

Scoring Guides and Prompt Listings



RATERS
of the Lost Art

Scoring Guides and Prompt Listings

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The Six Traits

Review



Ideas: Clear

Ideas are more than *topics* or *subjects*. The controlling idea of a piece is a single statement that binds the units of development, or paragraphs, into a cohesive whole. The main idea is clear, narrowed and supportable.



Organization: Planned

Organization is the driver of the idea, the overall structure. We look for its parts: beginning, middle, ending, sequencing, pacing and transitions. Proficiency is demonstrated if these are reasonably controlled and present in the text.



Voice: Targeted and Engaged

Voice is the reflection of the person writing the piece. The writer's interests, convictions and individual imprint stand out. The voice speaks to the reader, with a strong sense of purpose or conviction.



Word Choice: Precise but Natural

Even simple, everyday words combined in unusual ways can create powerful images and memorable phrases. A computer program is capable of selecting “big” words out of a text and rewarding points for vocabulary, but can it spot word choice that is concise, precise and thoughtfully chosen?



Sentence Fluency: Varied and Fluid

Well constructed sentences flow from one to the other with a pleasing rhythm and cadence. Our approach to scoring sentence fluency in a piece with errors in sentence punctuation is to “mentally” correct the errors and then read the piece for fluency.



Conventions: Accurate

Conventions comprise the spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar and usage, and paragraphing rules for writing in standard English. Expectations for proficiency in standard conventions adjust to the grade level assessed.



IDEAS

KEY POINTS

Basic Criteria
NOT A RUBRIC

EXCEPTIONAL,
EXCEEDS
GRADE LEVEL

6

- ⊗ CLEAR, FOCUSED, NARROWED TOPIC
- ⊗ SUPPORT—CREDIBLE, APPROPRIATE, COMPLETE
- ⊗ EXPERIENCE WITH TOPIC OBVIOUS
- ⊗ QUESTIONS ANSWERED
- ⊗ ORIGINAL, INSIGHTFUL

STRONG,
FLESHED OUT
DEVELOPMENT

5

- ⊗ CLEAR, FOCUSED, DEVELOPED
- ⊗ SUPPORT—SPECIFIC, USUALLY CREDIBLE
- ⊗ EXPERIENCE WITH TOPIC SHOWS
- ⊗ QUESTIONS MOSTLY ANSWERED
- ⊗ ORIGINAL AND INSIGHTFUL IN PLACES

PROFICIENT,
USUALLY ON
TRACK

4

- ⊗ CLEAR— TOPIC IS BROAD BUT FOCUSED
- ⊗ SUPPORT-CREDIBLE, BUT PREDICTABLE
- ⊗ EXPERIENCE WITH TOPIC IS PRESENT
- ⊗ QUESTIONS GENERALLY ANSWERED
- ⊗ SOME SPARKS OF ORIGINALITY

SIMPLISTIC,
SKETCHY

3

- ⊗ CLEAR AND UNDERSTANDABLE BUT SIMPLISTIC
- ⊗ SUPPORT—VERY GENERAL, OBVIOUS, OR WEAK
- ⊗ EXPERIENCE WITH TOPIC IS IFFY
- ⊗ QUESTIONS LEFT UNANSWERED OR LEFT HANGING
- ⊗ RESPONSE IS ADEQUATE- A MINIMUM

LIMITED,
READER MUST
REREAD TO
UNDERSTAND

2

- ⊗ UNCLEAR BUT EMERGING POSSIBILITIES
- ⊗ SUPPORT IS LIMITED OR CONFUSING
- ⊗ EXPERIENCE/KNOWLEDGE SEEMS WEAK
- ⊗ QUESTIONS ABOUND
- ⊗ RESPONSE IS INADEQUATE, CONFUSING OR TOO SHORT

NOT CLEAR

1

- ⊗ UNCLEAR MESSAGE, PURPOSE
- ⊗ NO SUPPORT
- ⊗ EXPERIENCE/KNOWLEDGE NOT PRESENT
- ⊗ QUESTIONS—"WHAT IS THE MAIN IDEA?"
- ⊗ RESPONSE IS MEANINGLESS, REPETITIOUS, RANDOM



ORGANIZATION

KEY POINTS

EXCEPTIONAL,
CAREFULLY
PLANNED AND
EXECUTED

6

- * STRUCTURE SHOWCASES THE MAIN IDEA
- * TRANSITIONS ARE SMOOTH
- * SEQUENCING ARRANGED FOR IMPACT
- * PACING—CRAFTED TO MATCH THE PURPOSE
- * BEGINNING, MIDDLE AND END—INVITING AND DEVELOPED

STRONG
STRUCTURE

5

- * STRUCTURE SUITS THE MAIN IDEA
- * TRANSITIONS ARE GENERALLY SMOOTH
- * SEQUENCING IS LOGICAL
- * PACING MOVES ALONG AT A NICE CLIP
- * BEGINNING, MIDDLE AND END ARE DEVELOPED

PROFICIENT,
FUNCTIONAL

4

- * STRUCTURE IS FUNCTIONAL
- * TRANSITIONS ARE SOMEWHAT VARIED
- * SEQUENCING IS USUALLY LOGICAL
- * PACING MAY DRAG OR SPEED UP IN PLACES
- * BEGINNING, MIDDLE, END ARE ADEQUATE

PROBLEMATIC

3

- * STRUCTURE CONTAINS WEAKNESSES
- * TRANSITIONS "TAKE OVER"
- * SEQUENCING IS FAULTY IN PLACES
- * PACING UNEVEN
- * BEGINNING, MIDDLE ARE PRESENT, BUT END IS ABRUPT

CONFUSING

2

- * STRUCTURE CONTRIBUTES TO READER CONFUSION
- * TRANSITIONS ARE MISSING OR OVERDONE
- * SEQUENCING MAKES LITTLE SENSE
- * PACING SHOWS VERY LIMITED CONTROL
- * BEGINNING, MIDDLE AND END—MISSING OR INEFFECTIVE

VERY LITTLE
STRUCTURE

1

- * STRUCTURE IS MISSING OR INEFFECTIVE
- * TRANSITIONS ARE MISSING
- * SEQUENCING IS ILLOGICAL OR NOT PRESENT
- * PACING IS NOT EVIDENT
- * NO REAL BEGINNING, MIDDLE OR END - RANDOM



VOICE

KEY POINTS

BEGS TO BE
READ

6

- ⚙ AUDIENCE AWARENESS IS EXCEPTIONAL
- ⚙ TAKES A RISK—REVEALS THE INDIVIDUAL
- ⚙ COMMITMENT TO TOPIC STANDS OUT
- ⚙ TONE IS INTERESTING, COMPELLING, LIVELY
- ⚙ CONTROL AND CONSISTENCY THROUGHOUT

