability to see what others miss
♥ Knowing what’s most important or interesting

Suggested Activities

1. Ask students to be observers of their surroundings. See how much they notice. Record their observations. You can do this on a nature hike, for instance, or by observing a classroom pet, such as a chameleon, hamster, rabbit or fish. Don’t stop too soon, either. Make them dig a little. Keep them working on it till they really cannot come up with more. Then a say, O.K., of all the things we noticed, which are most interesting? Most important? Most unusual? Which details would you like to read about?
2. Use unusual pictures to draw out summary lists of details. Greeting cards and postcards are good sources for unusual, colorful and interesting pictures. Collect them. If students are old enough to write their own lists, let them work in groups. A more advanced version of this is to have students describe a picture, then see if others can recognize it from the description.

3. Write a short piece yourself about a friend, pet, experience, etc. Before you write, invite students to make a list of questions they would like to ask and have you answer in the paper. Record all their questions, then read them back. Then tell students, “I will only answer 5 of your questions. Choose carefully.” Let them talk in groups or pairs for a couple minutes to choose favorites, then make a class list. If they cannot agree, you might try writing two different paragraphs, answering two different sets of questions, then talk about the differences. Which one is better? Which holds your interest more? Why?

4. As you share longer pieces of literature, ask, “What questions do you hope this writer will answer? What do you want him (or her) to tell next?”

5. Ask students to draw as they listen to literature. Draw what they feel and what they see. Then give them time to share: What did you feel? What did you see in your mind? Why do you think you saw it that way?

6. Rewrite a story that’s familiar to your students, but take out all the details and juicy tidbits you can. Share the story, e.g., “Once upon a time there were three pigs. Two were not very good builders. One was pretty good. The pigs that were not good builders got eaten by a wolf. The pig that was a good builder got away.” Ask what’s missing. Share the original story and ask what makes it better.

7. Create a group picture of a busy scene: e.g., shopping mall, zoo, grocery store, carnival, fair, city street, crowded beach, etc. Allow everyone to add details – call them details. At the end, talk about how many things you’ve thought of, how some people remembered things others had forgotten, etc. If possible, let this project span several days or more so that students have time to think, reflect, remember. Talk about how you don’t necessarily remember everything right away, but things sift into your mind little by little.
SIGNS OF THE TRAITS:
WHAT TO LOOK (& LISTEN) FOR
WHAT YOU COULD SAY

IDEAS
WHAT TO LOOK (& LISTEN) FOR........

- Complexity (lines, colors)
- Attention to detail
- Noticing little things others might not notice
- Clarity, focus, sense of purpose
- A message or story, complete or not

To reinforce IDEAS,
YOU COULD SAY...

- I know just what you mean!
- You're really using writing to communicate.
- I can really picture what you're telling me!
- No one else thought to write about Venus fly traps [or whatever] - how did you come up with such an original idea?
- I loved your topic/idea!! It made me think of...
- You really notice things - look at these details!!
- What is the most important thing this author had to tell us?
- What do you picture in your mind when you listen to this writing?
Organization

What you’re going for
♥ Sense of sequence
♥ Ability to organize and group
♥ Sense of beginning
♥ Sense of ending

Suggested Activities
1. When you read stories (or other literature or writings) aloud, pause after the beginning to ask, “Why do you think the writer started this way?” Alternative: BEFORE beginning, ask, “Where do you think the writer will begin?”

2. Predict: As you are reading, ask, “What do you think will happen next? What will this writer talk about next?”

3. Read a short story aloud and ask students to listen for the ending. Ask them to raise their hands when they think you have come to the end of the story. (Be careful to pick one without a too-obvious “lived happily ever after” sort of ending.)

4. Story boarding: Tell stories with pictures using two, three, four or more story board blocks to convey different events. Variation: Give pairs or groups of three a story board sequence in pictures. Have them put the pictures in order showing
what happens first, next, next, last. Ask them to talk about the clues they used in deciding on the “right” order. Could there be more than one order?

5. Grouping: Give students lots of opportunities to group things together that go together: colors, shapes, sizes, any category will do.

6. Ask for students’ help in organizing a paper of your own. Say you are writing a paper on black bears. Put two, three or four major categories on the board: How they look, What they eat, How they act around people, etc. Use any categories you think are appropriate. Then, one by one, list for students the bits of information you want to put in your paper. You should have a dozen or so “tidbits” of information. Ask them to tell you which category is most appropriate.

