

## SIX TRAITS OF GOOD WRITING

(adapted from the [Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory](#))

<b>I. IDEAS AND CONTENT</b> <i>This paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme.</i>	<b>5</b> <b>PROFICIENT SOPHOMORE WRITER</b> (Demonstrates mastery of Freshman Composition-level writing AND readiness for Associates' Degree-level professional writing in the field and/or upper-level writing in a Baccalaureate program)	<b>4</b> <b>COMPETENT FRESHMAN WRITER</b> (Demonstrates competency of Freshman Composition-level writing)	<b>3</b> <b>COLLEGE-READY WRITER</b> (Demonstrates readiness for Freshman Comp I)	<b>2</b> <b>DEVELOPING WRITER</b> (Demonstrates partial readiness for Freshman Comp I)	<b>1</b> <b>BEGINNING WRITER</b> Does not demonstrate readiness for entering Freshman college writing
<b>A.</b> The topic is <b>narrow</b> and <b>manageable</b> .					
<b>B.</b> Has a <b>clear thesis</b> – stated or implied					
<b>C.</b> <b>Relevant, telling, quality details</b> give the reader important information that goes <b>beyond the obvious</b> or predictable.					
<b>D.</b> Reasonably <b>accurate details</b> are present to support the main ideas.					
<b>E.</b> The writer seems to be writing from <b>knowledge</b> or <b>experience</b> ; the ideas are <b>fresh</b> and <b>original</b> .					
<b>F.</b> The reader's questions are <b>anticipated and answered</b> .					
<b>G. Insight</b> —an understanding of life and a knack for picking out what is significant—is an indicator of high level performance, though not required.					
<b>H.</b> Addresses the assignment.					

<b>II. ORGANIZATION</b> <i>The organization enhances and showcases the central idea or theme. The order, structure, or presentation of information is compelling and moves the reader through the text.</i>	<b>5</b> <b>PROFICIENT</b> <b>SOPHOMORE</b> <b>WRITER</b>	<b>4</b> <b>COMPETENT</b> <b>FRESHMAN</b> <b>WRITER</b>	<b>3</b> <b>COLLEGE-</b> <b>READY</b> <b>WRITER</b>	<b>2</b> <b>DEVELOP-</b> <b>ING</b> <b>WRITER</b>	<b>1</b> <b>BEGINNING</b> <b>WRITER</b>
<b>A.</b> An <b>inviting introduction</b> draws the reader in; a <b>satisfying conclusion</b> leaves the reader with a sense of closure and resolution.					
<b>B.</b> <b>Thoughtful transitions</b> clearly show how ideas connect.					
<b>C.</b> Details seem to fit where they're placed; <b>sequencing is logical</b> and <b>effective</b> .					
<b>D.</b> <b>Pacing is well controlled</b> ; the writer knows when to slow down and elaborate, and when to pick up the pace and move on.					
<b>E.</b> The <b>title</b> , if desired, is <b>original</b> and captures the central theme of the piece.					
<b>F.</b> Organization <b>flows so smoothly</b> the reader hardly thinks about it; the choice of structure matches the <b>purpose</b> and <b>audience</b> .					

<b>III. VOICE</b> <i>The writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that is individual, compelling and engaging. The writer crafts the writing with an awareness and respect for the audience and the purpose for writing.</i>	<b>5</b> <b>PROFICIENT SOPHOMORE WRITER</b>	<b>4</b> <b>COMPETENT FRESHMAN WRITER</b>	<b>3</b> <b>COLLEGE-READY WRITER</b>	<b>2</b> <b>DEVELOPING WRITER</b>	<b>1</b> <b>BEGINNING WRITER</b>
<b>A.</b> The tone of the writing <b>adds interest</b> to the message and is <b>appropriate</b> for the purpose, the audience and the assignment.					
<b>B.</b> The reader feels a <b>strong interaction</b> with the writer, sensing the <b>person behind the words</b> .					
<b>C.</b> The writer <b>takes a risk</b> by revealing who he or she is consistently throughout the piece.					
<b>D.</b> <b>Expository or persuasive</b> writing reflects a <b>strong commitment</b> to the topic by showing <b>why</b> the <b>reader needs to know this</b> and why he or she should care.					
<b>E.</b> <b>Narrative</b> writing is <b>honest, personal, and engaging</b> and makes you <b>think about, and react to</b> , the author's ideas and point of view.					

