

STUDENT LANGUAGE SCORING GUIDE: GRADE 7 DETAILED VERSION

Ideas and Content

Explanation of terms:

- *Supporting details: explanations, examples, reasons, facts, descriptions, little stories, logical points, etc.
- *Insights: understandings about what you have learned about yourself, about other people, about life, etc., or what other people have learned
- *Connections: referring to how your ideas or details are connected to other experiences, people, books, events, things that are happening in the world, etc.

6

The writing is very clear, focused, and interesting. The paper is usually longer, and it holds the reader's attention all the way through. Many carefully chosen details provide strong support.

- Purpose and main ideas: stand out; clear; focused
- *Supporting details: strong; rich; closely related to main ideas; specific; explained; interesting; carefully chosen for audience and purpose; there are usually many of them
- Overall result: an in-depth, balanced explanation of the topic
- *Insights and connections: the writer makes connections and shares insights
- Outside resources, if used: provide strong, accurate, believable ideas and details

5

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- *Insights and connections: the writer makes connections and shares insights
- Outside resources, if used: provide strong, accurate, believable ideas and details

4

The writing is clear and focused. It is long enough to show that the writer knows how to present ideas and explain them with enough specific details.

- Purpose and main ideas: clear; easy to understand; focused
- *Supporting details: specific; related to the main ideas (on the topic); focused; explained; show some awareness of audience and purpose; there are enough of them; (once in a while, a detail may be somewhat out of balance, explained either too much or too little)
- Overall result: topic is explained enough
- *Insights and connections: may be present
- Outside resources, if used: provide ideas and details that are accurate and specific

3

Main ideas are easy to understand, but they may be too general. There may not be enough specific details, or they may have some problems.

- Purpose and main ideas: easy to understand; may be too general (not specific enough) or too simplistic; may sound too much like another story, movie, etc.
- *Supporting details: too general (not specific enough); or some there, but not enough of them; or a little off the topic (such as in some “bed-to-bed” stories); or a list of details not explained (such as a list of events or points); or may sound too much like another story, movie, etc.
- Outside resources, if used: provide ideas and details based on stereotypes or questionable sources of information

2

Purpose and main ideas are not quite clear, or there may be problems with the supporting details.

- Purpose and main ideas: not quite clear; the reader may have to guess at what the main ideas are
- Supporting details: may be a few, but not enough; or many details that are off the topic; or many details that are repeated over and over

1

The reader cannot understand the purpose and main ideas, or the paper may be much too short to show that the writer can present and develop an idea.

- Purpose and main ideas: not clear or very limited
- Supporting details: may not be enough of them, or the reader may not be able to understand them

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Organization

Explanation of terms:

- *Transitions: words, groups of words, or sentences that allow the reader to follow along from one idea, detail, or paragraph to the next one (for example: and, but, so, because, however, as a result, for example, since, in fact, following, during, meanwhile, etc.)

6

Organization is strong. It fits the topic and strengthens ideas and details in a paper that is usually longer.

- Overall: organization moves the reader through the writing easily; the order of ideas and details is very effective; organization may be creative
- Beginning: strong, inviting
- Ending: strong, satisfying
- *Transitions: smooth and effective (between paragraphs, sentences, ideas)
- Paragraph breaks: are there in places that work well

5

Organization fits the topic and helps strengthen ideas and details in a paper that is usually longer.

- Overall: organization moves the reader through the writing; the order of ideas and details is effective
- Beginning: inviting; the reader wants to read on
- Ending: satisfying
- Placement of details: details belong where they are
- *Transitions: smooth and effective (between paragraphs, sentences, ideas)
- Paragraph breaks: are there in places that work well

4

Organization is clear in a paper long enough to show that the writer can organize ideas and details.

- Overall: the paper is easy to follow; ideas and details are placed in an order that makes sense
- Beginning: enough to make up about a short paragraph
- Ending: enough to make up about a short paragraph
- Placement of details: details make sense where they are placed
- *Transitions: are there; help the reader to follow the writing from one part to another
- Paragraph breaks: are there in places that help the reader to follow the writing
- Writing may follow a formula (such as the “five-paragraph essay”)

3

The writer has tried to organize the paper. However, the parts are not long enough, or there are some problems.

- Overall: organization helps the reader to follow the writing, but some parts may be a little unclear; or the organizational parts may not be long enough;
- Beginning: there, but may not be long enough; or it may be too obvious (“My topic is...” or “I will present all the reasons for...”)
- Ending: there, but may not be long enough; or too obvious (“These are all the reasons that...”)
- Placement of details: some details may seem out of place or out of order
- *Transitions: work sometimes; may be the same ones used too often (**and, so, but, then**); or details are numbered
- Paragraph breaks: some breaks may be there; may not be in places that make the best sense

2

The paper does not have clear organization. It is so hard to follow that the reader has to re-read major parts of it. The paper may just be too short to show that the writer knows how to organize ideas and details.