STRONG,
HOLDS
INTEREST

5

- ⚙ AUDIENCE AWARENESS STRONGLY PRESENT
- ⚙ TAKES A RISK—MAY GET "CARRIED AWAY" IN PLACES
- ⚙ COMMITMENT TO TOPIC IS STRONG
- ⚙ HOLDS THE READER'S INTEREST
- ⚙ CONSISTENT

VOICE IS
PRESENT

4

- ⚙ AUDIENCE AWARENESS IS PRESENT
- ⚙ TAKES A FEW RISKS THAT REVEAL THE INDIVIDUAL
- ⚙ NOT FULLY COMMITTED OR ENGAGED
- ⚙ SINCERE BUT NOT COMPELLING
- ⚙ CONSISTENT, BUT SOMEWHAT STILTED

LIMITED
VOICE

3

- ⚙ LIMITED AUDIENCE AWARENESS
- ⚙ LIMITED SENSE OF THE PERSON BEHIND THE WORDS
- ⚙ COMMITMENT TO THE TOPIC IS NOT CONVINCING
- ⚙ TEDIOUS TO READ
- ⚙ A GLIMMER OF INDIVIDUAL VOICE HERE AND THERE

LITTLE
INVOLVEMENT

2

- ⚙ LITTLE AUDIENCE AWARENESS
- ⚙ TAKES NO RISKS
- ⚙ LITTLE, IF ANY COMMITMENT TO THE TOPIC
- ⚙ FLAT AND MECHANICAL
- ⚙ A "GET THIS OVER WITH" KIND OF RESPONSE

VOICE IS
HARD TO
HEAR

1

- ⚙ AUDIENCE AWARENESS IMPOSSIBLE TO DISCERN
- ⚙ NO SENSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL BEHIND THE WORDS
- ⚙ NO COMMITMENT TO THE TOPIC, OR MEANING IS SO IMPAIRED THAT THE READER CANNOT CONNECT
- ⚙ MOOD, TONE OR FEELING NOT DISCERNIBLE



WORD CHOICE

KEY POINTS

PRECISE AND
COLORFUL

6

- ⦿ ACCURATE, SPECIFIC—CHOOSES WORDS CAREFULLY
- ⦿ NATURAL—SIMPLE WORDS USED IN AN UNUSUAL WAY
- ⦿ FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE EFFECTIVE, VIVID, MEMORABLE
- ⦿ VIVID AND STRIKING PHRASES
- ⦿ EXTENSIVE RANGE FOR GRADE LEVEL

EFFECTIVE
AND
ACCURATE

5

- ⦿ ACCURATE AND SPECIFIC
- ⦿ NATURAL
- ⦿ FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE WORKS WELL
- ⦿ STRETCHES TO USE PRECISE LANGUAGE
- ⦿ WIDE RANGE

FUNCTIONAL

4

- ⦿ ACCURATE, EVERY-DAY WORDS USED WELL
- ⦿ MAY OVERUSE THE THESAURUS
- ⦿ A FEW ATTEMPTS AT FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE
- ⦿ PICKS WORDS THAT "WILL DO"
- ⦿ ORDINARY RANGE FOR GRADE LEVEL

GENERIC

3

- ⦿ GENERAL, DULL WORDS OVERUSED
- ⦿ SOME WORD CHOICE IS INACCURATE
- ⦿ ATTEMPTS AT FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE NOT EFFECTIVE
- ⦿ REPETITION BEGINS TO IMPAIR THE MESSAGE
- ⦿ SIMPLISTIC RANGE

CONFUSING

2

- ⦿ INACCURATE, MISUSED WORDS
- ⦿ NOT NATURAL SOUNDING
- ⦿ READER MUST WORK TO INTERPRET MEANING
- ⦿ REPETITION EARMARKS THE WRITING
- ⦿ LIMITED RANGE

LITTLE
MEANING IS
CONVEYED

1

- ⦿ WORDS MAKE LITTLE SENSE
- ⦿ VERY UNNATURAL
- ⦿ READER STRUGGLES TO DECODE WORDS, MEANING
- ⦿ RANDOM AND/OR REPTITIVE
- ⦿ EXTREMELY LIMITED RANGE



SENTENCE FLUENCY

KEY POINTS

VARIED AND
FLUID

6

- ✱ WELL CONSTRUCTED TO ENHANCE MEANING
- ✱ LENGTH AND STRUCTURE VARIED
- ✱ SENTENCE BEGINNINGS VARIED
- ✱ CONNECTIONS WORK EFFORTLESSLY BETWEEN SENTENCES
- ✱ CADENCE, RHYTHM INVITE ORAL READING

EASY FLOW
AND RHYTHM

5

- ✱ WELL CONSTRUCTED-NOT ALWAYS GRACEFUL
- ✱ LENGTH AND STRUCTURE USUALLY VARIED
- ✱ SENTENCE BEGINNINGS USUALLY VARIED
- ✱ CONNECTIONS ARE SMOOTH WITH A FEW BUMPS
- ✱ READS WELL ORALLY

MORE
MECHANICAL
THAN FLUID

4

- ✱ SOUNDLY CONSTRUCTED AND FUNCTIONAL
- ✱ LENGTH AND STRUCTURE SOMETIMES VARIED
- ✱ SENTENCE BEGINNINGS NOT ALL THE SAME
- ✱ CONNECTIONS BETWEEN SENTENCES SOMETIMES MISSING OR FOLLOW A PREDICTABLE PATTERN
- ✱ ORAL READING GETS THE MESSAGE ACROSS

CHOPPY

3

- ✱ CONSTRUCTION IS GENERALLY CORRECT
- ✱ LENGTH AND STRUCTURE VARY A LITTLE
- ✱ SEVERAL SENTENCES BEGIN THE SAME WAY
- ✱ CONNECTIONS ARE OBTRUSIVE OR TOO PREDICTABLE
- ✱ MONOTONOUS, BUT READABLE

LITTLE
SENTENCE
SENSE

2

- ✱ STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS IMPAIR THE MEANING
- ✱ READER HAS TO MENTALLY "RECONSTRUCT"
- ✱ LENGTH AND STRUCTURE RELY ON ONE PATTERN
- ✱ SENTENCES BEGIN THE SAME WAY, OR GO ON AND ON
- ✱ NOT EASY TO READ ORALLY

RECOGNIZABLE
STRUCTURE
NOT PRESENT

1

- ✱ STRUCTURE IS MISSING
- ✱ SENTENCES DO NOT HANG TOGETHER
- ✱ JUMBLED AND CONFUSING—HARD TO READ



CONVENTIONS

KEY POINTS

MASTERY AND
STYLISTIC
CREATIVITY

6

- ⊗ SPELLING IS ACCURATE, EVEN ON "HARD" WORDS
- ⊗ PUNCTUATION USUALLY CORRECT AND USED WELL FOR EFFECT
- ⊗ CAPITALIZATION ACCURATE
- ⊗ GRAMMAR AND USAGE ACCURATE
- ⊗ PARAGRAPHING—SOUND AND LOGICAL

