

6+1 Trait® Writing Rubrics

Grades K-2



KEY QUESTION

Does the writing engage the reader with fresh information or perspective on a focused topic?

| | Not proficient | | | Proficient | | |
|-------------------------------|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| | 1 Beginning | 2 Emerging | 3 Developing | 4 Capable | 5 Experienced | 6 Exceptional |
| | Does not communicate an idea through writing, drawing, or dictation | Attempts to share a vague idea but lacks support through writing or drawing, or support is not connected | Shares an idea in writing in a general way (e.g., word string, sentence), but support is lacking or very weak | Presents a simple, clear main idea (e.g., a story, information, or opinion) in writing, with some details | Conveys a clear, focused main idea in writing, using multiple sentences with supporting details | Conveys a rich, focused, and well-developed main idea in writing that is fresh or original |
| A. Main idea | Uses scribbles or shapes that imitate letters and/or writes letters randomly; may dictate ideas or labels for pictures | Uses some recognizable letters or words that may include line forms imitating text; drawing, if present, may be labeled but may not relate to writing; may dictate ideas or labels for pictures | Shares a simple experience or information about an idea using words, but meaning is not entirely clear; drawing, if present, may relate to writing; may dictate ideas | Conveys a simple, clear main idea (e.g., through a story, information, or opinion); drawing, if present, is appropriate to the main idea | Conveys a clear, focused main idea; drawing, if present, supports main idea | Presents a rich, focused, and fresh or original idea; drawing, if present, enhances main idea |
| B. Details and support | Shares drawing or writing that is lacking details | Shares simple details in a drawing but does not support the main idea | Offers one or two details in writing but does not support the main idea (e.g., provides lists without additional explanation); drawing, if present, may add details that have limited connection | Uses multiple details and/or reasons that support the main idea in writing; drawing, if present, relates to main idea | Includes many specific details and/or reasons that develop the main idea in writing; drawing, if present, provides additional detail | Features specific, interesting, well-developed details and/or reasons that enrich the main idea in writing; drawing, if present, deepens meaning |

KEY QUESTION

Does the organizational structure enhance the ideas and make them easier to understand?

| | | Not proficient | | | Proficient | | |
|-------------------------------|--|---|--|--|---|---|---|
| | | 1 Beginning | 2 Emerging | 3 Developing | 4 Capable | 5 Experienced | 6 Exceptional |
| | | Has no obvious organization or structure | Attempts an organizational structure in writing or drawing, but it is incomplete or confusing | Begins developing a simple organizational structure in writing; may be confusing in places; uses limited transitions and/or random sequencing | Uses a basic organizational structure in writing that orders ideas using transitions and logical sequencing | Demonstrates an organizational structure in writing that connects ideas using varied transitions and sequencing that extends meaning | Provides an organizational structure in writing that enhances ideas using rich and varied transitions and sequencing that enriches meaning |
| A. Beginning, middle, and end | Has no sense of beginning, middle, or end; drawings, if present, may appear random or disconnected | Has a beginning sense of organizational structure in writing and/or drawing, but text may be out of order or incomplete | Begins developing an organizational structure in writing though may be hard to follow; experiments with a beginning (e.g., "Once upon a time") and/or a middle, but includes no clear ending except possibly "The End" | Has a beginning, middle, and end though that may not be entirely clear or work together smoothly; includes a lead and/or a concluding sentence | Has a beginning, middle, and end that work together to communicate clearly; includes identifiable lead and concluding sentences | Includes an inviting beginning, a middle with appropriate details, and a developed ending that is effective, interesting, and/or thoughtful | |
| | Demonstrates no sense of order or grouping of words and/or drawings | Attempts to group like words and/or drawings; may attempt limited transitions | Includes limited transitions but relies primarily on simple words (e.g., so, and, then); drawing, if present, may attempt to link ideas | Uses often predictable transitions (e.g., linking and temporal words); drawing, if present, links ideas | Selects frequently varied transitions to connect main ideas and details; drawing, if present, builds connections | Connects ideas in interesting, workable ways using a variety of transitions; drawing, if present, elaborates connections | |
| B. Transitions | | | | | | | |

KEY QUESTION

Does the organizational structure enhance the ideas and make them easier to understand?

