OFFICIAL WRITING SCORING GUIDE

NARRATIVE WRITING (PERSONAL OR FICTIONAL NARRATIVES)

Ideas and Content

6

The writing is exceptionally clear, focused, and interesting. Main ideas stand out and are developed by strong support and rich details suitable to audience and purpose.

- The purpose and main idea(s) are particularly clear, focused, and controlled.
- Well-chosen details are significant, relevant, and carefully selected to engage and orient the audience by setting out a problem, situation, or observation.
- A single or multiple point(s) of view is established and a narrator and/or characters introduced.
- Colorful, well-developed descriptions enhance the development of setting, plot, character(s), conflict, and/or theme.
- The topic is thoroughly developed to present real or imagined experiences or events.
- Beyond telling a story, the writing makes connections and shares insights to larger issues, problems or complexities.
- When used, dialogue, pacing, reflection, and/or multiple plot lines enhance the experiences, events, and/or characters presented.

5

The writing is clear, focused and interesting. Main ideas stand out and are developed by supporting details suitable to audience and purpose.

- The purpose and main idea(s) are clear, focused and controlled.
- Supporting details are relevant and carefully selected to engage and orient the audience by setting out a problem, situation, or observation.
- A single or multiple point(s) of view is established and a narrator and/or characters introduced.
- Well-developed descriptions enhance the development of setting, plot, character(s), conflict, and/or theme.
- The topic is thoroughly developed to present real or imagined experiences or events.
- Beyond telling a story, the writing makes connections and shares insights to larger issues, problems or complexities.
- When used, dialogue, pacing, reflection, and/or multiple plot lines develop the experiences, events, and/or characters presented.

4

The writing purpose is clear and ideas are focused. The reader can easily understand the main ideas and reasoning. Support is present, generally significant, and relevant.

- The purpose is clear and main idea(s) are easily identifiable.
- Supporting details are typically relevant and help develop the experiences, events and/or characters.
- Some connections and insights may be present.

3

The reader can infer the main idea(s), although purpose and intended audience may be more difficult to discern. Details are present but non-specific, insubstantial, overly general, or occasionally slightly off-topic.

- Purpose and main idea(s) are ambiguous, predictable or overly obvious.
- Developmental details are often limited, uneven, somewhat off-topic, predictable, or too general.
- The writing may rely on clichés, or stereotypes in presenting the experiences, events and/or characters.
- The paper may rely on general observations rather than specifics.

2

Main ideas and purpose are somewhat unclear or development is vague.

- The purpose and main idea(s) may require extensive inferences by the reader.
- Development is indistinct and details are insufficient.
- Irrelevant details may clutter the text.
- Details may be repeated extensively

1

The writing lacks a central idea or purpose.

- Ideas are extremely limited or simply unclear.
- Development is missing or the paper is too short to demonstrate the development of an idea.

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Organization

6

The organization enhances the central idea(s) and its development. The order and structure are compelling and move the reader through the text easily.

- Sequencing and paragraph breaks are effective, perhaps creative; the organizational structure fits the topic, and the writing is easy to follow.
- The beginning is strong, inviting and draws the reader in.
- The narrative creates a smooth progression of experiences or events that build on each other in a logical or plausible sequence.
- If used, techniques such as foreshadowing, flashbacks, dream sequences etc. flow smoothly within the structure of the narrative.
- Transitions are smooth, effective and varied among all elements (sentences, paragraphs, ideas).
- The conclusion provides a solid, satisfying sense of resolution or closure which reflects what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

5

The organization enhances the central idea(s) and its development. The order and structure are strong and move the reader through the text.

- Sequencing and paragraph breaks are effective; the organizational structure fits the topic, and the writing is easy to follow.
- The beginning is inviting and draws the reader in.
- The narrative creates a logical progression of experiences or events that build on each other.
- If used, techniques such as foreshadowing, flashbacks, dream sequences etc. work well within the structure of the narrative.
- Transitions are smooth and effective with some variety among sentences, paragraphs, and ideas.
- The conclusion provides a satisfying sense of resolution or closure which reflects what is experienced, observed or resolved over the course of the narrative.

4

Organization is clear and coherent. Order and structure are present, but may seem formulaic or somewhat predictable.

- Sequencing and paragraph breaks are clear and contribute to the logic and sense of the piece.
- The beginning is recognizable, developed, and introduces the plot, main idea, or main characters.
- The narrative is easy to follow with details that fit where placed and has a reasonable sequence to the events or experiences described in the narrative.
- If used, techniques such as foreshadowing, flashbacks, dream sequences etc. work within the structure of the narrative although they may be somewhat contrived.
- Transitional strategies are used adequately, with some variety, to clarify the relationships between and among ideas, events and experiences.
- The conclusion provides a sense of resolution or closure connected to what is experienced, observed or resolved over the course of the narrative.