NEEDS MINOR
EDITING

5

- ⊗ SPELLING IS USUALLY ACCURATE
- ⊗ PUNCTUATION MAY HAVE SOME FLAWS, BUT A HIGH LEVEL OF ATTEMPT IS EVIDENT
- ⊗ CAPITALIZATION IS USUALLY ACCURATE
- ⊗ GRAMMAR AND USAGE CONTAINS A FEW SLIPS
- ⊗ PARAGRAPHING—USUALLY SOUND

ERRORS DO
NOT IMPAIR
READABILITY

4

- ⊗ SPELLING IS NOT ALWAYS ACCURATE, ESPECIALLY FOR COMMONLY MISPELLED OR "HARD" WORDS
- ⊗ END PUNCTUATION IS SOUND; INTERNAL COMMAS AND USE OF COLONS, SEMI-COLONS, QUOTATIONS MAY CONTAIN ERRORS
- ⊗ CAPITALIZATION IS MOSTLY ACCURATE
- ⊗ GRAMMAR AND USAGE HAVE A FEW PROBLEMS (AGREEMENT, TENSE)
- ⊗ PARAGRAPHS ARE INDENTED, BUT NOT ALWAYS IN THE RIGHT PLACE

ERRORS MAKE
READER SLOW
DOWN

3

- ⊗ SPELLING IS SPOTTY BUT DECODABLE
- ⊗ END PUNCTUATION MAY BE MISSING
- ⊗ CAPITALIZATION IS SPOTTY FOR PROPER NOUNS
- ⊗ GRAMMAR AND USAGE BEGIN TO DISTRACT FROM THE MESSAGE
- ⊗ PARAGRAPHING IS OFF IN PLACES

IMPAIRED
READABILITY
EVERY LINE
NEEDS WORK

2

- ⊗ SPELLING OF HIGH USE WORDS IS OFTEN INCORRECT
- ⊗ END PUNCTUATION AND COMMAS ARE MISPLACED OR MISSING
- ⊗ CAPITALIZATION IS NOT CONSISTENT
- ⊗ GRAMMAR AND USAGE DO NOT MEET STANDARD ENGLISH REQUIREMENTS
- ⊗ PARAGRAPHING IS MISSING OR DOES NOT MAKE SENSE

VERY HARD TO
READ- WRITER
NEEDS HELP
EDITING

1

- ⊗ PHONETIC SPELLING
- ⊗ MISSING OR INCORRECT END PUNCTUATION, MISPLACED COMMAS
- ⊗ MISSING CAPITALIZATION ON SENTENCE BEGINNINGS
- ⊗ GRAMMAR AND USAGE SEVERELY IMPAIRED
- ⊗ PARAGRAPHING NOT PRESENT



Scoring Guide K-2 Ideas

<p>6 EXCEPTIONAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ The main idea is clear and fresh; the topic is narrowed ☉ Supporting details enhance the idea or story line ☉ Pictures (if present) offer intriguing details or clarification ☉ Development is in depth, balanced and complete ☉ Focus is maintained throughout the writing 	<p>5 EXPERIENCED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ The main idea is clear; topic is manageable ☉ Supporting details help flesh out the idea or story line ☉ Pictures (if present) add detail to the idea or story line ☉ Development includes some specific, interesting detail ☉ Focus is generally maintained 	<p>4 CAPABLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ The main idea, simple story or explanation is clear in the text ☉ Support is present and generally adds to the main idea or story line ☉ Pictures (if present) clearly connect with the main idea ☉ Development is general, broad strokes ☉ Focus wavers at times
<p>3 DEVELOPING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ The main idea is stated in text, or easily inferred ☉ Support is present, but minimal—a few details ☉ Pictures (if present) offer detail not present in the text ☉ Development is sketchy (either very short or repetitive) ☉ Focus: a list of words about the topic, or a few related sentences 	<p>2 EMERGING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ The main idea can be inferred through words, labels, title, pictures, or symbols ☉ Support is present in a general way—words, pictures, symbols seem to stem from the central idea ☉ Pictures (if present) help to communicate the idea ☉ Development—not yet ☉ Focus—elements seem to relate 	<p>1 BEGINNING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Main idea is not yet clear (scribbles, random letters) ☉ Support—not yet ☉ Pictures (if present) not yet ☉ Development: not yet ☉ Focus: not yet



Scoring Guide K-2 Organization

<p>6 EXCEPTIONAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">⚙ The structure complements the purpose and content⚙ Picture elements (if present) show balance and planning⚙ Transitions are varied and smooth⚙ Sequencing is logical, arranged for the greatest impact⚙ An engaging lead and developed conclusion are present⚙ Format is clear, assists reader orientation	<p>5 EXPERIENCED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">⚙ The structure leads the reader through the piece smoothly⚙ Pictures elements (if present) show thoughtful planning⚙ Transitions are varied⚙ Sequencing makes sense (steps in a process, chronology in a story)⚙ A strong lead and satisfying concluding sentence are present⚙ Format shows care in arrangement of elements on the page	<p>4 CAPABLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">⚙ A predictable structure is present and effective⚙ Picture elements (if present) work in a general way⚙ Transitions are present, but predictable (first, second, third, etc.)⚙ Sequencing may need more attention, but reader can follow⚙ Generic lead and conclusion are present (Once upon a time, The end).⚙ Format helps reader pick out important things
<p>3 DEVELOPING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">⚙ Basic structure observable in the text and pictures⚙ Picture elements (if present) may appear crowded, out of scale, but the reader can grasp the general meaning⚙ Transitions are limited, repetitive or not present⚙ Introductory sentence works for the lead—ending not present.⚙ Format is simple but clear	<p>2 EMERGING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">⚙ Structure shows a beginning sense of where things go on the page⚙ Pictures (if present) show signs of order and balance⚙ Transitions: not yet⚙ Sequencing: not yet⚙ A label, title or a few words begin to introduce the topic—no ending⚙ Format shows awareness of left to right, top to bottom, picture separated from words and letters	<p>1 BEGINNING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">⚙ Structure: not yet (scattered, random letters, or none)⚙ Pictures (if present) are hard to decipher—random scribbles, etc.⚙ Sequencing: not yet⚙ Beginning/ending: not yet⚙ Format clues: not yet



Scoring Guide K-2 Voice

<p>6 EXCEPTIONAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Powerful, expressive voice is heard consistently throughout the piece* Pictures (if present) contribute to the mood, atmosphere or point of view* Begs to be read aloud* Unique, individual, committed to the topic* Engages the audience	<p>5 EXPERIENCED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Opinions, feelings are clearly expressed* Pictures (if present) accentuate the voice expressed in the writing* Reads well aloud* Clear impression of the person behind the words* Speaks directly to the audience or sustains reader's interest	<p>4 CAPABLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* The writer makes feelings, opinion, viewpoint clear-or easy to infer* Pictures (if present) support writer's feelings, mood, atmosphere* Parts of the piece read well aloud* Individual expression is present* Audience awareness is present or implied
<p>3 DEVELOPING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* A word or two reflects the writer's feeling (fun, like); exclamation point, capitals etc.* Pictures show expression in faces and details* Audience awareness is present in a general way* A general impression of feeling, mood is evident* A general feeling is captured in words and/or pictures	<p>2 EMERGING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Not enough text is present to convey mood, feeling or action* Pictures(if present) convey voice vaguely through color, action, expression* Audience awareness: not yet present or clear* Individual expression is hard to find* A feeling can be inferred from clues in the text and pictures	<p>1 BEGINNING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* As yet, no text is present to convey mood, feeling, or action* Pictures (if present) are difficult to interpret* Audience awareness: not yet* Individual expression is reflected in markings, scribbles, floating letters, etc.* The reader is not sure what mood or feeling is intended



