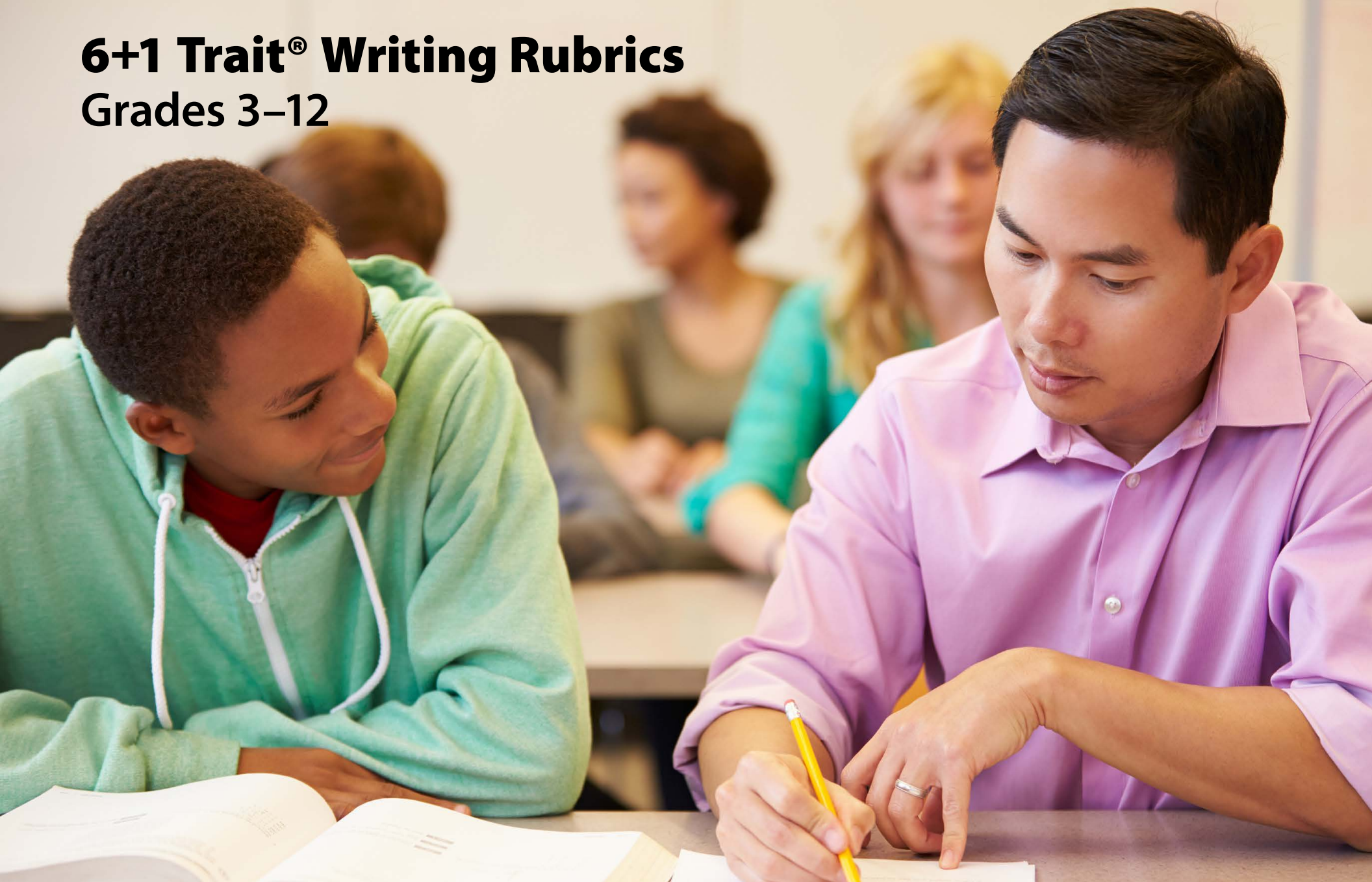


6+1 Trait® Writing Rubrics

Grades 3–12



KEY QUESTION

Does the writer 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 reflect a main idea or topic	Provides a focus, but main idea is unclear	States or implies a main idea but is unfocused, inaccurate, and/or underdeveloped	Communicates a generally clear, focused, and accurate main idea with adequate development	Presents a clear, focused, and substantive main idea with convincing development	Establishes a clear, focused, and significant main idea, with original insights, that is fully developed
A. Main idea	Does not have a main idea or topic	Focuses on a general topic, but main idea is unclear	Suggests a main idea, but the direction of the piece is confusing	Presents an adequately clear, focused main idea	Develops a clear, focused, and somewhat complex and/or original main idea	Conveys a clear, focused, complex, and original main idea that drives the piece
B. Details, evidence, and support	Does not support a main idea In arguments grade 7+, does not acknowledge a counterclaim	Attempts to support the main idea with some information and/or details, but these are unfocused, unclear, and/or unrelated In arguments grade 7+, may acknowledge but does not attempt to develop counterclaim	Provides incidental support of the main idea with information and/or details that lacks specificity, relevance, and/or accuracy In arguments grade 7+, may acknowledge but does not develop counterclaim adequately	Supports the main idea with generally accurate, specific, and relevant information and/or details In arguments grade 7+, develops and addresses counterclaim adequately	Supports the main idea fully, with specific, credible, relevant, information and/or vivid details In arguments grade 7+, fully develops and addresses counterclaim	Supports the main idea convincingly, with highly specific, credible information and/or striking details that go beyond the obvious In arguments grade 7+, thoroughly develops and addresses counterclaim in an original way

KEY QUESTION

Does the writer 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
C. Reasoning/thinking	Does not show writer’s thinking in developing or connecting ideas	Generalizes about ideas without analyzing or connecting them logically	Attempts to identify relationships among ideas, but lacks clarity or logical connection	Helps the reader understand the writer’s reasoning or perspective Connects ideas	Presents fresh reasoning or perspective using higher-order thinking and connects Clarifies ideas	Conveys unique, useful insights using higher-order thinking and convincing reasoning Clarifies and enhances ideas in original ways
D. Awareness/engagement of reader	Does not share information with reader in mind	Shares information without engaging reader in exploring ideas Does not address any important questions	Attempts to engage readers in exploring ideas Does not address many important questions or concerns	Adequately engages readers in exploring ideas Adequately addresses reader’s questions and/or concerns	Effectively engages readers in exploring ideas Fully addresses reader’s knowledge, questions, and/or biases	Successfully engages readers in exploring ideas on multiple levels Fully addresses reader’s knowledge, questions, and biases on multiple levels
E. Textual evidence from sources (optional)	Contains no textual evidence Lacks acknowledgment of sources; includes some plagiarized support	Uses very weakly integrated textual evidence Includes limited acknowledgment of sources; may include some plagiarized support	Contains weakly integrated textual evidence Contains general acknowledgment of sources; may include some plagiarized support	Provides adequately integrated textual evidence Includes proper acknowledgment of sources	Includes well-integrated textual evidence Includes proper acknowledgment of sources	Incorporates very smoothly integrated textual evidence Includes proper acknowledgment of sources