7. As you’re reading, omit the ending from a piece. Ask students to make up their own to either write or share orally.

8. For readers, list three or four events that occur in a story. Ask them to put these in order. Next step: Expand the list to include one or two events that really don’t belong. Ask students, “What could you leave out? Is there something that might go better in another story?”
ORGANIZATION

WHAT TO LOOK (& LISTEN) FOR........

• Pictures and/or text balanced on the page
• Coordination between text and picture (they go together)
• Multiple pictures that show sequence
• Grouping of details, ideas
• Text that shows sequence: First ... then... after... next... later... last
• Text that shows connections: because... so... when ... however
• Sense of ending: So finally... That's all ...At last... The end
• Cause and effect structure in text (or pictures series)
• Problem solving structures in text (or pictures series)
• Chronological structure in text (or pictures series)
• Surprises that work
• Sticking with one main topic or idea

To reinforce ORGANIZATION,

YOU COULD SAY...

• I can see how these ideas/pictures go together.
• You knew just how to begin (or end).
• This happened because this happened - that's a good way to organize ideas.
• You organized your story by time ...first this, then this...
• I wanted to know what would happen next!
• What a surprise ending!
• You solved a problem - that's a good way to organize ideas.
• [When reading aloud] This story has the title _______. What do you suppose it's about?
• So far this author has told us _______. What do you predict will happen next?
  How do you predict this will end?
• Let me read just the beginning of this writer's story/essay. Is this a good way for the writer to begin? Why?
• Can you retell this story/essay in a few sentences?
Voice

What you’re going for
♥ Feelings
♥ Enthusiasm for writing
♥ Individuality
♥ Passion

Suggested Activities
1. Read and discuss lots of literature with voice. Look everywhere. Pictures books are great (See Using Picture Books to Teach the Six Analytical Traits by Ruth Culham); but they’re not the only source. Also check the newspaper, magazines (especially ads, movie reviews, book reviews and editorials). Check food labels, brochures, junk mail, etc. Go for the strong and the weak, always asking, “Did you like this writing? Would you like to hear more? Why? Why not?” Join in these discussions yourself. Let it be known that you value and seek voice in writing. If you run across something you love in your own reading, bring it in to share – even if it’s difficult. Your love of good language and feeling is more important to convey than the meaning of the text.

2. Look for individuality in both pictures and print. Point it out. Praise students for their differences: “This is so unusual, so unlike anyone else’s!”

3. Play the “voice” game. Students can sit at their desks for this, but it works much better if they gather in a circle on the floor or outside on the lawn, where seating is random. Ask students to close their eyes as you roam through the group. Periodically, touch a student gently on the head or shoulder; that’s their signal to say “Hello out there” (or any phrase of your choice). Others try to guess who is speaking. After the game, talk about how you recognize different voices.

4. Ask students to complete a thought or share opinions on the same topic. For example, you might ask everyone, “The BEST thing (or WORST thing) about
school is …” Keep responses private. Share them later, individually and anonymously, to see if classmates can recognize one another’s responses.

5. As you share literature, ask students, “What kind of person is the writer? What do you picture? If you had lunch with this person, what would he/she be like?

6. Share two very different pieces of writing by different authors. Then, share a third piece by one of those authors – a piece that has the same sound or style as the first once by the same author. Ask students to identify the writer of the third piece. Ask them to explain how they knew which one it was.

7. Search for posters, postcards, greeting cards, etc. that convey voice through originality, unusual perspective, color, sensitivity, humor, or general “personality.” Ask students what they see in the art or photography that they like. Does it look like anyone else’s? Is that good? Why?

8. Use metaphor: Which FOODS have a lot of voice? Which COLORS have the most voice? Suppose you dressed yourself in CLOTHES with lots of voice; what might your outfit look like?

9. Take a simple piece of writing, such as a greeting card, and ask students for suggestions on revising it to add voice: e.g., “Thanks for the good time.” What could you say that would have a little more punch, pizzazz, personality?

10. Have students work with you to compose a simple original piece with lots of voice – preferably a “real” piece of writing to which you might expect a response. For example: A note of thanks to someone who visits the classroom, A business note written to a local business to express appreciation, or even a complaint. Be sure to share the reason behind the note first. Share the response too, if you get one.

WHAT TO LOOK (& LISTEN) FOR........