- Overall: some attempts to organize; the reader can see these efforts once in a while but is often confused
- Beginning: very short or not there
- Ending: very short or not there
- Placement of details: many details may be placed where they do not make sense; the order confuses the reader
- *Transitions: may be missing or overused (**and, so, but, then**)
- Paragraph breaks: may be missing

1

The writing is extremely difficult to follow. The reader is confused even after re-reading.

- Overall: the order of ideas and details does not work; problems with organization make it difficult for the reader to understand even the main points
- Beginning: may be missing
- Ending: may be missing
- Placement of details: most details may be placed where they do not make sense; the order confuses the reader
- *Transitions: may be missing
- Paragraph breaks: may be missing

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Voice:

*Consider the following when thinking about an appropriate voice:

- Purpose (or mode): to tell a personal story, to explain something, to convince someone, to make up a fictional story
- Topic (What is the writer writing about?)
- Audience (Who is the intended reader?)

After considering the above, is it appropriate for the writer's voice to be personal, conversational, and casual, or should the writer's voice be more objective, more formal, more academic? (For example, a narrative should usually have a strong personal voice. However, an expository paper may require research using outside resources and a more objective or academic voice.) One indicator of Voice is always appropriate: the writer's commitment to the topic.

6

The writer has chosen a voice appropriate for the topic, purpose, and audience.

- Commitment to topic: the writer shows deep commitment to topic and seems very interested in it
- *Appropriateness of voice, considering topic, audience, and purpose: the writer has made appropriate choices all the way through the paper to be more personal or more objective; the writer seems very aware of audience; the reader may sense the writer behind the words and feel involved with the writing
- Other indications of voice: it seems that the topic has come to life; when appropriate, the writing may show sincerity, originality, liveliness, honesty, strong opinions or beliefs, excitement, humor, suspense, etc.

5

The writer has chosen a voice appropriate for the topic, purpose, and audience.

- Commitment to topic: the writer shows commitment to the topic and seems very interested in it
- *Appropriateness of voice, considering topic, audience, and purpose: the writer is appropriately personal or appropriately more objective; the writer seems very aware of audience; the reader may sense the writer behind the words and feel involved with the writing
- Other indications of voice: it seems that the topic has come to life; when appropriate, the writing may show sincerity, originality, liveliness, honesty, strong opinions or beliefs, excitement, humor, suspense, etc.

4

A voice is present. The writing is long enough to show fairly consistent use of an appropriate voice.

- Commitment to topic: the writer seems committed to the topic and interested in it
- *Appropriateness of voice, considering audience and purpose: most of the time, the writer seems personal enough or objective enough; the writer seems aware of the reader much of the time; the reader may sense the writer behind the words at times
- Other indications of voice: when appropriate, the writing may be sincere, lively, expressive, engaging, or funny

3

A sense of voice comes through at times, but it may not seem a good choice much of the time. In some papers, the writing may not be long enough to show a consistent voice.

- Commitment to topic: inconsistent; the writer seems somewhat committed to the topic and somewhat interested in it
- *Appropriateness of voice, considering audience and purpose: some problems using a more objective voice when necessary; some problems maintaining a personal voice when appropriate
- Length: a voice may be present, but the writing may not be long enough to show the ability to maintain an appropriate voice

2

There is little sense of the writer's involvement or commitment.

- Commitment to topic: little sense of commitment; the writer does not seem very interested in the topic or involved with the reader
- *Appropriateness of voice, considering audience and purpose: little audience awareness; little sense of "writing to be read"; the writing may seem stiff or mechanical; little hint of the writer behind the words

1

The writing does not seem to have a sense of involvement or commitment.

- Commitment to topic: no feeling of the writer's commitment, involvement, or interest in the topic
- *Appropriateness of voice, considering audience and purpose: no audience awareness; the writing is flat and lifeless; there is no hint of the writer behind the words

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Word Choice

Explanation of terms:

- *Descriptive language: words or phrases that create images in the mind the reader, often sensory images (sight, sound, touch, taste, smell)
- *Figurative language: words and phrases that are not meant to be taken literally (such as similes and metaphors)
- *Technical language: words that are specific to a certain career or special interest (for example, words related to health care, computers, auto mechanics, skateboarding, rock climbing, cooking, etc.)

