

SIX TRAITS OF GOOD WRITING

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

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

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

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

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

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

VI. CONVENTIONS <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>	5 PROFICIENT SOPHOMORE WRITER	4 COMPETENT FRESHMAN WRITER	3 COLLEGE- READY WRITER	2 DEVELOP- ING WRITER	1 BEGINNING WRITER
A. Spelling is generally correct , even on more difficult words.					
B. The punctuation is accurate , even creative, and guides the reader through the text.					
C. A thorough understanding and consistent application of capitalization skills are present.					
D. Grammar and usage are correct and contribute to clarity and style.					
E. Paragraphing tends to be sound and reinforces the organizational structure.					
F. The writer may manipulate conventions for stylistic effect—and it works! The piece is very close to being ready to publish .					
G. The writing is sufficiently complex to allow the writer to show skill in using a wide range of conventions .					