- Individuality
- Sparkle
- Personality
- Liveliness, playfulness
- Emotion
- The unusual
• Taking a chance by trying something new or different
• Recognizing that the writing/drawing is for self and audience
• Tailoring communication to an audience
• Response to VOICE in the writing/art of others

To reinforce VOICE,
YOU COULD SAY...
• Your feelings come through loud and clear here.
• I could tell this was you!
• This story/picture made me laugh/cry/feel what you must have felt.
• You seem to be writing to/for [specify your best guess on audience]. Is that right?
• I love the way you help your reader see and feel the things you are seeing or feeling when you write. There's a word for that - VOICE.
• Your writing rings with voice. It made me want to keep reading!
• Do you think the story we just read had VOICE?
• Which of these two pieces [share two samples orally] has more VOICE in your opinion? Why do you think that?
• If VOICE were a color, what would it be? If it were a food... If it were a sound... If it were a place...

Word Choice

What you're going for
♥ Awareness of language
♥ Awareness that there are different ways to say things
♥ Love of favorite words
Suggested Activities

1. Collect favorite words. Make lists. Decorate them on colored paper and post them or hang them from the ceilings. Make mobiles. Make word collages. Encourage labeling – but be creative. Put adjectives with the nouns: e.g., not just “wall,” but drab green wall” perhaps.

2. Retire *tired* or *dead* words. Put those words in a shoe box and bury them.

3. Brainstorm alternatives to the tired words in #2. Put them on word wheels: these are shaped like daisies, with the tired word at the center and creative options on petals rotating out from the center. Mount word wheels on walls or ceilings.

4. As you share literature, ask students to listen for a favorite word or two. Share with a partner or the whole class. Or write them in a journal (for writer-readers). Or, *you* write three or four or more on the board. Guess how and use expectancies to spell as you go for younger reader-writers.

5. Brainstorm alternatives. Suppose you are writing a note to a friend. It might begin like this: “I had a good time at your house.” Tell your students, “I’m tired of the word *good*. Help me out. What else could I say? What are some other ways to say this?” Do this often, so that looking for alternatives begins to feel natural.

6. Words in context: Encourage students to guess at meanings of words that are new. Brainstorm several alternatives before giving them the answer. Encourage guessing. Encourage thinking.

7. Get a word-a-day calendar for kids, and let them guess what today’s word might mean. Alternative: Play the word meaning game. Give the real definition to one child. Two other volunteers make up their own definitions for the new word. All three share their definitions orally with the class; students try to guess which one is accurate. This only takes about 5 minutes per word, so you can play two or three rounds. Great for vocabulary and imagination. (Yes, they DO remember the correct definition!)

8. Let students see you using word meaning resources – such as a good dictionary or thesaurus. Allow one student to choose a word for which they would like to hear synonyms. Look it up and share the synonyms.

9. Talk about *appropriate* language. Write two very different versions of one note - say a complaint about school lunches you might write to the principal of your
school and another note on the same topic you might write to a friend in another city. See if students can tell from the language you use which note goes where. Ask them to explain how they know. Were there particular words or phrases that gave it away?

**WORD CHOICE**

**WHAT TO LOOK (& LISTEN) FOR.........**

- Playing with letter forms, letters, letter strings, first words, labels, etc.
- Stretching to use new words
- Curiosity about words
- Verbs, verbs, verbs (energy words)
- Precise words
- Unusual use or words or phrases (in speaking or writing or labeling)
- Striking words or phrases
- Imitation of words or phrases heard in literature (or any reading you share in class)
To reinforce **WORD CHOICE**, YOU COULD SAY...

- I see you're making a connection between letters and words.
- This word/phrase goes well with this picture.
- I love this word - how did you think of it?
- What was your favorite word in the story we just read?
- What do you think the word _____ means? Make a guess.
- When you said *streaked*, I could really picture the whole thing...
- I love this word - *flourishing* - how did you think of it?
- This picture makes me think of the word [...???]
- _____ was just the right word to describe/explain_____

**Sentence Fluency**

What you're going for

♥ An ear for language
♥ A love of rhythm
♥ Sentence sense

**Suggested Activities**

1. Share rhythmic language that’s fun to read aloud. Poetry is an excellent choice, but be sure the rhymes are creative and the language natural. Some poems work so hard at rhyming that much of the natural flow is lost. Rehearse. Read it aloud before you share it with students, so it will feel natural. Remember that some
prose pieces have wonderful rhythm, too. Hearing good language read aloud builds fluency even in young writers who are themselves not yet ready to begin writing sentences.