| | Not proficient | | | Proficient | | |
|---------------------|--|---|--|---|---|--|
| | 1 Beginning | 2 Emerging | 3 Developing | 4 Capable | 5 Experienced | 6 Exceptional |
| C. Sequencing | Shows no sense of sequencing in writing and/or drawing | Has random sequencing in writing and/or drawing | Attempts sequencing in writing and/or drawing that may be confusing or out of order | Uses logical sequencing that organizes text; drawing, if present, also reflects logical sequencing or placement | Uses sound sequencing that clarifies meaning; drawing, if present, also clarifies meaning | Uses convincing sequencing to enhance or extend meaning; drawing, if present, also enhances or extends meaning |
| D. Title (optional) | Has no title | Has an unrelated or confusing title | Includes a basic title (e.g., "The Dog") or a title that does not directly link to the main idea | Creates a title that connects adequately to the main idea | Develops an interesting title that reflects the main idea | Creates an original, insightful, or clever title that reflects the main idea |

KEY QUESTION

Does the reader hear the writer speaking in the text?

| | Not proficient | | | Proficient | | |
|--|---|---|--|---|---|--|
| | 1 Beginning | 2 Emerging | 3 Developing | 4 Capable | 5 Experienced | 6 Exceptional |
| | Shows indifference or distance | Makes ineffective attempts to connect with task and/or purpose and engage reader | Uses emerging voice that does not yet support task and/or purpose or engage audience | Employs voice that supports task and purpose and audience, engaging reader adequately | Strengthens writing with voice that fully addresses task, purpose, and audience | Uses voice uniquely, demonstrating powerful ownership of task, purpose, and audience |
| A. Feelings/mood | Expresses little or no feeling | Offers hints of feelings through words, phrases, and/or drawing, but is not yet clear | Shares predictable feelings or personal opinions in writing and/or drawing, though may be weak and/or repetitive | Shares identifiable feelings or personal opinions in writing; drawing, if present, may support feelings | Features writing that has strong feelings and/or personal opinions; drawing, if present, highlights emotion | Creates writing intentionally to show a variety of feelings; drawing, if present, enhances emotional appeal |
| B. Individual Expression | Reveals nothing specific about writer in writing and/or drawing | Reveals little of writer's personality in writing and/or drawing | Offers glimpses of personality in writing and/or drawing but shows minimal risk-taking | Expresses personality; drawing, if present, conveys personality; may take risks in one or two places that surprise, delight, and/or move reader | Frequently interacts and engages with reader in an authentic, committed manner | Reveals highly unique personality that enriches text; drawing, if present, heightens personality; demonstrates risk-taking that makes it easy to "hear" writer |
| C. Engagement/ audience awareness | Has no connection with or awareness of reader in writing and/or drawing | Has little connection with or awareness of reader in writing and/or drawing | Shows limited connection with reader but is unsuccessful; may express a general awareness that writing and/or drawing will be seen by someone else | Connects with reader in some places; drawing, if present, supports connection | Connects with reader in several places, demonstrating awareness of audience; drawing, if present, strengthens connection and engages reader | Creates close connection with reader; shows clear sense of audience throughout; drawing, if present, engages reader |

KEY QUESTION

Does the language convey precise and compelling meaning and/or create a vivid picture for the reader?

| | Not proficient | | | Proficient | | |
|-----------------|---|---|--|---|--|--|
| | 1 Beginning | 2 Emerging | 3 Developing | 4 Capable | 5 Experienced | 6 Exceptional |
| | Uses no or very few printed words; uses drawings to represent words and/or copies some environmental print, making meaning unclear | Has some simple words that may be difficult to decode; may rely on environmental print | Uses words, word groups, and/or phrases with possible drawing; vocabulary is limited to general, known words and may be repetitious | Uses basic vocabulary correctly, including basic domain-specific vocabulary if appropriate; may attempt a few creative word choices | Uses precise, accurate, varied vocabulary, including domain-specific vocabulary if appropriate; may attempt creative word choice including figurative language | Uses precise, accurate, varied, and/or creative vocabulary, including domain-specific vocabulary if appropriate; may employ figurative language; vocabulary reflects understanding |
| A. Word meaning | Uses drawings to represent words and phrases; writes some letters and/or letter strings inconsistently, and meaning cannot be decoded | Uses some simple words and/or phrases that may be decodable to make meaning | Uses general or ordinary words and/or phrases, sometimes incorrectly, to make meaning; may attempt new or challenging words that may not fit meaning | Uses favorite and/or basic vocabulary correctly, including basic domain-specific vocabulary if appropriate; may attempt varied, sophisticated words with some success | Uses precise, accurate, varied vocabulary, including basic domain-specific vocabulary if appropriate; may experiment with more sophisticated words | Uses precise, accurate, varied, and creative vocabulary, including domain-specific vocabulary if appropriate |
| B. Word quality | Uses no descriptive words | Uses comfortable, high-frequency, and/or simple words and that may be repetitive (e.g., names, letters, high-frequency words) | Uses familiar and/or basic words; attempts descriptive words to create an image | Uses some descriptive vocabulary to provide details and/or create a vivid image | Frequently uses creative vocabulary to provide details and/or create a vivid image; may attempt more advanced and/or figurative language | Consistently chooses expressive vocabulary to create vivid, detailed images that linger in the reader's mind; may use metaphors, similes, or other figurative language |