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
		No identifiable organization; writing lacks a sense of direction or seems random	Uses mostly ineffective organization with only a few sections that direct reader	Shows developing organization that is sporadic, hampering ability to follow text	Includes basic organization that moves the reader through the text logically with minimal confusion	Reflects smooth, cohesive organization and varied techniques that build to create a unified whole	Develops seamless organization that enhances and showcases central ideas and their relationships
A. Lead and conclusion	Uses no lead and no conclusion	Includes either a lead or a conclusion If lead is present, fails to establish purpose; if conclusion is present, fails to provide closure	Includes both a lead and a conclusion Lead fails to establish purpose, and/or conclusion fails to provide closure	Contains a lead that establishes purpose, though may be formulaic or obvious Contains a conclusion that provides closure, though may be formulaic or obvious	Features a lead that creates anticipation and establishes clear purpose Includes a conclusion that ties up loose ends, providing a satisfying sense of closure	Creates an inviting lead that establishes clear purpose, draws reader in, and creates a strong sense of anticipation Develops a satisfying conclusion that conveys a powerful and thoughtful sense of closure	
	Lacks use of transitions Does not use paragraphs	Rarely uses transitions Uses paragraph breaks sporadically.	Uses transitions that are repetitive, inconsistent, and/or fail to connect ideas Separates ideas into paragraphs weakly	Includes transitions that connect ideas, though they may be formulaic or predictable Consistently separates ideas into distinct paragraphs	Features logical, varied transitions that connect and develop ideas Includes paragraphing that supports ideas	Features thoughtful, smooth, varied transitions that clearly connect ideas and enhance meaning Uses paragraphing that enhances ideas	
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	Uses no sequencing of ideas	Uses very limited sequencing that fails to show how ideas fit together	Uses sequencing that fails to showcase ideas or becomes formulaic	Provides logical sequencing of ideas	Employs sequencing that builds connections to create a unified whole	Utilizes highly effective sequencing, making best choices for progression and enrichment of reader's understanding
D. Pacing	Uses no evident pacing	Uses uneven pacing, slowing down or speeding up inappropriately or awkwardly	Appropriately controls pacing in some sections but not in others	Evenly controls pacing in most places	Exhibits well-controlled pacing throughout	Skillfully uses pacing to compel the reader through the text and enhance its impact
E. Purpose/text structure	Uses no discernible text structure or purpose	Uses loose text structure that leaves reader unclear or confused about purpose	Uses text structure inconsistently, affecting the reader's ability to identify purpose	Uses text structure consistently to reflect purpose, moving the reader through the text logically, with minimal confusion	Employs text structure that clarifies and supports purpose throughout	Utilizes text structure that enhances understanding of purpose and flows very smoothly
F. Title (optional)	Uses no title	Uses a title that does not link to main idea or is misleading	Uses a title that is formulaic, nondescript, or fails to link directly to main idea	Includes a title that connects adequately to main idea	Selects a title that reflects main idea in an unusual or interesting way	Draws the reader in with an original title that reflects main idea and captures deeper meaning