2. Share two versions of writing with the same content but a very different sound. Write one with short, choppy sentences: we went to the beach. It was sunny. It was warm. We had fun. We flew kites. We ate snacks. VERSUS: We spent a warm, sunny day at the beach eating snacks and flying kites. Ask students which they prefer and why. You may need to share a number of examples before students begin to hear the differences. Don’t give up. Keep sharing. Keep asking.

3. Play the sentence building game; you can do this on the board or just orally. Have students choose a topic: money, baseball, school, cats, etc. Then, you come up with sentence beginnings, and ask them to finish each sentence. Give them only one sentence beginning at a time. The only rule is you have to make a complete sentence. For instance, you might come up with the beginning “In the morning…” When students add their endings, the sentence might turn into “in the morning OUR CAT IS HUNGRY.” The purpose of the game is to help students become aware that sentences can begin in many ways. So use your imagination to come up with lots of variety. Use six or seven beginnings or more each time you play. Variation: Let them give YOU the beginnings, and you come up with the answers by completing the sentences.

4. Sentences and fragments: Play this like a spelling bee, with teams lined up. One side plays first, then the other. To remain standing, students must give the right answer. You give the questions: Ask each student, “Is this a sentence or fragment?” Then give an example: My cousin Mary, Come inside, Where is your umbrella? The ugly old baboon, etc. The idea is for students to develop an ear for sentences and to learn to hear the difference between sentences and fragments. Make the examples very easy at first, then gradually harder as students get better at the game. The team with the most people left standing at the end wins.
Sentence Fluency

WHAT TO LOOK (& LISTEN) FOR........

- Experimenting with word strings to form sentences
- Rudimentary sentences - subject and verb
- Use of more complex sentences
- Multiple sentences with different beginnings, varied lengths
- Rhythm, cadence in oral or written language
• Long and short sentences
• Love of rhythmic language (e.g., poetry)

To reinforce Sentence Fluency,
YOU COULD SAY...
• I read this aloud and I loved the sound of it!
• You seem to know what a sentence is - good for you!
• You have a long sentence, then a short one - I like that.
• Your sentences begin in different ways - that's great!
• I like this phrase - "After a while" - it helps me understand when things happened.
• Listen to this piece [read a fluent piece aloud]. Now, listen to this one [read the same one chopped into 3- or 4-word sentences that all begin the same way]. Do you hear a difference? Which one do you like?
• Here's one of my favorite pieces [choose one to read aloud]. I think it has rhythm. See if you hear it, too.
• This picture makes me think of the word [...??]

Conventions

What you're going for
♥ Awareness of writing conventions
♥ Willingness to experiment
♥ Patience to take a second look

Suggested Activities
1. Set aside a real editing time – not on every piece you work on, but occasionally. Assign editing tasks that are appropriate for age and ability. A good first editing activity is to check for your name on your paper. It is there? Be sure you refer to this as editing, and reward students for having the patience to go back and check for this detail. Gradually, add other simple things as appropriate: e.g., a title on the paper or picture, date on the piece.

2. Ask students to help you edit your work, looking for the same things you ask them to look for. Put a piece on the overhead, for instance, that has no title. Let them
tell you what’s missing – then let them help you brainstorm a good title! Keep the editing tasks simple, short, and manageable.

3. Punctuation scavenger hunt: Print out a short paragraph of text and make enough copies so you can give one to every two students. Make sure the copy is LARGE and easy to read, with big spaces between words and big spaces vertically, too. Also, make sure there are different punctuation marks used. Then, identify a mark (e.g., *Look for a period*) and see which team can find an example first. Let the first finders help the others locate the mark you’re looking for. Then, ask if anyone knows why it is there. Even non-readers and beginning readers can play this game if you keep it simple enough. They can begin to identify periods and questions marks. Variation: See if students can identify key words: e.g., *Who can find the word DOG in your paragraph? Put your finger on it when you find it.* Gradually, add more skills, more difficult questions: e.g., *Who can find the longest sentence? Who can find a semicolon? Who can find quotation marks? Who can find a name of a person?* You decide what questions are appropriate. Variation: Let students who identify an item correctly ask the next question.

4. When students begin to generate their own conventional text (multiple words, beginning sentences, punctuated phrases and sentences), ask WHY: Why did you put a period here? Why did you put a capital letter here? This helps reinforce the thinking behind the conventions.

5. Reward what is done correctly and DO NOT WORRY YET ABOUT “ERRORS,” which at this age are ESSENTIAL for experimentation.

6. Celebrate discoveries without worrying overmuch about correctness: e.g., “Robert – I see you’ve discovered periods! You have lots of them in your writing now.”