3

An attempt has been made to organize the writing; however, the overall structure is inconsistent, skeletal, or too rigid.

- Some sequencing and paragraph breaks are used, but the order or the relationship among ideas, events, experiences or characters may occasionally be unclear.
- The beginning may be either undeveloped or too obvious (e.g., "Once upon a time...").
- Some details move the narrative forward although breaks in the sequence of events, experiences, or observations may be somewhat confusing at times; some details may be out of place.
- Some transitions work, but the same few transitional devices (e.g., coordinating conjunctions, numbering, etc.) may be overused; at times, transitions are missing or confusing.
- If used, techniques such as foreshadowing, flashbacks, dream sequences may seem contrived to bring the narrative to an end or explain away confusion in the events, experiences or observations.
- The conclusion, if present, may be a summary, repeat details from the narrative, or use a surprise ending ineffectively.

2

The writing lacks a clear organizational structure. An occasional organizational device is discernible; however, the writing is either difficult to follow and the reader has to reread substantial portions, or the piece is simply too short to demonstrate organizational skills.

- Some attempts are made at sequencing, but the progression of events, experiences or observations is frequently unclear.
- The beginning, body, and/or conclusion may be missing or extremely undeveloped.
- When supporting details are used, they seem to be out of order or misplaced within the piece, leaving the reader frequently confused.
- In general, transitions are absent, ineffective, or overused.

1

The writing lacks coherence; organization seems haphazard and disjointed. Even after rereading, the reader remains confused.

- Paragraph breaks, if used, are arbitrary and sequencing is unclear.
- There may be no identifiable beginning, body, and/or ending.
- Transitions tend to be absent or ineffective.
- The overall pacing of the piece is consistently awkward; the reader feels either mired down in trivia or rushed along too rapidly.
- The lack of organization ultimately obscures or distorts the main idea(s), events, experiences, or observations.

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Voice

6

The writer has chosen an expressive, engaging voice appropriate to the events, experiences, or observations of the narrative. The writer demonstrates deep commitment to the topic, and there is an exceptional sense of "writing to be read." The writing is expressive, engaging, or sincere.

- A focused point of view is consistently used throughout the narrative, or when various points of view are used, the effect is smooth and the differing "voices" uniquely recognizable.
- Drawing on an exceptionally strong sense of audience, the writer focuses on communicating the events, experiences, or observations most effectively. The reader may discern the writer behind the words and feel a sense of interaction.
- When appropriate, the topic comes to life with originality, liveliness, honesty, conviction, excitement, humor, mystery, or suspense.

5

The writer has chosen a voice appropriate to the events, experiences, or observations of the narrative. The writer demonstrates commitment to the topic, and there is a sense of "writing to be read." The writing is expressive, engaging, or sincere.

- A consistent point of view is maintained throughout the narrative, or when various points of view are used, the effect is clear and the differing "voices" are consistent.
- The writing shows a strong sense of audience and a desire to communicate the events, experiences, or observations effectively. The reader may discern the writer behind the words and feel a sense of interaction.
- The writing may show originality, liveliness, honesty, conviction, excitement, humor, mystery or suspense.

4

The writer seems committed to the topic, and there may be a sense of "writing to be read." In places, the writing is expressive, engaging, or sincere in relating the events, experiences or observations to the audience.

- The writing generally maintains a consistent point of view.
- An appropriate level of style and tone is generally consistent with audience, topic and purpose.
- The writer seems to be aware of audience but may not consistently employ and maintain an appropriate level of closeness to or distance from the audience.
- The writing may show liveliness, sincerity, or humor but may be either inappropriately casual and personal, or inappropriately formal and stiff at times.

3

The writer's commitment to the topic seems inconsistent. A sense of the writer may emerge at times; however, the voice is inconsistent and does not seem to be aware of the audience.

- The point of view may shift unexpectedly and without apparent purpose.
- The voice, style and tone may vary without discernible purpose in the narrative.
- The events, experiences or observations of the narrative are related inconsistently; although at times there may be some connection, other times the tone may sound mechanical.
- There is a limited sense of audience; the writer's awareness of the reader is unclear.
- The text may be too short to establish a consistent or appropriate voice.

2

The writing provides little sense of involvement or commitment. There is no evidence that the writer has considered audience, topic and/or purpose in selecting style and tone.

- Point of view is extremely inconsistent and may add to the confusion in following the narrative.
- The writer seems to be minimally engaged with a largely flat, lifeless, stiff, or mechanical voice.
- The style and tone may be overly stiff and formal for the topic and purpose.
- Audience awareness is lacking with little sense of "writing to be read."

1

The writing seems to lack a sense of involvement or commitment.

