

Writing Rubrics: Grades 4-8

CONTENT (One Passage): Central Idea, Development, and Organization

Key Questions: Does the writer stay focused and respond to all parts of the task? Does the writer's use of the text show an understanding of the passage and the writing task? Does the organizational structure strengthen the writer's ideas and make the composition easier to understand?

Score Point	4 Consistent, though not necessarily perfect, control; many strengths present	3 Reasonable control; some strengths and some weaknesses	2 Inconsistent control; the weaknesses outweigh the strengths	1 Little or no control; minimal attempt
CENTRAL IDEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sharply focused central idea shows a complete understanding of the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clear central idea shows a general understanding of the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vague central idea shows a partial understanding of the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> unclear or absent central idea shows a lack of understanding of the task
USE OF THE PASSAGE AND DEVELOPMENT	A composition without evidence from the passage cannot receive a score higher than a 2 in Content.			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes ample, well-chosen evidence from the passage to support central idea Evidence and ideas are developed thoroughly. Details are specific, relevant, and accurate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes sufficient and appropriate evidence from the passage to support central idea Evidence and ideas are developed adequately (may be uneven). Details are, for the most part, relevant and accurate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes insufficient or no evidence from the passage, OR only summarizes or paraphrases passage information Evidence and ideas are not developed adequately (list-like). Some information may be irrelevant or inaccurate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes minimal or no evidence from the passage and/or the evidence shows a misunderstanding of the passage minimal/no development Information is irrelevant, inaccurate, minimal, confusing.
ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of planning and logical order allows reader to easily move through the composition. Clear beginning, middle, and ending contribute sense of wholeness. effective transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logical order allows reader to move through the composition. has a beginning and an ending transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attempt at organization digressions, repetition weak beginning and ending may lack transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> random order no beginning or ending difficult for the reader to move through the response

CONTENT (Two Passages): Central Idea, Development, and Organization

Key Questions: Does the writer stay focused and respond to all parts of the task? Does the writer’s use of the text show an understanding of the passages and the writing task? Does the organizational structure strengthen the writer’s ideas and make the composition easier to understand?

Score Point	4 Consistent, though not necessarily perfect, control; many strengths present	3 Reasonable control; some strengths and some weaknesses	2 Inconsistent control; the weaknesses outweigh the strengths	1 Little or no control; minimal attempt
CENTRAL IDEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sharply focused central idea shows a complete understanding of the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clear central idea shows a general understanding of the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vague central idea shows a partial understanding of the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> unclear or absent central idea shows a lack of understanding of the task
USE OF THE PASSAGE(S) AND DEVELOPMENT	A composition that addresses only one of the two passages cannot receive a score higher than a 3 in Content. A score of 4 cannot be assigned unless both passages have been addressed.			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes ample, well-chosen evidence from the passages to support central idea Evidence and ideas are developed thoroughly. Details are specific, relevant, and accurate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes sufficient and appropriate evidence from at least one of the passages to support central idea Evidence and ideas are developed adequately (may be uneven). Details are, for the most part, relevant and accurate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes insufficient or no evidence from the passage(s), OR only summarizes or paraphrases passage information Evidence and ideas are not developed adequately (list-like). Some information may be irrelevant or inaccurate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes minimal or no evidence from the passage(s) and/or the evidence shows a misunderstanding of the passage minimal/no development Information is irrelevant, inaccurate, minimal, confusing.
ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of planning and logical order allows reader to easily move through the composition. Clear beginning, middle, and ending contribute sense of wholeness. effective transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logical order allows reader to move through the composition. has a beginning and an ending transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attempt at organization digressions, repetition weak beginning and ending may lack transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> random order no beginning or ending difficult for the reader to move through the response

STYLE: Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, and Voice

Key Questions: Would you keep reading this composition if it were longer? Do the words, phrases, and sentences strengthen the content and allow the reader to move through the writing with ease?

Score Point	4 Consistent, though not necessarily perfect, control; many strengths present	3 Reasonable control; some strengths and some weaknesses	2 Inconsistent control; the weaknesses outweigh the strengths	1 Little or no control; minimal attempt
WORD CHOICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • precise • effective • vivid words and phrases appropriate to the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear but less specific • includes some interesting words and phrases appropriate to the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generic • limited • repetitive • overused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • functional • simple (below grade level) • may be inappropriate to the task
SENTENCE FLUENCY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fluid, very easy to follow, because of variety in length, structure, and beginnings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generally varied in length and structure • Most sentences have varied beginnings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • little or no variety in length and structure • Awkward sentences may affect the fluidity of the reading. • same beginnings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simple sentences • no variety • Construction makes the response difficult to read.
VOICE (individual personality of the writing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compelling and engaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear, but may not be particularly compelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • weak and/or inconsistent voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no voice • Response is too brief to provide an adequate example of style; minimal attempt.

Conventions Rubric

The dimensions of Sentence Formation, Usage, Mechanics, and Spelling are scored with either a **+** (acceptable), which receives 1 point, or **–** (unacceptable), which receives 0 points. Scorers look for a pattern of errors based on length of the response.

Sentence Formation: Desirable features are completeness and construction of a variety of patterns.

+	The response exhibits acceptable control of sentence formation. Most sentences are correct; there are few, if any, run-on sentences or fragments. Additionally, there is a variety of sentence patterns, indicating that the writer can construct more than one type of sentence competently.
–	The response exhibits unacceptable control of sentence formation. There are run-on sentences, fragments, and/or poorly constructed sentences that indicate that the writer does not have adequate skill in sentence formation. There may be evidence of control of only one type of sentence pattern (usually simple).

Usage: Features are agreement, standard inflections, and word meaning.

+	The response exhibits acceptable control of usage. Subject-verb agreement, verb tenses, forms of adjectives and adverbs, and word meaning are generally correct. If errors are present, they do not appear to be part of a pattern of usage errors.
–	The response exhibits unacceptable control of usage. There are errors in subject-verb agreement, verb tenses, forms of adjectives and adverbs, and/or word meaning. The pattern of errors is evidence of a lack of control of the features of usage.

Mechanics: Features are punctuation and capitalization.

+	The response exhibits acceptable control of mechanics. Punctuation and capitalization are generally correct. If errors are present, they do not appear to be part of a pattern of mechanics errors.
–	The response exhibits unacceptable control of mechanics. There are errors in punctuation and capitalization. The pattern of errors is evidence of a lack of control of the features of mechanics.

Spelling:

+	The response exhibits acceptable control of spelling. The majority of grade-appropriate words are spelled correctly. There is no pattern of spelling errors.
–	The response exhibits unacceptable control of spelling. There are errors in spelling grade-appropriate words. There is a pattern of spelling errors.

In some cases, a composition may not be scorable. For example, if it is illegible or if it includes only copied text from the given passage(s), it will not be scored in any dimension and will receive a score of zero. A paper may be off-topic and cannot be scored for Content or Style, but it may be scored for Sentence Formation, Usage, Mechanics, and Spelling. Such a paper could receive a maximum of 4 of 12 points.