Scoring Guide K-2

Word Choice

<p>6 EXCEPTIONAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Words alone convey a complete story, opinion or informational pieceWord choice is thoughtful, striking or memorableVocabulary shows refinement, search for precisionRepetition rarely occurs	<p>5 EXPERIENCED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Words alone convey the message in several sentencesWord choice contains moments of sparkle; everyday words used wellThe vocabulary shows accuracy and attempts to use new wordsRepetition occurs in a few places	<p>4 CAPABLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The words convey a simple message, story line or informational pieceWords are basic and used accuratelyVocabulary is mostly routine, with a few exceptionsRepetition is noticeable but does not impair the message
<p>3 DEVELOPING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Word groups, sentence parts convey the message with some help from picturesWord choice is limited but manages to convey the ideaVocabulary is limited to “known” or “safe” wordsRepetition of “safe” words and phrases	<p>2 EMERGING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A few words begin to emergeWord choice is difficult to decode—reader can't be sureVocabulary relies on copied words from prompts, environmental wordsRepetition: may repeat letters, alphabet, name, etc.	<p>1 BEGINNING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">No words are present (imitative writing)Word choice: not presentVocabulary: not presentRepetition: inconsistent letter shapes, imitative writing or none



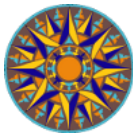
Scoring Guide K-2 Sentence Fluency

<p>6 EXCEPTIONAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">⊗ Several sentences are present in the text with some variety in structure and length⊗ Sentence beginnings are varied⊗ Rhythm is fluid and pleasant to read aloud⊗ Connective words within sentences add to fluency	<p>5 EXPERIENCED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">⊗ Several sentences are present-more than one sentence pattern⊗ Sentence beginnings have some variety⊗ Rhythm is more fluid than mechanical—easy to read aloud⊗ Connective words do not interfere with the fluency	<p>4 CAPABLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">⊗ Reliance on simple sentence patterns earmarks the writing⊗ Sentences do not <i>all</i> begin the same way⊗ Rhythm is more mechanical than fluid⊗ Some overuse of connective words (<i>and, and then, then I, so</i>) is present, but does not dominate
<p>3 DEVELOPING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">⊗ Most of a sentence is present in the text (<i>Like tigres becuz ther riree Fas</i>)⊗ Sentences begin the same way⊗ Rhythm is choppy and repetitive⊗ Connective words tack sentence parts together	<p>2 EMERGING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">⊗ Part of a sentence may be present (<i>Cus dogo bit</i>)⊗ Words are limited and/or repetitive⊗ Rhythm: not present⊗ Connective words may appear in sentence parts	<p>1 BEGINNING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">⊗ No sentences or sentence parts are present in the text⊗ The marks, lines or scribbles show beginning of word “sense”⊗ Words stand alone⊗ Connectives: not present



Scoring Guide K-2 Conventions

<p>6 EXCEPTIONAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✱ Capitalization is accurate for sentence beginnings, proper names, titles ✱ End punctuation, commas in series, other varied uses for stylistic effect ✱ Spelling: grade level words and “hard” words spelled phonetically, if not accurately ✱ Grammar and usage: accurate ✱ Paragraphing: consistent indentation for paragraphs 	<p>5 EXPERIENCED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✱ Capitalization: capitals for sentence beginnings, proper names, titles usually correct ✱ Punctuation: end punctuation usually correct—some varied uses present ✱ Spelling: usually accurate for grade level words ✱ Grammar and usage: usually accurate ✱ Paragraphing: first line indented 	<p>4 CAPABLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✱ Capitalization: capitals for sentence beginnings, proper names, titles (if applicable) is present ✱ Punctuation: end punctuation is present ✱ Spelling: high use grade level words mostly correct; phonetic spelling easy to decode ✱ Grammar and usage: subject/verb agreement, tense, still spotty ✱ Paragraphing: spotty, or not present
<p>3 DEVELOPING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✱ Capitalization: beginning sentence, proper names, titles (if applicable) still inconsistent ✱ Punctuation: period or other punctuation is present somewhere ✱ Spelling: phonetic spelling decodable; accurate spelling of some words ✱ Grammar and usage: a grammatical construction is present, but missing parts ✱ Paragraphing: not present 	<p>2 EMERGING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✱ Capitalization: random use of upper and lower case letters ✱ Punctuation: none or random ✱ Spelling: Phonetic, some decodable, a few simple words ✱ Grammar and usage: a noun and a verb are present ✱ Paragraphing: not present 	<p>1 BEGINNING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✱ Capitalization: print sense still emerging ✱ Punctuation: not present ✱ Spelling: pre-phonetic or not present ✱ Grammar and usage: not present ✱ Paragraphing: not present



6 Trait Scoring Guide Ideas

<p>6 The writing reflects in-depth knowledge and experience with the topic; key, balanced support and well chosen, intriguing details enrich the main idea.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ A strong main idea stands out clearly; topic is narrowed and well managed ☉ Key support and quality, intriguing details enhance the ideas ☉ Experience and knowledge show surprising depth ☉ Development is generous, balanced and complete; reader questions are answered. ☉ The writing stays focused and holds the reader's attention 	<p>5 The writing reflects a strong exploration of the topic; relevant support and accurate details add credibility to the main idea.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Main idea is clear; topic is narrowed ☉ Accurate supporting evidence, and quality, interesting details ☉ Experience and knowledge are clearly demonstrated ☉ Development is fleshed out and complete ☉ The writing is focused and interesting 	<p>4 The writer has defined the topic clearly, although development is basic or predictable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ The main idea is a clear, but a routine take on the subject; topic needs further narrowing ☉ Support is broad; some new information, details are present ☉ Experience and knowledge of the topic is evident ☉ Development has a few gaps leaving the reader with a question or two ☉ The writing stays generally focused
<p>3 The main idea is clear, but the theme and development are broad or simplistic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Main idea needs further narrowing ☉ Support in the form of lists of facts related to the topic- "filler" ☉ Due to shaky knowledge or experience with the topic, the writer relies upon common information ☉ Development is predictable, "best guesses" ☉ The writing is loosely focused 	<p>2 Kernel ideas are present, but no one idea stands out clearly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ The writer has not yet decided on a main idea; nothing clearly stands out ☉ Support is minimal or inaccurate ☉ Reflects limited knowledge, experience with the topic ☉ Development relies on recycling the same point-many questions go unanswered ☉ The writing lacks focus, definition and purpose 	<p>1 The writing lacks coherence and a sense of purpose. Readers must infer the message and intent of the writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ Very little text is present beyond a restatement of the prompt ☉ Support, if present, only vaguely relates to an idea ☉ Very limited experience or knowledge of topic is evident ☉ Reader can find very little development for an idea ☉ Writer needs help "getting a grip" on the topic, thinking it out