- Point of view is vague or inconsistent and frequently interferes with the progression of the narrative.
- The writing is flat and lifeless.
- Audience awareness is lacking with no sense of "writing to be read."
- There is no sense of interaction between writer and reader; the writing does not involve or engage the reader.

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Word Choice

6

Words convey the intended message in an exceptionally interesting, precise, and natural way appropriate to audience and purpose. The writer employs a rich, broad range of words which have been carefully chosen and thoughtfully placed for impact.

- Accurate, strong, specific, powerful words energize the writing.
- Vocabulary is striking and varied, using sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting and/or characters without being overdone.
- Carefully selected words and phrases create cohesion and clarify relationships among experiences, events, setting and/or characters, often with fresh and original expression.
- Slang and/or dialect, if used, is purposeful and effective.
- Words evoke strong images and thoughtfully constructed figurative language conveys significant details.

5

Words convey the intended message in an interesting, precise, and natural way appropriate to audience and purpose. The writer employs a broad range of words which have been carefully chosen and thoughtfully placed for impact.

- Accurate, specific word choices energize the writing.
- Vocabulary is varied, using sensory language to enhance the picture of the experiences, events, setting and/or characters.
- Carefully selected words and phrases create cohesion and clarify relationships among experiences, events, setting and/or characters.
- Slang and/or dialect, if used, is effective.
- Words evoke clear images and figurative language is carefully placed to enhance understanding..

4

Words effectively convey the intended message. The writer employs a variety of words that are functional and appropriate to audience and purpose.

- Words are functional and clear in conveying the intended ideas and events.
- Vocabulary is sufficiently varied to avoid repetition and to suggest nuances in characters and describe events and settings.
- Some sensory language may be used effectively to describe experiences, events, setting and/or characters.
- Slang and dialect, if used, are generally effective.
- Clichés are generally avoided and some metaphors, similes, and analogies may be effectively used.

3

Language lacks precision and variety, or may be inappropriate to audience and purpose in places. The writer does not employ a variety of words, producing a sort of "generic" paper filled with familiar words and phrases.

- Words are accurate for the most part, although misused words may occasionally appear.
- Selected vocabulary rarely captures the reader's interest and may be redundant.
- Sensory words and figurative language are mundane or general.
- Attempts at colorful or sensory language or slang and dialect may seem overdone or forced.
- Clichés and overused expressions appear frequently.
- The text may be too short to demonstrate variety in word selection.

2

Language is monotonous and/or misused, detracting from the meaning and impact.

- Words are frequently colorless, flat, or imprecise.
- Descriptions of experiences, events, setting and/or characters are dull, repetitive, or absent.
- Worn expressions and clichés detract from the message.
- Slang or dialect, if used, may be ineffective or feel out of place.
- Non-specific, general words are used where sensory words or figurative language would help convey the meaning more precisely.

1

The writing shows an extremely limited vocabulary or is so filled with misuses of words that the meaning is obscured. Only the most general kind of message is communicated because of vague or imprecise language.

- General, vague words fail to communicate.
- The range of words used is extremely limited.
- Some words simply do not fit the text; they seem imprecise, inadequate, or just plain wrong.
- Descriptions of experiences, events, setting and/or characters are confusing or missing.

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Sentence Fluency

6

The writing has an effective flow and rhythm. Sentences show a high degree of craftsmanship, with consistently strong and varied syntax that makes expressive oral reading easy and enjoyable.

- There is a natural, fluent cadence and sound that glides easily along from one sentence to the next.
- Syntactic variety is strong with sentence structure, length, and beginnings that add interest to the text.
- Sentence structure enhances meaning by drawing attention to key events, experiences, observations or ideas or by reinforcing relationships among them.
- Varied sentence patterns create an effective combination of power and grace.
- Syntactic control is strong; if used, fragments work well and dialogue sounds natural.

5

The writing has an easy flow and rhythm. Sentences are carefully crafted, with strong and varied syntax that makes expressive oral reading easy and enjoyable.

- There is a natural, fluent sound that glides along with one sentence flowing into the next.
- Variation in sentence patterns, structure, length, and beginnings adds interest to the text.
- Sentence structure enhances meaning and is well-controlled.
- If used, fragments and dialogue work well.

4

The writing flows with some fluid connections between phrases or sentences. Sentence patterns are somewhat varied, contributing to ease in oral reading.

- The writing has a natural sound and the reader can move easily through the piece.
- There is some syntactic variety with adequate variation in sentence length, beginnings, connectives and rhythm.
- Control of simple sentence structures is strong, but control over more complex sentences varies; fragments, if present, are usually effective.
- Some lapses in stylistic control may occur; dialogue, if used, sounds natural for the most part.

3

The writing tends to be mechanical rather than fluid. Occasional awkward constructions may force the reader to slow down or reread.