6

Words communicate in a very interesting and natural way appropriate for audience and purpose.

- Kinds of words: strong, accurate, specific, fresh; powerful words energize the writing; ordinary words may be used in an unusual way
- Variety: rich, broad range of words; may be striking, but natural, effective, and not overdone
- Placement: words carefully placed to have an impact
- Slang, if used: seems to be used on purpose and works well (as it might in dialogue)
- *Descriptive or *figurative language: words may create clear images in the mind of the reader; figurative language may be used

5

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4

The words work. They get the message across in writing that is long enough, and they are appropriate for audience and purpose.

- Kinds of words: words that work; they communicate meaning; (at this score point, words do not energize the writing)
- Variety: variety of words used; writing is long enough to see many different words
- Slang, if used: does not seem to be used on purpose (as it might in dialogue)
- *Descriptive or *figurative language: may seem overdone once in a while
- *Technical language: may be overused once in a while
- Clichés: avoids overused sayings or expressions most of the time

3

Words lack accuracy and variety, or may not be the best choice at times for audience and purpose. The writing may not be long enough to show solid skill with word choice.

- Kinds of words: general, not specific; words work at times but may not always be quite the right word
- Variety: not much variety; some words may be repeated too often; in some papers, words may work fine, but the writing may not be long enough to see enough variety
- Misused words: wrong words may occur once in a while
- Slang, if used: does not seem to be used on purpose; does not work well
- *Descriptive language: may seem very much overdone
- *Technical language: may be overused much too often
- Clichés: may be too many overused sayings or expressions

2

Words are repeated much too often and/or are misused. They make it difficult for the reader to understand the writer's meaning.

- Kinds of words: inaccurate, colorless, flat
- Variety: little variety; words are repeated over and over again
- Misused words: wrong words may occur so often that the reader has some problems understanding the meaning of the writing

1

The writing has so many misuses of words that the reader cannot understand the meaning. Word choices are extremely limited.

- Kinds of words: general, vague words that do not communicate meaning
- Variety: extremely limited range of words
- Misused words: words that do not make sense; the wrong words may be used

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Sentence Fluency

Consider the following when thinking about Sentence Fluency:

- Read the writing out loud, at least in your head, to see how easily it flows.
- When evaluating a paper for Sentence Fluency, read through errors in conventions such as punctuation; those errors will be taken into consideration when evaluating the trait of Conventions. (For example, if two complete sentences are separated only by a comma—called a “comma splice”—that would be a serious error in Conventions. In Sentence Fluency, when you are looking at the underlying structures of the writing, you would naturally pause or stop at the comma, and this comma splice might not be a problem at all if the two sentences sound fluent and natural.)

6

The writing has an effective flow and rhythm. Sentence structures show a high level of writing skill.

- Overall: a natural, fluent sound; reading aloud is very easy and enjoyable; the sentences glide along, with one sentence flowing smoothly into the next; extensive variety in sentences make the writing more interesting
- Sentence beginnings: sentences begin in many different ways
- Sentence lengths: some short, some medium, some long
- Sentence patterns/structures: strong control; structures draw attention to key ideas and relationships among ideas; create combinations of power and grace
- Dialogue, if used: sounds natural

5

The writing has an easy flow and rhythm. Sentences are carefully crafted.

- Overall: a natural, fluent sound; reading aloud is easy and enjoyable; the sentences glide along, with one sentence flowing into the next; much variety in sentences makes the writing more interesting
- Sentence beginnings: sentences begin in many different ways
- Sentence lengths: some short, some medium, some long
- Sentence patterns/structures: good control; reflect the meaning and add to it (for example, short sentences may be used at times of excitement, suspense, or danger)
- Dialogue, if used: sounds natural

4

The writing is easy to read out loud. It flows and is long enough to show variety in sentence beginnings, lengths, and patterns.

- Overall: a natural sound; the reader can read through the paper easily; sentences have variety
- Sentence beginnings: most sentences begin in different ways
- Sentence lengths: some sentences are shorter; some are longer
- Sentence patterns/structures: a variety of patterns; simple sentences read smoothly; more complex sentences may be less smooth
- Dialogue: sounds natural for the most part

3

Parts of the writing are easy to read, but the reader may have to slow down or re-read in places because of the way sentences have been formed. In some papers, the writing may be smooth but does not contain enough sentences to show solid 7th Grade skills.