6 Trait Scoring Guide Organization

<p>6 The organization carries the reader through the text effortlessly. The order, structure and sequencing of the information enhances the ideas and creates impact where needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Well-crafted structure guides the reader through the text without bumps or joltsStrong lead creates “great expectations”- conclusion follows naturally from previous informationSequencing shows logic, planning for greatest impactTransitions link ideas and paragraphs smoothly, effortlesslyPacing matches the purpose—speeds up or slows down as neededParagraphs act as building blocks—units of development for thesis or storyline	<p>5 The organization effectively prepares the reader for the information that follows and carries the reader through to the conclusion smoothly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Strong structure with a sense of directionInviting lead, and thoughtful, satisfying conclusionSequencing shows planning-nothing out of orderEffective transitions do their job without commanding too much attentionPacing works consistently with the information or storylineParagraphs effectively develop the theme	<p>4 The organization works well, although there are a few places where it “takes over” or needs smoothing out.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The structure is predictable, but works to support the idea without overshadowing itFunctional lead and conclusionSequencing generally effectiveTransitions keep ideas, paragraphs linkedPacing works where it matters (to bring home the point or the punchline)Paragraphs are soundly constructed and adequately developed
<p>3 Formulaic organization overshadows the ideas, grace and flow of the writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Organization takes over with predictable, formulaic structureLead and conclusion are mechanical repetitions of each other, OR conclusion is rushed, abruptSequencing shows poor planning (“Oops, I forgot to say in the last paragraph...”)Transitions are present, but overdonePacing drags with repetitious information or irrelevant materialParagraphs are inconsistently structured, a few without a topic sentence or point to make	<p>2 A great deal of work is needed to make the organization work effectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Loose structure fails to provide cohesion; does not help to clarify the ideaLead or conclusion missingSequencing needs work to make sense of the story or messageTransitions do not fit the type of writing attempted, or are missingPacing plods along at the same beat with no change, or skips via “cut and paste” without warningParagraphs are loose bits, or one long one	<p>1 Structure is missing, leaving the reader with no clear sense of direction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">No sense of direction drives the ideaStarts and stops without a warning (no lead or conclusion)Sequencing jumps all over the place both logically and chronologicallyTransitions confuse, rather than clarify-or are missingPacing does not help to emphasize what is importantParagraphs are missing or do not hang together-writer needs help planning



6 Trait Scoring Guide

Voice

<p>6 The writer speaks directly to the audience in a way that is compelling, individual and engaging.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✱ Individual stamp, deep conviction, strong commitment stand out✱ Speaks directly and confidently to an audience; holds listener captive when read aloud✱ Reflects a consistent personal viewpoint; sees viewpoint of others✱ Expresses infectious love or interest in the topic✱ Skilled in keeping reader engaged, “on the hook”	<p>5 The writer speaks sincerely and appropriately for the purpose and audience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✱ Distinctive imprint of an individual✱ Marked audience awareness, invites oral reading✱ Personal viewpoint comes across- others' suggested or implied; easy to read aloud✱ Sincerely cares about the topic and wants reader to agree, understand✱ Keeps the voice consistent, appropriate, interesting	<p>4 The writer seems sincere, but not fully engaged or confident. The tone is pleasant, but not compelling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✱ Recognizable as the writing of an individual; sincere and pleasant✱ Speaks appropriately to the audience—a little stilted, tenuous✱ Reflects a personal viewpoint and hints at viewpoints of others; some read aloud moments✱ Seems engaged in the writing, but plays it “safe”✱ Consistent; sometimes takes a risk
<p>3 It is difficult to hear a unique moment in the writing, because the viewpoint expressed is generic, conventional.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✱ The person behind the words conveys little about himself/herself✱ May contain a few read aloud moments to spark the audience✱ Writer holds back personal viewpoint, in favor of generic responses✱ Reader senses uncertainty with topic; writer tries to cover up or rush through✱ Holds promise, but needs stronger knowledge/experience base to build confidence	<p>2 It is hard to find a word or phrase that expresses the writer's opinion, viewpoint or reaction to the subject; little audience awareness is present.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✱ Reader is hard put to find a distinctive, personable moment✱ Not ready to read aloud—reads like a list, robotic sounding✱ Writer is either indifferent or “at sea” with the topic; adopts an unconvincing or inconsistent viewpoint✱ Reader is “left out” because writing addresses no one in particular✱ Voice is barely there	<p>1 The writer seems indifferent to the subject and audience, leaving the reader to wonder about the purpose of the writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✱ No sense of an individual writing this yet✱ Not written to be read aloud✱ Writer's struggle with understanding the topic generates faint viewpoint✱ Reader must infer what's going on, how reader feels about the topic✱ Writer needs to start with a topic he or she knows more about



6 Trait Scoring Guide

Word Choice

<p>6 Words convey the message with precision, accuracy and color. Memorable phrases and striking images reflect a writer who chooses words thoughtfully.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word choice stands out; original, striking, precise • Strong vocabulary takes the place of many “little” words • Varied transitional words and phrases clarify and smoothly link paragraphs • Chooses verbs with power and adjectives that distinguish shades of meaning • Words create lasting images, impressions with noticeable style 	<p>5 Many word choices reflect a writer striving to convey the message with specific, accurate and colorful words and phrases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses natural words in an unusual way-- accurate and well chosen • Knows key words, vocabulary that fits the subject • Manages links between ideas clearly with different transitional words and phrases • Strong verbs and adjectives earmark the piece • Words draw a clear picture and convey the message well; some memorable words and phrases are present 	<p>4 The language is generic, with occasional sparks of energy conveyed through a few powerful words or attempts at imagery. The message is conveyed in functional language, easy to understand.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every day words convey the message, rarely capture reader's imagination • Stronger vocabulary would help reduce areas of wordiness • Uses predictable transitional words and phrases to link and clarify • Some strong verbs and adjectives help to add texture and sparkle • Words do their job—help reader understand the main message clearly
<p>3 In places, vague, overused, or trite words dominate, but do not obscure the message.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vague words, OR misused thesaurus words • Vocabulary needs work, although the message is understood—wordiness is a problem in places • Unvaried connecting words begin to confuse, rather than clarify relationship between ideas • A strong word or phrase shows that the writer <i>can</i> do it • Words convey the basic idea, but lack precision, color and accuracy 	<p>2 The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary or uses the wrong words in key places. More specific word choice would help the reader grasp the ideas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repetition of vague, overused words predominate • Writer struggles with a limited vocabulary • Connecting words, transitions (<i>so, and, and so, then</i>) overwhelm the text • Dull words bog down the reader-- add little to the meaning • Reader must sort through confusing or misused words 	<p>1 The reader struggles to understand the intent and meaning of the words used. Repetition of the same words and phrases lead the reader in a circle of confusion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effort and struggle are evident in the few words on the page • Writer recycles the same word or words due to an extremely limited vocabulary • Missing or misused transitions, connecting words, keeps reader looking for direction • Has not yet acquired understanding of common words • The message is not coming through with the words chosen