- Some passages invite fluid oral reading but others do not.
- Sentence structure, length, and beginnings show limited variety and may become repetitive.
- Simple sentence structures work well, but there is little control over more complex sentences.
- Sentences are functional but may lack energy.
- Recurrent lapses in stylistic control occur; fragments and dialogue, when used, may be ineffective.

2

The writing tends to be either choppy or rambling. Awkward constructions often force the reader to slow down or reread.

- Significant portions of the text are difficult to follow or read aloud.
- Sentence patterns lack variety (e.g., subject-verb or subject-verb-object).
- There are significant numbers of awkward, choppy, rambling, or incorrect sentence constructions.
- Text may be too short to demonstrate variety and control.

1

The writing is difficult to follow or to read aloud. Sentences tend to be incomplete, rambling, or very awkward.

- The text does not invite, and may not even permit, smooth oral reading.
- Confusing word order and syntax is often jarring and irregular.
- Sentence structure frequently obscures meaning.
- Sentences are disjointed, confusing, or rambling.

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Conventions

6

The writing demonstrates exceptionally strong command of standard writing conventions (e.g., punctuation, spelling, capitalization, grammar and usage) and uses them effectively to enhance communication. Errors are so few and so minor that the reader can easily skim right over them unless specifically searching for them.

- There is a strong command of conventions; manipulation of conventions may occur for stylistic effect.
- Punctuation is strong and guides the reader through the text.
- Where used, dialogue is punctuated correctly and dialect varies standard spelling, creating a consistent phonetic approach to capture spoken variations.
- Spelling is consistently correct, even for difficult words.
- Grammar and usage are correct and contribute to clarity and style.
- A wide range of conventions is used in a sufficiently long and complex piece to demonstrate skill.
- There is little or no need for editing.

5

The writing demonstrates strong control of standard writing conventions (e.g., punctuation, spelling, capitalization, grammar and usage) and uses them effectively to enhance communication. Errors are few and minor. Conventions support readability.

- Strong control of conventions is evident.
- Effective use of punctuation guides the reader through the text.
- Where used, dialogue is punctuated correctly and dialect may appear as variations on standard spelling to create the desired spoken effect.
- Spelling is correct, even for most difficult words.
- Capitalization errors, if any, are minor.
- Correct grammar and usage contribute to clarity and style.
- The text is sufficiently long and complex to demonstrate skill in using a wide range of conventions.
- There is little need for editing, and needed edits are minor.

4

The writing demonstrates control of standard writing conventions (e.g., punctuation, spelling, capitalization, grammar and usage). Errors are infrequent and minor errors do not impede readability and meaning.

- Conventions used are generally correct, demonstrating control, although a limited range may be employed.
- End-of-sentence punctuation and internal punctuation, including hyphenation, is generally correct.
- Where used, dialogue is generally punctuated correctly, and dialect, while inconsistent with standard usage, is not so inaccurate that the reader is confused or distracted.
- Spelling of common words is generally correct.
- Capitalization is generally correct
- Occasional lapses in correct grammar and usage do not distort meaning or confuse the reader.
- The need for further editing is moderate and meaning is clear.

3

The writing demonstrates limited control of standard writing conventions (e.g., punctuation, spelling, capitalization, grammar and usage). Errors begin to impede readability.

- Basic conventions are used with some control; however, the text may be too simple or too short to determine mastery.
- End-of-sentence punctuation is usually correct, while internal punctuation may contain frequent errors.
- Where used, dialogue may be punctuated inconsistently, while attempts at dialect may confuse or distract the reader.
- Spelling errors, including misspelling of some common words, distract the reader.
- Some capitalization errors may occur.
- Errors in grammar and usage do not completely block meaning but do distract the reader.
- Significant editing is needed.

2

The writing demonstrates little control of standard writing conventions. Frequent, significant errors impede readability.

- Errors occur in basic conventions.
- Many end-of-sentence and internal punctuation errors appear, including incorrect punctuation of dialogue.
- Dialect, if used, varies so completely from standard spelling that the reader is frequently confused or distracted.
- Spelling errors, including misspelling of common words, occur frequently, distracting the reader.
- Capitalization is inconsistent or often incorrect.
- Errors in grammar and usage interfere with readability and meaning.
- The paper would require substantial editing before completion.

1

Numerous errors in usage, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation repeatedly distract the reader and make the text difficult to read. In fact, the severity and frequency of errors are so overwhelming that the reader finds it difficult to focus on the message and must reread for meaning.

- Conventions used are very limited and include frequent errors.
- Basic punctuation (including end-of-sentence punctuation and quotations) tends to be omitted, haphazard, or incorrect.
- Spelling errors, including frequent errors in spelling common words, significantly impair readability.
- Capitalization appears to be random.
- The paper would require extensive editing.