

The Six Traits of Effective Writing

IDEA DEVELOPMENT: The heart, main idea, or thesis of a text; refers to the details, examples, or images that develop and support the main idea.	ORGANIZATION: The internal structure of ideas. Effective organization begins with a purposeful lead and moves toward a logical, thoughtful ending.	VOICE: You hear the writer's heart and soul, conviction and wit; the text has energy and connects you to both the writing and the writer.
<p>5 <i>Text is clear and focused; captures reader's attention.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Topic is narrow and manageable. <input type="checkbox"/> Details are relevant, interesting, vivid, accurate. <input type="checkbox"/> Point is clear; tells whole story; no trivia. <input type="checkbox"/> Details support the paper's main idea. <input type="checkbox"/> Ideas engage, inspire, or intrigue reader. <p>3 <i>Text's ideas are focused but general, obvious.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Topic is fairly broad, but understandable. <input type="checkbox"/> Details are loosely related, obvious, or dull. <input type="checkbox"/> Point vague; gives general idea; incomplete. <input type="checkbox"/> Details provide weak support for main idea. <input type="checkbox"/> Ideas leave reader guessing; not specific. <p>1 <i>Text lacks clear idea, purpose, and details.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Topic lacking; no evident focus or purpose. <input type="checkbox"/> Details are missing, incorrect, or unclear. <input type="checkbox"/> Makes no point; cannot identify main idea. <input type="checkbox"/> Details repeat each other; seem random. <input type="checkbox"/> Ideas confuse and frustrate the reader. 	<p>5 <i>Order compels, enhances, and moves ideas.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Introduction intrigues, invites; conclusion resolves. <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful transitions show how ideas connect. <input type="checkbox"/> Sequencing is logical and effective. <input type="checkbox"/> Pacing is well controlled and purposeful. <input type="checkbox"/> Organization flows smoothly; matches purpose. <p>3 <i>Order moves reader through with confusion.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Introduction and conclusion are evident, weak. <input type="checkbox"/> Transitions often work well; connections are vague. <input type="checkbox"/> Sequencing shows some logic but lacks control. <input type="checkbox"/> Pacing is inconsistent but fairly well controlled. <input type="checkbox"/> Organization offers limited support; inappropriate. <p>1 <i>Order is missing or random; no identifiable structure.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Introduction and conclusion ineffective/missing. <input type="checkbox"/> Transitions and connections absent or confusing. <input type="checkbox"/> Sequencing is random; lacks any purpose. <input type="checkbox"/> Pacing is awkward, frustrating, or missing. <input type="checkbox"/> Organization makes it hard to identify main idea. 	<p>5 <i>Writing is compelling, engaging; aware of audience.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Tone is interesting and appropriate for audience and the purpose. <input type="checkbox"/> Author's presence is evident, powerful. <input type="checkbox"/> Expository writing is committed, persuasive. <input type="checkbox"/> Narrative writing is honest, engaging, personal. <p>3 <i>Writing seems sincere but not engaged; it's plain.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Tone is nondescript; shows limited awareness of audience; not very appropriate for purpose. <input type="checkbox"/> Author sounds earnest and pleasing, but safe. <input type="checkbox"/> Expository writing shows minimal commitment. <input type="checkbox"/> Narrative writing is reasonably sincere but plain. <p>1 <i>Writer is indifferent, distanced from topic/audience.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Tone shows no awareness of audience, inappropriate for the audience or purpose. <input type="checkbox"/> Author sounds monotone, flat, even bored. <input type="checkbox"/> Expository writing lacks any commitment. <input type="checkbox"/> Narrative writing shows no attempt at voice.
WORD CHOICE: The right word, used in the right way, at the right time. The writer chooses words that create the intended effect, impression, or mood.	SENTENCE FLUENCY: Language that flows with rhythm and grace, logic and music. Sentences are well-crafted and want to be read aloud.	CONVENTIONS: Includes punctuation, spelling, grammar, and usage. It does not include layout, formatting, or handwriting. The final editing phase.
<p>5 <i>Words are precise, interesting, engaging, powerful.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Words are specific, accurate; meaning is clear. <input type="checkbox"/> Words and phrases are striking and memorable. <input type="checkbox"/> Language is natural, effective, and appropriate. <input type="checkbox"/> Verbs are lively, nouns precise, modifiers effective. <input type="checkbox"/> Choices enhance meaning and clarify meaning. <p>3 <i>Words are common and obvious; they lack energy.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Words are adequate and correct in a general sense. <input type="checkbox"/> Words and phrases convey; but aren't memorable. <input type="checkbox"/> Language reaches for color; thesaurus overload. <input type="checkbox"/> Verbs are passive; nouns common; modifiers dull. <input type="checkbox"/> Choices are random: first word that came to mind. <p>1 <i>Words are simple or vague; limited in scope.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Words are nonspecific, distracting, and vague. <input type="checkbox"/> Words and phrases are dull; detract from meaning. <input type="checkbox"/> Language is used incorrectly, carelessly. <input type="checkbox"/> Verbs, nouns, adjectives show limited vocabulary. <input type="checkbox"/> Jargon or clichés distract, mislead; redundancy. 	<p>5 <i>Writing flows with rhythm and cadence. Elegant.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences are constructed to enhance meaning. <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences vary in length and structure. <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences use purposeful, varied beginnings. <input type="checkbox"/> Connecting words join and build on other words. <input type="checkbox"/> Writing has cadence; it moves, has a music to it. <p>3 <i>Writing moves along but feels more business-like.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences are routine; they lack craft and music. <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences are usually constructed correctly. <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences are not <i>all</i> alike; there is some variety. <input type="checkbox"/> Connecting words absent; reader hunts for clues. <input type="checkbox"/> Parts invite reading aloud; choppy, awkward, stiff. <p>1 <i>Writing lacks flow; it is difficult to read.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences ramble, are incomplete or awkward. <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences do not connect to each other at all. <input type="checkbox"/> Sentences begin the same way; monotonous. <input type="checkbox"/> Endless or <i>no</i> connectives (<i>and, so then, because</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> The text does invite reading aloud; no music. 	<p>5 <i>Observes and uses standard conventions; few errors.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Spelling is mostly correct, even on difficult words. <input type="checkbox"/> Punctuation is accurate, even creative and effective. <input type="checkbox"/> Capitalization skills are evident and consistent. <input type="checkbox"/> Grammar and usage are correct and enhance the text. <input type="checkbox"/> Paragraphing is sound; reinforces organization. <input type="checkbox"/> Writer may manipulate conventions for style. <p>3 <i>Reasonable control of conventions; distracting errors.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Spelling mostly correct; errors on difficult words. <input type="checkbox"/> End punctuation mostly correct; internal errors. <input type="checkbox"/> Capitalization generally correct; some errors. <input type="checkbox"/> Grammar and usage problems are not serious. <input type="checkbox"/> Paragraphing lacks cohesion and organization. <p>1 <i>Errors distract the reader and make reading difficult.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Spelling errors are frequent and distracting. <input type="checkbox"/> Punctuation is often missing or incorrect. <input type="checkbox"/> Capitalization is random; only easiest are correct. <input type="checkbox"/> Grammar and usage errors are obvious and serious. <input type="checkbox"/> Paragraphing is missing, irregular, or frequent.

Adapted by Jim Burke. See *Creating Writers* (Addison Wesley Longman) by Vicki Spandel for complete exploration of the Six Traits model.