KEY QUESTION

Does the language convey precise and compelling meaning and/or create a vivid picture for the reader?

| | Not proficient | | | Proficient | | |
|---------------|--|---|--|---|--|--|
| | 1 Beginning | 2 Emerging | 3 Developing | 4 Capable | 5 Experienced | 6 Exceptional |
| C. Word usage | Uses no or very little print or drawings to represent words but does not make sense; may attempt to copy environmental print | Uses functional words and words copied from environmental print but may be incorrect and/or repetitious | Uses limited, simple words; may occasionally be incorrect or repetitious | Uses basic and appropriate vocabulary; may attempt creative word usage (e.g., synonyms, adjectives, adverbs) but may not be correct | Chooses varied, accurate vocabulary for specific purposes (e.g., synonyms, adjectives, adverbs) and to create a vivid picture for the reader | Consistently chooses rich, varied, accurate, creative vocabulary to enhance meaning and/or create a vivid picture for the reader |

KEY QUESTION

Does the writer control sentences so the piece flows smoothly when read aloud?

| | Not proficient | | | Proficient | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|---|---|--|
| | 1 Beginning | 2 Emerging | 3 Developing | 4 Capable | 5 Experienced | 6 Exceptional |
| | Has no sentences; may make random, undecodable attempt to represent words | Includes part of a sentence that is decodable, but text contains no sense of rhythm | Has some decodable sentences, but they are choppy and lack rhythm | Uses simple sentences with limited transitional words; may have little variety and/or rhythm | Uses multiple sentences with transitional words, including a variety of sentence beginnings; has rhythm that is fluid and easy to read aloud | Uses a variety of sentences with varied transitional words, that flow smoothly and are easy to read aloud |
| A. Sentence structure | Has no sentence structure but may use left-to-right progression in marks or letter strings across the page | Uses short, phrase-like wording as sentences, some of which are decodable | Correctly uses simple sentences that have no variation in sentence patterns | Correctly uses simple sentences with some variation in sentence patterns; may be mechanical | Effectively uses varied simple and more varied sentence patterns to create strong sentences | Employs varied, effective sentence structure throughout text; sentences are frequently creative |
| B. Sentence variety | Contains no sentences or sentence fragments | Uses short, repetitive word patterns; has no variety; may be incomplete in places | Uses sentences that begin the same way, with few exceptions; uses sentences that are about the same length, resulting in chopiness | Uses some varied sentence beginnings and lengths that help make the text flow | Uses a variety of sentence beginnings and lengths that make the text flow smoothly | Purposefully uses a variety of sentence beginnings and lengths that enhance flow |
| C. Connecting sentence | Has no transition words | Uses a few simple transitions among clusters of words that are not yet sentences | Includes a few simple transitions; may be repetitive | Uses transitions to connect words and/or phrases with minimal errors | Uses transitions to connect words and/or phrases correctly; creates readability | Uses varied transitions smoothly and effectively to enhance readability |

KEY QUESTION

Does the writer control sentences so the piece flows smoothly when read aloud?

| | Not proficient | | | Proficient | | |
|---------------------|--|---|--|---|--|---|
| | 1 Beginning | 2 Emerging | 3 Developing | 4 Capable | 5 Experienced | 6 Exceptional |
| D. Sentence rhythms | Has no or limited words; has no rhythm | Has limited text and very little rhythm when read aloud | Lacks rhythm due to uneven sentence structure and/or repetition; text is difficult to read aloud | Has some rhythm but may be somewhat mechanical in parts; is easily read aloud | Has frequent rhythm and flow; sounds natural when read aloud | Uses natural rhythm and cadence to create a flow that is easy and enjoyable to read aloud |

KEY QUESTION

How well does the text illustrate the writer’s proficiency with grade-appropriate conventions?