KEY QUESTION

Is the voice appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience?

	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 developing voice that does not yet support task and/or purpose or engage audience	Employs voice that supports task, 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. Tone	Uses no evident tone _____ Uses inappropriate level of formality	Uses a tone that does not support the purpose _____ Often uses inappropriate level of formality	Uses a flat, disinterested tone or one that does not always support the purpose _____ Sometimes uses inappropriate level of formality	Uses a tone that supports purpose and reflects audience _____ Nearly always uses appropriate level of formality	Uses a tone that is frequently appropriate for purpose and audience _____ Consistently uses appropriate level of formality	Employs a tone that is consistently appropriate for purpose and audience, clarifying and validating the message _____ Consistently uses appropriate level of formality
B. Engagement with and awareness of reader	Makes no effort to consider what reader needs to know	Fails to engage or consider reader sufficiently	Shows limited awareness of reader and fails to engage audience sufficiently	Interacts with or shows awareness of reader at times, though not yet fully engaging manner	Frequently engages with reader in an authentic manner	Consistently interacts and engages with reader through original or unique choices that underscore commitment
C. Commitment	Demonstrates no commitment to topic	Shows minimal commitment to topic	Shows emerging commitment to topic	Shows commitment to topic, though may not be fully evident	Demonstrates clear commitment to topic	Establishes ownership of topic
D. Individual expression (if appropriate)	Reveals nothing specific about writer	Reveals little of the writer's personality	Offers glimpses of personality but shows minimal risk-taking	Expresses personality; may take risks in one or two places that surprise, delight, and/or move reader	Frequently demonstrates personality; takes multiple risks that strengthen the text and move reader	Reveals unique personality in a manner that enriches text; demonstrates risk-taking that makes it easy to "hear" writer

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 limited vocabulary	Uses flawed or simplistic vocabulary, resulting in impaired meaning	Uses vocabulary that is usually understandable but at times conveys confusing or limited meaning	Uses vocabulary that is functional and achieves purpose; may use imagery and/or figurative language if appropriate	Incorporates precise and creative vocabulary; uses imagery and/or figurative language if appropriate	Uses precise, powerful, accurate, and engaging vocabulary, including vivid imagery and/or figurative language where appropriate
A. Word meaning	Consistently uses vocabulary that is incorrect in meaning	Uses flawed and/or simplistic vocabulary that impairs understanding	Uses vocabulary that is sometimes incorrect or limited, or uses inaccurate domain-specific vocabulary	Uses mostly correct, clear vocabulary, including domain-specific vocabulary if appropriate	Frequently uses precise vocabulary, including accurate domain-specific vocabulary if appropriate; vocabulary may be creative	Consistently features precise, creative, and powerful vocabulary, including exact domain-specific vocabulary if appropriate
B. Word quality	Uses vague or limited vocabulary	Uses confusing or misleading vocabulary	Uses very basic, functional words that convey limited meaning May include weak attempt at imagery or figurative language if appropriate	Chooses familiar vocabulary that communicates meaning Uses limited imagery and/or figurative language if appropriate	Often employs strong vocabulary that clearly conveys meaning Includes vivid imagery and/or figurative language if appropriate	Consistently employs striking, powerful vocabulary that enhances meaning and/or shows imagination Includes striking imagery and/or figurative language if appropriate