6 Trait Scoring Guide

Sentence Fluency

<p>6 Well constructed sentences flow smoothly from one to the next, with a marked rhythm and cadence that invites oral reading.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grammatically sound and varied sentences enhance rhythm and impact meaning Varied in length, structure and complexity Stylistic control, flexibility, established and consistent (uses fragments, dialogue correctly) Varied sentence beginnings (and endings) are crafted to make smooth connections Phrases, clauses and connectives smoothly clarify Reading aloud reveals a writer tuned to the rhythm and flow of language 	<p>5 Correct structure with moments of strong fluency; varied patterns and lengths throughout.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sound sentences, varied and fluid; key ideas enhanced by sentence structure Varied in length and structure Stylistic control is established and consistent (fragments and dialogue well done) Puts in effort to vary sentence beginnings Uses phrases, clauses, connectives well A pleasure to read aloud 	<p>4 Although functional and generally well constructed, the sentences sometimes fall into a mechanical rhythm that would benefit from more variety in length and pattern.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences generally constructed correctly, but may fall into a mechanical rhythm Some variation in length and structure is present Stylistic control is not yet consistent (fragments look like incomplete sentences) Sentence beginnings show reasonable variation Connecting words and transitions are sometimes missing, or tacked on awkwardly Parts of the writing invite oral reading
<p>3 Technically correct sentences may rely on the same, simple sentence pattern, creating a sing-song rhythm that is hard on the ear.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences are generally correct, but repetition creates a monotonous or choppy rhythm Variety is needed to break up the even, uniform beat Style is developing, not yet established Favors the same sentence beginnings with a little variation Sentences need stronger, more varied, inter-connections; overuse of <i>and</i>, <i>then</i>, <i>first</i>, <i>second</i>, <i>etc.</i> Reading aloud clearly points to revisions that will make the difference 	<p>2 Even some of the easier sentences have structural problems that cause the reader to slow down and reconstruct in order to get through the text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences are poorly constructed, even when reader “mentally” supplies missing punctuation Reconstruction of basic patterns, as well as introduction to other patterns is needed Many sentences begin the same way Connectives may be overused, stringing sentences together in endless succession with “and”, for example Reader must reread to get meaning 	<p>1 Sentences need reconstruction, probably with help, in order to derive their intended meaning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reader has a hard time figuring out where sentences begin and end Many sentences need reconstruction, even simple ones Help is needed to get a sentence started Connectives are not yet present or appear everywhere Problems with sentences impair the message



6 Trait Scoring Guide Conventions

<p>6 Mastery of basic conventions plus stylistic, creative use of conventions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✱ Spelling reflects mastery of common, technical, domain specific words✱ Punctuation reflects mastery of basic rules, plus stylistic applications✱ Capitalization reflects mastery of basic rules for sentence beginnings, proper nouns, etc.✱ Grammar and usage reflect strong control✱ Very little editing needed	<p>5 Mastery of basic conventions, some stylistic applications present.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✱ Spelling reflects mastery of common, technical, domain specific words with a few errors✱ Punctuation reflects mastery of basic rules with a few exceptions✱ Capitalization reflects mastery of basic rules✱ Grammar and usage are usually accurate✱ A few things need editing for publication	<p>4 Errors are noticeable but do not impair readability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✱ Spelling reflects spotty errors in commonly misspelled, technical or domain specific words✱ Punctuation reflects consistency in basic rules, but not always for more difficult applications✱ Capitalization reflects consistency for basic rules with a few exceptions✱ A few problems in grammar and usage (agreement, tense, etc.)✱ Needs a general going over prior to publication
<p>3 Errors are numerous enough to slow the reader.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✱ Spelling is inconsistent, even on common words✱ Punctuation reflects some knowledge of rules, but contains errors that distract✱ Capitalization reflects some knowledge of basic rules, but application is not consistent✱ Noticeable errors in grammar and usage✱ A thorough going over is needed prior to publication	<p>2 Shaky control over basic conventions causes reader to reread.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✱ Spelling errors cause reader to stop and decode✱ Punctuation is missing or inaccurate in many places✱ Capitalization basic rules inconsistent✱ Grammar and usage errors distract the reader✱ Every line needs work prior to publication	<p>1 So many errors are present, the message is impaired.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✱ Spelling errors seriously impair the message (hard to decode)✱ Punctuation is random or missing✱ Capitalization random or not present✱ Basic control of grammar and usage not present✱ Editing assistance is required

PROMPTS FOR BEGINNERS K-2

Drawings are encouraged for students still learning how to form words and sentences. The drawing sometimes conveys the main idea, such as a drawing of a zebra for the "Favorite Animal" prompt. If the student's writing for the word "zebra" is not decodable, the drawing, and details on the drawing, will communicate the idea. Beginners are free to refer to environmental words, alphabets, trait posters, etc., posted in the classroom. Please use paper for Kindergarten students that includes a "picture box" (see attached form for one option).

As children learn to convey their ideas in writing, the drawings are no longer needed unless the student wants to include a visual aid to enhance, clarify or support the main idea. By second grade, students are usually (but not always) able to communicate through text alone.

Titles help beginning writers summarize their topic and often serve as the first organizational element on the page. For a template that includes a title line, go to <http://www.oregonraters.com/TemplateK-2>.

Informational/Expository Prompts K-2

Think of something you made with your own hands. What did you make? What materials did you need? **Explain what you made and how you did it.**

Think of an animal you know something about. Write down the **facts** you know about this animal.

Think of something you do well. You have a friend who wants to learn the same thing. Write down the steps **explaining how** to do it.

Think of a tool you know how to use. It could be a kitchen tool, a gaming tool, an art tool, a garden tool—any kind of tool. **Explain** what the tool is, what it is used for, and how you learned to use the tool.

Write a letter to your teacher. **Explain** what part of the day you like best, and why this part of the day is special to you.

Opinion/Persuasive Prompts K-2

Your teacher cannot decide what classroom pet is best. What do you think would make a good classroom pet? Write a letter to your teacher with **convincing reasons why** your choice is the best.

Do you have a favorite book or story? Write the title of the book and **give convincing reasons why** this book is so special. Draw a picture of something you like in the book.

What is your favorite animal? It could be an animal you have seen at the zoo, in books or on television—it could be a pet you know at school or at home. **Why do you think your animal is special and interesting?** Draw a picture to show details you think are important about your special animal.