- Overall: some parts have a natural sound but others do not; the reader may have to slow down in places; or the writing may be smooth but not long enough to show variety and control
- Sentence beginnings: some beginnings may be the same, although some are different
- Sentence lengths: many may be about the same
- Sentence patterns/structures: simple sentences read smoothly; more complex sentences are awkward, with parts that are more difficult to read through
- Dialogue: may not sound natural

2

Most of the writing is difficult to read out loud. Difficult parts often force the reader to slow down or re-read because of the way sentences have been formed.

- Overall: most is difficult to read out loud; it does not sound natural; may be little variety in sentences
- Sentence beginnings: many are the same
- Sentence lengths: many or most are the same
- Sentence patterns/structures: many are the same, usually short and choppy **or** long and rambling

1

The writing is very difficult to read out loud. The reader often has to slow down or re-read because of the way sentences have been formed.

- Overall: extremely difficult to read out loud; it does not sound natural
- Sentence beginnings and lengths: most are the same
- Sentence patterns/structures: usually long and rambling (may be short and choppy)
- Order and placement of words: may be mixed up and confusing; words may be out of order

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Conventions

Explanation of terms:

- *Conventions: the rules that apply to written English
- *Run-ons: complete sentences with no punctuation between them; one sentence runs right into another (incorrect)
- *Comma splices: complete sentences separated by only a comma (incorrect)
- *Fragment: part of a sentence; an incomplete sentence (usually incorrect; can be used on purpose for effect once in a while)
- *Verb tense: for example, past tense, present tense (the time an event happened); should be consistent

6

The writing shows very strong control of *conventions in a paper that is usually longer and more complex.

- Punctuation that ends complete sentences: sentences end where they should with the correct punctuation mark; no *run-ons, *comma splices, or *fragments
- Punctuation within sentences: correct
- Spelling: correct, even of more difficult words
- Capitalization: correct
- Grammar: correct
- Errors: few and minor
- Variety: wide range in a longer and more complex paper (for example, the correct use of semi-colons, colons, parentheses, dialogue, many uses of commas)

5

The writing shows strong control of *conventions in a paper that is usually longer and more complex.

- Punctuation that ends complete sentences: sentences end where they should with the correct punctuation mark; no *run-ons, *comma splices, or *fragments
- Punctuation within sentences: correct
- Spelling: correct, even of more difficult words
- Capitalization: correct
- Grammar: correct
- Errors: some, but minor
- Variety: wide range of conventions in a longer and more complex paper (for example, correct use of semi-colons, colons, parentheses, dialogue, many uses of commas)

4

The writing shows control of *conventions in a paper that is long enough.

- Punctuation that ends complete sentences: sentences end where they should with the correct punctuation mark; few if any *run-ons, *comma splices, or *fragments
- Punctuation within sentences: apostrophes correct; may be some comma errors; may be other minor errors
- Dialogue, if used: correctly punctuated
- Spelling: usually correct, especially of common words
- Capitalization: correct; minor errors
- Grammar: *verb tense is correct most of the time; subjects and verbs go together most of the time; some other errors, but not severe
- Errors: some, but major errors do not occur often
- Variety: wide range of conventions not necessary, but the writing must be long enough and just complex enough to show solid 7th Grade skills

3

The writing shows limited control of *conventions. In some papers, conventions may be correct, but there is not enough writing to show control.

- Punctuation that ends complete sentences: most sentences end where they should with the correct punctuation mark; may be some *run-ons, *comma splices, or *fragments
- Punctuation within sentences: frequent errors (for example, some uses of commas, apostrophes)
- Dialogue, if used: may contain some errors
- Spelling: common words are sometimes incorrect
- Capitalization: may be some errors
- Grammar: may be some errors in *verb tense and in subjects/verbs going together; may be other errors
- Errors: more errors; some are basic, but they do not prevent the reader from understanding the meaning
- Variety: conventions may be correct, but writing may not be long enough or may be too simple to show solid 7th Grade skills

2

The writing shows little control of *conventions. Many major errors make reading difficult.

- Punctuation that ends complete sentences: most sentences do not end where they should with the correct punctuation mark; many *run-ons, *comma splices, *fragments
- Punctuation within sentences: frequent errors
- Spelling: common words may often be misspelled
- Capitalization: inconsistent or often incorrect
- Grammar: major errors
- Errors: many major errors; they often make it difficult to read and to understand the meaning

1

The writing shows very limited skill in using *conventions. There are so many major errors that the reader has to re-read and has a hard time understanding the meaning.

- Punctuation that ends complete sentences: left out, incorrect, or random; most sentences do not end where they should with the correct punctuation mark
- Spelling: many errors make reading difficult
- Capitalization: may seem random
- Grammar: major errors
- Errors: extensive major errors—so many that the reader has a hard time understanding the meaning and has to re-read often