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 repetitive words and/or unsuitable language (e.g., slang, texting)	Uses vocabulary incorrectly or inappropriately, and/or reuses words rather than synonyms	Uses limited functional vocabulary and/or overuses descriptive or complex vocabulary	Uses appropriate vocabulary with minimal overuse; may attempt creative use of vocabulary	Employs creative or unique vocabulary appropriately	Consistently uses creative or unique vocabulary in novel ways
D. Grammar	Misuses parts of speech frequently, clouding meaning	Uses limited variety in parts of speech; may use jargon or clichés that detract from meaning	Uses passive or boring verbs and/or overuses nouns and/or modifiers that limit meaning; may sound mechanical	Uses accurate and functional parts of speech that start to shape meaning, including some active verbs and specific nouns and modifiers	Chooses precise and varied parts of speech (e.g., active verbs, specific nouns and modifiers) to effectively communicate meaning	Chooses powerful parts of speech, including expressive, active verbs and polished nouns/modifiers, to best convey exact meaning

KEY QUESTION

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

	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional
	Structures sentences incorrectly; reader must reread text several times to read aloud	Structures many sentences incorrectly, causing reader to stumble; little variation in sentences	Structures sentences that may be technically correct but not varied, sounding mechanical, awkward, or not smooth	Structures varied sentences that are usually technically correct and flow smoothly	Structures a variety of well-developed sentences that are rhythmic and flowing	Structures well-built, strong, varied sentences that flow, with compelling rhythm and cadence
A. Sentence structure	Uses choppy sentence structure that is incomplete, run-on, or rambling	Uses sentence structure that is simplistic and/or rarely correct	Uses sentence structure that may be technically correct yet isn't smooth, or overuses complicated sentences	Uses smooth, correct sentence structure that may be somewhat mechanical in places	Utilizes well-developed sentence structure throughout text	Controls strong sentence structure for maximum impact throughout text
B. Sentence sense and rhythm	Lacks sentence sense; choppy rhythm makes reading aloud without writer's help nearly impossible	Shows little evidence of sentence sense, requiring reader to reconstruct sentence flow to read text aloud	Uses inconsistent sentence sense that may lead to sing-song pattern or require reader to reread when reading text aloud Dialogue and fragments, if used, may be ineffective or interrupt flow	Evidences correct sentence sense with rhythm and flow; reading aloud is smooth Dialogue and fragments, if used, are often effective	Conveys strong, rhythmic sentence sense, with enough variety to enhance flow; easy to read aloud Dialogue and fragments, if used, are consistently effective	Exhibits powerful, rhythmic sentence sense with cadence that enables expressive reading aloud If used, dialogue sounds natural and is effective, and fragments add style

KEY QUESTION

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

	Not proficient			Proficient		
	1 Beginning	2 Emerging	3 Developing	4 Capable	5 Experienced	6 Exceptional
C. Sentence variety	Lacks varied sentence beginnings or types	Uses simple, often monotonous sentences that repeat same beginnings and/or types	Uses some variety in sentence beginnings, yet some are routine or generic, and/or uses mostly simple and compound sentences	Varies sentence beginnings, yet some are routine or generic Includes multiple sentence types	Employs varied and interesting sentence beginnings Includes a variety of sentence types to create balance	Creates interest and energy with varied sentence beginnings Includes a variety of sentence types chosen to enhance flow
D. Connecting sentences	Uses weak or no transitional words or phrases to join sentences or sentence parts and/or has choppy, disconnected language and/or run-on sentences	Uses basic transitions that do little to join sentences and sentence parts within paragraphs; transitional words or phrases may be missing or randomly applied	Joins sentences and sentence parts with few transitional words or phrases; some transitional words or phrases may be overused	Joins sentences and sentence parts with varied transitional words or phrases	Joins sentences and sentence parts fluidly, with thoughtful and varied transitional words or phrases	Joins sentences and sentence parts throughout paragraphs with creative and varied transitional words or phrases that highlight relationships between sentences