What is your favorite season of the year, winter, spring, summer or fall? **What are your reasons** for choosing this season? Write about your reasons for liking the season you chose.

What is your favorite place to spend time with family or friends? It could be indoors or outdoors, at home or far away. Write about the place where you love to be. Draw a picture with **details to show why** you enjoy this special place.

Narrative Prompts K-2

Think about a special day you had with family or friends. It could be a trip, a project, or a holiday celebration. **Tell the story** of what happened on this special day.

We all make mistakes in our lives. **Write a story** about a big mistake you have made. What happened?

Think of a friend you have, in or out of school. **Tell one story** that you remember whenever you think of this friend.

Do you remember a vacation that was lots of fun? Maybe it was a trip, camping in the backyard or going to the beach. **Tell the story** of a special vacation that you like to remember.

Descriptive Prompts K-2

Describe a place that's so special to you that you love just thinking about it. Write about your special place. Where is it? What does it look like?

Imaginary Prompts K-2

If you could be any kind of insect, what would you want to be? What would you look like? Where would you live? What would you like to do all day?

Imagine you could stop a character in a fairy tale or book from making a BIG MISTAKE. What would you say or do to stop this character from making the mistake? **Write a story** about a character in a book you stop from making a big mistake. Pretend you are in the story with them.

Prompts, Elementary 3-5

Note: The words in boldface match the purpose and type of writing elicited by the prompt.

Informational/Expository Prompts 3-5

We have been hearing a lot about stormy weather affecting people all over the world. Forecasters try hard to warn people before a storm hits, so that everyone is prepared. What can everyone do *before* the storm, to be prepared for a long spell with the power out, trees down, roads blocked, etc. **Explain what steps** you and your family take to prepare for the power going out.

Write about a memorable person in your life. It could be a teacher, a family member or a friend. Include enough information so that the reader will be interested and will **understand why** you remember this person.

Think about an expert speaker at a school assembly, field trip, zoo, museum, or other place, who taught you surprising facts and new information about a subject. **Explain** the subject, and **report** the information you learned from the expert.

Think of a teacher you will never forget. What reasons do you have for choosing this person? Write a paper with lots of details to **explain why** you will never forget this teacher.

Having their faces on postage stamps has honored many people, both real and fictional. Choose a real or fictional person **who in your opinion** deserves this honor, and include details about the person that **explain the reasons** for your choice.

Many families have favorite traditions, customs and celebrations. **Explain** your favorite custom or celebration to a friend who may not know about this tradition. Include interesting and specific details including what food, decorations, costumes, music or other things make this event special.

Everyone has chores or responsibilities such as cleaning, yard work, caring for pets or younger siblings. What are your responsibilities at home or at school? Write a paper **explaining** what you do, and tell the reader why your job is important to you and to others.

Pretend your class is planning to preserve an important artifact for the future generation to find in 100 years. This artifact will tell people in the future what technology on earth was like in the year 2013. Write a paper to EXPLAIN what **ONE** object you would choose, and tell what information you think the future people will learn from it.

Do you have an object that has special meaning, only to you? Write about a special object, something you found, made, or keep because it reminds of you a special time or a special person. **Explain** what the object is, and tell **why** you value it so much.

There are many things we can do to make our environment safer and healthier. Identify **one** problem in your school that could affect everyone's health and/or safety, whether it's in the classroom, the playground, lunchroom or halls. What actions can people take to reduce or solve the problem? Write a paper **explaining** the problem and your solution.

Opinion/Persuasive/Argumentative Prompts 3-5

In your opinion, is it better to be the *oldest*, *youngest*, *middle*, or the *only* child in the family? What are your reasons for your choice? **Write a convincing essay** to prove your claim.

A special Young Reader's Book Award is going to be given to a book that is popular with students at your grade level. Write a paper to **convince** judges to choose the book you think is the best one. The judges want you to write about the reasons this is a good book, not just retell the story.

Think about ONE improvement you would like to make at your school. Write about why you think that change would be good for other people—students, teachers, other staff members—and try to **convince** an adult to make the change you want.

Imagine that a new family moved in next door, and now you have a neighbor your age who will be going to your school. Your neighbor is worried about the change. **Write a convincing letter** to help him or her look forward to going to your school.

Narrative Prompts 3-5

Tell the story of a favorite experience you had with a special person. Include details in your story that help the reader see why this experience is special to you.

Children are always being told to listen to their parents, teachers, elders, and other adults. Write about a warning, advice or other "wise words" someone said that came back to you at a crucial moment when you needed help. **Tell the story** of what happened.

People often do things that make them proud. It could be getting a good grade in school, helping a team win a game, accomplishing a goal, or doing something nice for someone else. Think about a time you were proud of yourself. **Tell the story** of what happened.

Think of a time you felt challenged to do something you weren't sure you could do. What did you do? How did it turn out? **Tell the story of what happened.**

Descriptive Prompts 3-5

Describe your favorite place in a way that the reader can visualize this location, and will know exactly why you like to be there. Think about the sights, sounds, and smells of the place you love to be. **Write a description** of your favorite place.

Think of a person in your life, past or present, you will never forget. In a descriptive piece of writing, **describe** this person so clearly that another person can "see" him or her.

Imaginative Prompts 3-5

Pretend your class could choose a super hero to teach your class for one day. What super hero would you choose? **Make up a story** about the day a super hero was your teacher for a day.

Imagine a time when you and a friend found a secret message in a bottle. Create a story about where you found the bottle, what the message said, and what you did to help the person who wrote the message. **Write an imaginary story** about a message in a bottle.

Prompts, Intermediate 6-8

Informational/Expository Prompts 6-8

At our middle school we have talked a lot about “bullying” and “harassing” behaviors. Define these terms and discuss to what degree you believe these types of behaviors occur in your school. Why does this happen, and what can students and faculty do to help prevent these types of behaviors? **Explain** your view.

Everyone is an “expert” at something. Think of something you learned how to do after lots of practice. Now pretend you are going to teach a younger person how to do this. What materials or equipment is needed? What is the best way to go about learning this? Write a paper **explaining the steps** to becoming an expert like you.

Celebrations bring us together. Holidays, birthdays, religious and sports events are cause for celebration. Come up with a new holiday to celebrate. What would you name this holiday? **Explain why** you want this holiday, and ways to celebrate it.

You have just read a book in which the teenagers in the story must adjust to difficult changes in their lives. Think about a change in your life and how you dealt with it. Explain what the change was, and how you adjusted to it. **Explain** the situation in a paper, including important details that will help readers understand why this was hard for you.

Think about the most valuable object you have that was not bought in a store. It can be a something you found or received at a special time in your life. **Explain** what the thing of value is, and inform him or her why it is so valuable to you.

Think about a character in a book, real or fictional who you think makes a good role model. In an informative essay, **explain why** you think this person sets a good example for you and for others.