(Note: For the trait of conventions, grade level matters. Expectations should be based on grade level and include only skills that have been taught.)

| | Not proficient | | | Proficient | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| | 1 Beginning | 2 Emerging | 3 Developing | 4 Capable | 5 Experienced | 6 Exceptional |
| | Demonstrates little or no understanding of grade-level conventions | Has many types of convention errors scattered throughout text | Handles conventions well at times but makes errors that impair readability | Applies standard grade-level conventions accurately on most occasions | Has few errors with only minor editing needed to publish; may attempt more complex conventions | Uses conventions effortlessly without significant errors; may use conventions to creatively enhance message |
| A. Spelling | Uses letter strings indicating gaps in knowing letter/sound relationships; has emerging print sense | Attempts phonetic spelling (e.g., MTR, KLOSD, UM, KD) that is mostly decodable; may include some simple words spelled correctly Attempts some random punctuation | Has inconsistent spelling of grade-level, high-frequency words; uses some phonetic spelling | Uses generally correct grade-level, high-frequency words correctly; uses phonetic spelling for less frequent words | Spells grade-level, high-frequency words with minimal errors; attempts more difficult words logically | Spells nearly all words correctly, including grade-level, high-frequency, and more difficult words |
| B. Punctuation | Has no punctuation | Attempts some random punctuation | Experiments with end punctuation | Has end punctuation that is mostly correct | Uses end punctuation that is usually correct; attempts other punctuation with some correctness | Uses end punctuation correctly; often correctly uses advanced punctuation with few errors; may use punctuation for style and/or effect |

KEY QUESTION

How well does the text illustrate the writer’s proficiency with grade-appropriate conventions?

(Note: For the trait of conventions, grade level matters. Expectations should be based on grade level and include only skills that have been taught.)

| | Not proficient | | | Proficient | | |
|--------------------------|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| | 1 Beginning | 2 Emerging | 3 Developing | 4 Capable | 5 Experienced | 6 Exceptional |
| C. Capitalization | Has no or little capitalization | Uses upper and/or lower-case letters inconsistently | Has inconsistent capitalization but shows signs of appropriate use | Has mostly correct capitalization at the beginnings of sentences and for names and/or titles | Uses correct capitalization at the beginnings of sentences and for names, titles, and usually for proper nouns; may attempt creative capitalization for effect | Uses consistently correct capitalization for sentence beginnings, names, titles, and/or proper nouns; may use creative capitalization for emphasis |
| D. Grammar/usage | Demonstrates no understanding of basic grammar and/or usage in text | Demonstrates limited understanding of grammar and/or usage in text | Attempts basic grammar and usage, but is mostly uneven, overly simplistic, or incorrect | Has mostly correct noun/pronoun agreement, verb tenses, and subject/verb agreement in simple constructions | Uses correct grammar nearly all the time | Shows consistent and correct use of grammar at grade-level expectations and frequently beyond |

KEY QUESTION

Is the finished piece easy to read, polished in presentation, and pleasing to the eye?

| | Not proficient | | | Proficient | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|---|---|
| | 1 Beginning | 2 Emerging | 3 Developing | 4 Capable | 5 Experienced | 6 Exceptional |
| | Strings letters or words together with no sense of spacing; may use drawings randomly | Begins to make letters but may be randomly placed; drawings lack connection to text | Has some discrepancies in letter shape; has mostly correct spacing of letters and words; drawings connect to text | Has most letters, words, and sentences properly spaced; drawings/graphics, if present, include pictures, charts, tables, and/or graphs that logically connect to text | Produces an easily readable text, with appropriate spacing; drawings/graphics, if present, logically connect to and support text | Creates a text that is polished with proper spacing and effective use of white space; drawings/graphics, if present, purposefully enrich the text |
| A. Handwriting | Has no consistent shape to marks or letters; alphabetic understanding may | Shapes some letters properly, but others are difficult to recognize or inaccurate | Shows inconsistencies in letter shape, but many letters are identifiable | Has consistent letter shape that makes most letters and words readable | Uses letters that are well formed and easy to read | Features handwriting that can be read easily, is attractive, and shows style |
| B. Spacing | Strings letters and words together randomly without spacing or margins | Shows random attempts to use spacing between letters and words and/or use margins on page | Has some letters and words that are readable; uses mostly correct spacing | Uses proper spacing for most letters, words, and sentences; may attempt to indent first line(s) of paragraph(s) | Has words and sentences that are correctly spaced; uses proper margins; indents first line of paragraph(s) | Features words and sentences that are consistently and evenly spaced throughout; uses margins that frame text; consistently indents or blocks paragraphs, if used |
| C. Drawings and graphics (optional) | Places drawings randomly on the page; does not support print if present | Places drawings randomly within text, making it distracting | Places drawings or graphics to support text | Positions drawings or graphics logically | Incorporates text features that help to integrate ideas, articulate meaning, and support reading | Uses text features to extend meaning and/or develop more complete understanding |



Model of Instruction & Assessment

Education Northwest developed the 6+1 Trait® Writing Model of Instruction & Assessment to help educators provide clear, consistent, and evidence-based feedback on student writing. As more schools and districts emphasize students' writing skills across the curriculum, it's essential that all staff members use a common terminology and shared strategies to provide feedback. We offer a broad range of training, technical assistance, and resources, including free starter materials such as rubrics and Common Core crosswalks.

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