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
	Contains numerous and/or varied errors that make text unreadable or distracting; requires extensive editing	Includes many errors that make text difficult to read; requires much editing	Shows inconsistency in use of correct conventions which may impair readability;” please include grade level specific considerations	Uses grade level appropriate correct conventions with some minor errors; requires minor editing	Demonstrates consistent use of correct conventions; requires very limited editing	Uses error-free, creative conventions; enhances readability; requires virtually no editing
A. Spelling	Makes frequent spelling errors, even with common words	Uses phonetic spelling, with many errors	Frequently spells simple words incorrectly, though reader can still understand the meaning	Uses correct spelling for most common grade-level words; may be inaccurate with more difficult words	Correctly spells common grade-level words and often more difficult words	Exhibits correct spelling, including more difficult words
B. Punctuation	Does not use or misuses punctuation nearly all the time	Uses punctuation randomly and/or incorrectly	Uses simple end punctuation that is usually correct; internal punctuation (e.g., comma, apostrophe, semicolon) contains errors	Uses mostly correct end and internal punctuation at grade level	Correctly uses both end and internal punctuation	Employs correct end and internal punctuation; may use creative punctuation that enhances readability
C. Capitalization	Lacks capitalization, or uses it incorrectly	Uses capitalization randomly, with frequent errors	Uses some correct capitalization at grade level	Uses mostly correct capitalization at grade level expectation	Correctly uses capitalization	Employs consistently correct capitalization and possibly more sophisticated capitalization for 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
D. Grammar/usage	Makes serious grammar/usage, errors, making text incomprehensible	Makes numerous grammar/usage errors, making comprehension difficult	Makes grammar/usage errors that may distract reader; may use conversational or texting language inappropriate to style	Employs correct grammar/usage with few grade-level errors; minor problems do not distort meaning or distract reader	Employs proper grammar/usage	Exhibits correct grammar/usage that contributes to clarity and style
F. Bibliography (optional)	Lacks citations or basic bibliographic information	Makes weak attempts to cite or include basic bibliographic information	Uses citations and/or basic bibliographic information inconsistently and/or incompletely	Uses citations and/or bibliographic information in correct format; may contain some errors	Uses citations and/or bibliographic information correctly, with few errors	Uses citations and/or bibliographic information without errors

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
	Uses presentation or formatting that makes text unreadable	Uses presentation or formatting that makes text confusing	Uses uneven presentation or formatting that sometimes makes text difficult to read or understand; text lacks a finished appearance	Uses presentation or formatting that supports understanding; text is finished and polished	Creates presentation or formatting that makes text easy to read with a pleasing appearance that enhances understanding	Exhibits professional-looking presentation or formatting; makes choices to enhance importance
A. Font style/size	Includes many font styles/sizes that make piece unreadable	Uses multiple font styles/sizes that impair reading or understanding	Uses font styles/sizes that are inconsistent and/or poorly chosen in places, impairing reading or understanding	Uses font styles/sizes consistently so text is easy to read and understand	Chooses font styles/sizes that are consistent and appropriately chosen, supporting understanding and readability; some font styles may vary to highlight sections of the text	Intentionally selects font styles/ sizes that enhance understanding and strengthen readability; some font styles may vary to highlight sections of the text
B. White space	Does not consider white space, or use is random and confusing, making it difficult to identify beginning and ending text	Shows emerging use of white space, but few intentional margins or boundaries; text placement may be arbitrary	Uses white space to frame and balance text but is inconsistent; may have margins, though some text may crowd edges May use uneven indenting or blocking	Uses white space to frame text with acceptable margins Consistently indents or blocks paragraphs	Features white space that helps reader focus on text; uses margins to frame piece and other white space to set off graphics and text features Indents or blocks paragraphs	Uses white space to optimally frame and balance text with graphics and text features; may include creative use of space to highlight important details Indents or blocks paragraphs

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
C. Text features (optional)	Uses no text features (e.g., titles, bullets, page numbers, subheads)	Uses text features that lack purpose and are mostly inappropriate and/or ineffective	Uses text features that are frequently ineffective for organizing and/or clarifying text	Includes text features that adequately organize and clarify ideas	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
D. Visuals and graphics (optional)	Uses visuals/graphics that are incomprehensible and/or unrelated to text	Chooses visuals/graphics that are only topically related to text and/or do not enhance understanding	Uses visuals/graphics that support text in some instances	Includes visuals/graphics that support text	Features visuals/graphics that support and clarify text	Creates visuals/graphics that help enrich and extend meaning and are integrated
E. Handwriting (optional)	Forms handwritten letters inconsistently and/or incorrectly, making piece unreadable Lacks spacing of letters and words, or spacing is unbalanced	Uses irregular letter shape and/or form; letters and words are often unreadable Includes spacing that is often inconsistent, impairing readability	Uses handwriting that occasionally impairs readability Uses inconsistent spacing in places	Uses correct and readable handwriting Uses generally uniform spacing and lettering	Uses neat and readable handwriting Uses uniform spacing and lettering	Features handwriting that is pleasing to the eye Uses uniform spacing and lettering



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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