7. Ask, “How can I show . . . ?” You want to write a question, let’s say:

   **What time is it**

   Say to students, “How can I show that this is a question? How will my reader know?” Let students “problem solve” with you to find the right punctuation mark for the situation:

   **What time is it?**

8. Group spelling: Gather students in a group. Let four or five students choose any word they’d like to spell. Ask students to hear the word in their heads first, then
try to picture it as you pronounce it slowly and carefully. Then, work together sounding it out as you write it on the board. Take SWAMP, for instance. You might say, “O.K., what should you hear first? How do you think it starts? S-S-S-That’s an S—let’s put that on the board . . . What sound do you hear next? . . . and so on. Students have the fun of playing with words, but they’re learning words sounds – on words of their choosing.

9. As students begin to write, encourage guess–and–go temporary spelling and punctuating, but explain WHY. This is important. Students like many parents – may be reluctant to accept this way of doing things if they think it will lead to poor work, mistakes and low grades. Help them understand that worrying over spelling as you go may block the flow of ideas and feelings. Writing without ideas and feeling is dull and bland. No one wants to read it. You can fix the spelling later, but you often CANNOT recall the very interesting thing you were going to say about Aunt Harriet’s terrible cooking. Use your own work as an example: Share the story of the time you got up from your poem to look up a word in the dictionary and then came back only to discover you couldn’t remember what you wanted to say.

10. EXPLAIN when and why editing is important. You may wish to distinguish between “book language” and “first draft language.” Does everything need to be in “book language”? How about the grocery list? A phone message? A note to a buddy? A note to your mom? A poem? A birthday greeting? A report on eagles? A memo written by someone in the school? A letter your mom writes to the school principal? A letter you write to the President? How do you decide when correctness really COUNTS? Talking this through makes these decisions more comfortable. Don’t be surprised to discover you need to talk this over quite a lot.

11. Developing a proofreader’s eye: Once students are beginning to write conventional text, give them editing practice on TEXT THAT IS NOT THEIR OWN. Keep it very short and do not include many mistakes at first. As the scavenger hunt, make it a searching game – this time with students looking for what’s wrong. A beginning editor’s test might look like this:

The cat at two mise

There are three mistakes here. Some students may find all three. Some may find just the missing period – or just the missing “e” for “ate.” That’s great – it’s a beginning. Do not grade these exercises. Just play the game regularly, always asking, “How many errors are in this text? What are they?” Let students work
with partners. Give them plenty of time. Keep the task simple. Teach them proofreader’s marks so that the final copy eventually looks like this:

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The cat ate two mice
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12. Give students a chance to look for mistakes in *real printed text* – not just text you create for editing practice. If you discover a mistake in newspaper headline, for instance, put it on an overhead and see if they can spot it too.


14. Let students *be their own editors*. This is vital. Edit for students only when

   a) the piece is going to be formally published somewhere

   b) the student writer has gone as far with the editing as skills will permit

   c) the writer approves/requests/sanctions your intervention.
Conventions

WHAT TO LOOK (& LISTEN) FOR........

• Left to right orientation on the page
• Up to down orientation on the page
• Letters facing appropriate directions
• Distinction between upper and lower case letters
• Spaces between words
• Spaces between lines
• Name on the page
• Use of title
• Use of labels
• Use of indentation to show a new paragraph
• Dots over I's
• Cross T's
• Exploration with punctuation, whether conventionally placed or not
• Rudimentary spelling, showing a connection of sounds to words
• Readable spelling (can be interpreted without the writer's help)

To reinforce Conventions,

When I had a bad day, I went to bed and when I got dressed I put my shirt on backward.
YOU COULD SAY...

- You remembered to write your name at the top - thanks!
- I love it when you put a title on your paper - it gives me a good clue about your message/story!
- You remembered to put spaces between your words - boy, that helps!
- I could sound out most of these words. I read it without any help.
- How did you know to put a comma/period/question mark/capital here?
- I notice you start on this side (left) and write this way (right): you’re really paying attention to how books are written.
- I see you’ve discovered ellipses [or whatever is new]. Great! When you see that mark, what does it mean to you?

- When you work to make your spelling readable, it really helps your reader a lot. Super!

COPY EDITOR’S SYMBOLS

✏ PRIMARY & EARLY ELEMENTARY
Take it out. I'm a good singer.
Put it in. I'm a singer.
Add a period. I'm a good singer.
Make this letter a capital. i'm a good singer.