Not all of your learning takes place at school. Think of one special skill you learned OUTSIDE of school from a “mentor”—a grandparent, older brother or sister, or friend. First, tell what you learned. Next, describe the learning situation. Then, **explain why** learning this skill was fun or helpful in your life.

Opinion/Persuasive/Argumentative Prompts 6-8

Choose a character from a short story, novel or play that you feel is memorable and important. In an essay, **convince your reader** why your character stands out, through his or her actions, words or special abilities.

Is it better to be the youngest, middle, or the oldest child in the family—or, would you rather be the only child in the family? Write an essay for a group of soon-to-be parents that **state your position**, and the **reasons why you have this opinion**.

Your school is planning to make a video on “Music Eighth Graders Love”. Think about your favorite music and write a letter to the producers of the video **convincing** them to use your musical choice in the video.

People worry too much about _____. Fill in the blank with any topic you like. Then, write a paper that supports your statement. **Convince** others to agree with you.

Each year, principals have to decide which courses should be offered at school. Imagine this year your principal has asked for students’ opinions. What new class would you like to see offered at your school? Why should it be offered? Write a letter to **persuade** your principal to offer the new class you would like to take. In your letter, be sure to include a description of the class, as well as details that will **convince** your principal it is worthwhile.

Think of one object, item or gadget you own that you like well enough to recommend to others. **Write a paper to convince** an adult that this item is useful, entertaining, or helpful to have.

Narrative Prompts 6-8

Think of a time when you learned a valuable lesson. **Tell the story** of the situation or events that taught you this lesson.

Think of one experience you have had that would be hard to forget. It might be seeing someone famous or going to a special place. It might be a scary or funny or surprising. **Write the story** of what happened, including those details that you think will be hard to forget.

All of us have experienced a time when the weather has helped us have a good time or spoiled our plans. It could have been sunshine, rain, wind, flood, snow, ice or hail that made us happy or miserable. **Tell the story** about one time when the weather made a big difference in YOUR life.

Think of a time when you took care of someone. You may have taken care of a younger child, a friend, or someone new at school. You might tell how you cared for a person or animal that was hurt, ill, or lost. **Tell the story** of how you took care of someone, their pet, or their things. What did you learn from doing it?

Descriptive Prompts 6-8

Think of a special treasure that means a lot to you. **Describe** it so clearly that your reader will understand why you treasure it so much.

Imaginative Prompts 6-8

Choose a time in history when you would like to have been an eye witness to an historic "first". Imagine yourself the "only person on the scene". How would you report this event to an audience who might find it hard to believe what you are seeing actually could happen? **Write an imaginative story** about the event, and how you would tell the story to a skeptical audience.

Prompts, Secondary 9-12

Informational/Expository Prompts 9-12

Music is an important part of most people's lives. Think about a piece of music (or type of music) that is one of your personal favorites to listen to and/or perform. Write an essay **explaining** to an adult why your music is so important to you.

"It takes a village to raise a child" is an expression that you may have heard. Basically, the phrase means that parents depend on and work with other family members, friends, teachers, and people within the community to guide and direct their children to do the right thing and to stay out of harms way.

Who in your "village" has helped guide you along your journey from infancy to young adulthood? Pick a person who has been significant in your life. Write an essay **explaining** how that person has supported and influenced you.

Imagine that you have an opportunity to get a job that you have been wanting for a long time. (You get to decide what the job is). To get this job, you need to write a convincing essay **explaining why** you are the right person and why someone should choose you over others to do this.

Employers hear about lots of problems from their employees, but what they want to hear are the *solutions* to the problems. Think of a situation at home, school or work that causes a problem, however small, for everyone. Explain one or more solutions that you think would solve or alleviate the problem. Write an essay that **explains** the problem and proposes the solution, to a parent, teacher or employer.

Leisure activities are an important balance to your work. Considering the wide variety of ways to spend free time, which factors are most important to you in choosing a pastime activity? In a formal essay to your career counselor, **explain** how these factors influence your choice of leisure activities.

Opinion/Persuasive/Argumentative Prompts 9-12

Older people are often resistant to change. They like to do things the "old" way. Think of a time when you tried to convince an older person to try doing something new. Write a **persuasive argument** with compelling reasons to change an older person's viewpoint about trying something new or doing something a new way. **Anticipate the arguments** you might hear from this person, and **prove your case** that the new way is better.

AGREE OR DISAGREE: The internet is the best thing to ever happen to education.

Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, said, "You never really understand a person until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Write an opinion paper that clearly states your personal view. Support your point of view with your experience and details from the book.

Take a stand on the impact of the media on American society. Are there times, in your opinion, when the media "goes too far" reporting a story day after day about a famous athlete or movie star involved in a crime or scandal? Is it a benefit or is it a negative force in our lives? In a **persuasive essay** of several paragraphs, **defend your position** by including reasons and examples that support your point of view.

Digital piracy is a subject that generates controversy in both the movie and music industries. Spokesmen for both industries claim losses in revenue in billions of dollars due to piracy. Others point to the benefits of exposure and "free publicity" for the music or movie through wide exposure, that may actually increase sales of music, or attendance at movies. Where do you stand on the issue? **Write a convincing argumentative essay** to prove your point of view on the issue of digital piracy.

There has been much discussion about changing the age that you can get a driver's license. Some say it should be lowered from 16 to 14, and others say it should be raised to 18. Tell why you think the legal driving age should be lowered, raised, or stay the same and **persuade** the reader to your point of view.

A committee of administrators, teachers, and parents has been formed to determine what is acceptable for students to view, read, and voice in school. Some consider this censorship; others feel this is ensuring an appropriate learning environment. Take a stand. **Convince** others that your position is valid.

Studies show that teenagers need more sleep than they are able to get with school starting so early. The school board is considering a change. They propose to start and end the school day two hours later. How would this change affect you and your family? What is your position on this issue? Write a letter to the school board with **convincing arguments** to support your opinion.

Narrative Prompts 9-12

First experiences often stick with us for life. Recall a significant first. This could be a first success or failure, a first job, a first loss or any other significant first. **Tell the story of what happened** and why it is memorable.

Think of a time you made a quick decision that had significant consequences, either good or bad. Tell what happened, and what, if anything, you would do differently if you could.

Have you, or anyone you know ever been involved in a case of "mistaken identity", where someone mistook you or another person for someone else? Tell the story of what happened, and how—if at all—things got straightened out.

Think about a time you were challenged to do something for the first time. What was the challenge, and how did you meet it? Tell the story of what happened.

Descriptive Prompts 9-12

Think of a place that is so vivid in your mind you can almost feel what it is like to be there. It might be as large as a city or as tiny as a corner of one room. **Describe** this place so clearly that the reader can experience it with you.

Think of a teacher you will never forget. **Describe** this person in details that show the reader why you this person is memorable to you.

Imaginative Prompts 9-12

Imagine that you have become a famous person. You have been asked to speak at a high school graduation, to tell your story. Tell your story to the students.