<b>IV. WORD CHOICE</b> <i>Words convey the intended message in a precise, interesting, and natural way. The words are powerful and engaging.</i>	<b>5</b> <b>PROFICIENT</b> <b>SOPHOMORE</b> <b>WRITER</b>	<b>4</b> <b>COMPETENT</b> <b>FRESHMAN</b> <b>WRITER</b>	<b>3</b> <b>COLLEGE-</b> <b>READY</b> <b>WRITER</b>	<b>2</b> <b>DEVELOP-</b> <b>ING</b> <b>WRITER</b>	<b>1</b> <b>BEGINNING</b> <b>WRITER</b>
<b>A.</b> Words are <b>specific</b> and <b>accurate</b> . It is easy to understand just what the writer means.					
<b>B.</b> <b>Striking words and phrases</b> often catch the reader's eye and linger in the reader's mind.					
<b>C.</b> Language and phrasing is <b>natural, effective,</b> and <b>appropriate</b> for the audience.					
<b>D.</b> <b>Lively verbs</b> add energy while <b>specific nouns</b> and <b>modifiers</b> add depth.					
<b>E.</b> Choices in language <b>enhance</b> the <b>meaning</b> and <b>clarify</b> understanding.					
<b>F.</b> <b>Precision</b> is obvious. The writer has taken care to put just the right word or phrase in just the right spot.					

<b>V. SENTENCE FLUENCY</b> <i>The writing has an easy flow, rhythm, and cadence. Sentences are well built, with strong and varied structure that invites expressive oral reading.</i>	<b>5</b> <b>PROFICIENT</b> <b>SOPHOMORE</b> <b>WRITER</b>	<b>4</b> <b>COMPETENT</b> <b>FRESHMAN</b> <b>WRITER</b>	<b>3</b> <b>COLLEGE-</b> <b>READY</b> <b>WRITER</b>	<b>2</b> <b>DEVELOP-</b> <b>ING</b> <b>WRITER</b>	<b>1</b> <b>BEGINNING</b> <b>WRITER</b>
<b>A.</b> Sentences are constructed in a way that underscores and enhances the <b>meaning</b> .					
<b>B.</b> Sentences <b>vary in length as well as structure</b> . Fragments, if used, add style. Dialogue, if present, sounds natural.					
<b>C.</b> <b>Purposeful</b> and <b>varied sentence beginnings</b> add variety and energy.					
<b>D.</b> The use of <b>creative and appropriate connectives</b> between sentences and thoughts shows how each relates to, and builds upon, the one before it.					
<b>E.</b> The writing has <b>cadence</b> ; the writer has thought about the sound of the words as well as the meaning. The first time you read it aloud is a breeze.					

<b>VI. CONVENTIONS</b> <i>The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, usage, paragraphing) and uses conventions effectively to enhance readability. Errors tend to be so few that just minor touch-ups would get this piece ready to publish.</i>	<b>5</b> <b>PROFICIENT</b> <b>SOPHOMORE</b> <b>WRITER</b>	<b>4</b> <b>COMPETENT</b> <b>FRESHMAN</b> <b>WRITER</b>	<b>3</b> <b>COLLEGE-</b> <b>READY</b> <b>WRITER</b>	<b>2</b> <b>DEVELOP-</b> <b>ING</b> <b>WRITER</b>	<b>1</b> <b>BEGINNING</b> <b>WRITER</b>
<b>A. Spelling is generally correct</b> , even on more difficult words.					
<b>B. The punctuation is accurate</b> , even creative, and guides the reader through the text.					
<b>C. A thorough understanding and consistent application of capitalization skills</b> are present.					
<b>D. Grammar and usage are correct</b> and contribute to clarity and style.					
<b>E. Paragraphing tends to be sound</b> and reinforces the organizational structure.					
<b>F. The writer may manipulate conventions</b> for stylistic effect—and it works! The piece is very close to being <b>ready to publish</b> .					
<b>G. The writing is sufficiently complex</b> to allow the writer to show skill in using a <b>wide range of conventions</b> .					