

Student Language Writing Scoring Guide: Grades 6-8 Condensed Version  
 Informative/Explanatory and Argument Writing and Research Projects

	<b>6/5: STRONG</b> The writing is thorough and complex, demonstrating strong writing skills.	<b>4: MEETS</b> The writing is complete and demonstrates adequate grade level writing skills.	<b>3: ALMOST MEETS</b> The writing demonstrates progress toward meeting grade level writing skills.	<b>2/1: NEEDS WORK</b> The writing is limited, confusing, or too short to demonstrate grade level writing skills.
IDEAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose and main ideas are very clear and focused.</li> <li>• Topic is thoroughly developed with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.</li> <li>• Claims and counterclaims are clearly stated and well-developed with logical reasoning and relevant evidence.</li> <li>• Accurate, credible sources are used to demonstrate understanding of the topic or text.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose and main ideas are easy to understand.</li> <li>• Topic is supported with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.</li> <li>• Claims and counterclaims have logical reasoning and relevant evidence.</li> <li>• Mostly accurate, credible sources are used to demonstrate understanding of the topic or text.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose and main ideas may be too general or simple.</li> <li>• Supporting details are limited, a little off-topic, or may be simply a list.</li> <li>• Some claims and counterclaims have logical reasoning and evidence.</li> <li>• Few or irrelevant facts, definitions, details, quotations, and other information support the topic.</li> <li>• Some credible sources are used to show partial understanding of the topic or text.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose and main ideas are not clear. The reader may have to guess the main idea.</li> <li>• Claims are unclear and may lack reasoning to support the claims.</li> <li>• Facts, definitions, details, quotations, and other information may be missing, inaccurate, irrelevant or off-topic.</li> <li>• The paper may be much too short to develop an idea.</li> </ul>
ORGANIZATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization and order of ideas and details are well-structured and easy to follow.</li> <li>• The introduction is strong, inviting, and makes the reader want to keep reading.</li> <li>• Details fit where placed.</li> <li>• A variety of transitional words and phrases are used effectively.</li> <li>• The conclusion is strong and clearly supports the claims, arguments, information, and explanations presented.</li> <li>• Paragraph breaks are effective.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization and order of ideas and details make sense and are easy to follow.</li> <li>• The introduction introduces the topic.</li> <li>• Details make sense where they are placed.</li> <li>• Transitions help the reader follow the writing from one part to another.</li> <li>• The conclusion supports the claims, argument, information, or explanation presented.</li> <li>• Paragraph breaks help the reader.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization and order of ideas may be a little unclear.</li> <li>• The introduction is underdeveloped or too obvious.</li> <li>• Some details seem out of place or out of order and may not support arguments, information, or explanations presented.</li> <li>• Transitions sometimes work, but the same ones may be used too often.</li> <li>• The conclusion may not be long enough or is too obvious.</li> <li>• Paragraph breaks may not be in the right places.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization is not clear and is hard to follow.</li> <li>• The introduction is ineffective or missing.</li> <li>• Many details are placed where they do not make sense.</li> <li>• Transitions are missing or overused.</li> <li>• The conclusion is ineffective or missing.</li> <li>• The paper may be much too short to show organization.</li> <li>• Paragraph breaks may be missing or incorrectly placed.</li> </ul>
VOICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voice is appropriate for the purpose, audience, and topic.</li> <li>• The writing maintains a formal style.</li> <li>• The topic comes to life. The writing shows sincerity, originality, liveliness, honesty, excitement, or strong opinions.</li> <li>• The writer shows deep commitment to the topic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writer is aware of the reader most of the time.</li> <li>• The writing maintains a formal style.</li> <li>• In places, the writing is expressive, engaging, sincere, or honest.</li> <li>• The writer seems committed to the topic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writer may not be aware of the audience. The voice is inconsistent.</li> <li>• The writing may not maintain a formal style.</li> <li>• The writer seems somewhat committed to the topic.</li> <li>• The writing may be too short to show a consistent voice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writer seems to be unaware of the audience.</li> <li>• The writing is informal or too casual.</li> <li>• The writing is flat, lifeless, stiff, or mechanical.</li> <li>• The writer shows no involvement or commitment to the topic.</li> </ul>

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<b>WORD CHOICE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accurate, strong, specific, powerful words energize the writing.</li> <li>Vocabulary is striking and varied. Domain-specific words and phrases enhance the overall message.</li> <li>A broad range of words are carefully chosen and placed for impact.</li> <li>Words create vivid images for the reader.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Words communicate meaning, but may not energize the writing.</li> <li>Domain-specific words are used along with words that are functional and precise.</li> <li>Words have variety. Many different words are used.</li> <li>Overused sayings or expressions (clichés) are usually avoided.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Words lack accuracy and variety.</li> <li>Domain-specific words are limited.</li> <li>Some words may be repeated too often.</li> <li>Occasionally, wrong words may be used.</li> <li>Overused sayings or expressions (clichés) may appear often.</li> <li>The writing may be too short to show variety.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Words are inaccurate, colorless, or flat.</li> <li>Domain-specific words are missing or misused.</li> <li>Word choices are extremely limited.</li> <li>Words are repeated over and over again or they do not make sense.</li> </ul>
<b>SENTENCE FLUENCY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writing has an easy flow and rhythm.</li> <li>Sentences glide along with one sentence flowing smoothly into the next.</li> <li>Strong and varied structure makes oral reading easy and enjoyable.</li> <li>There is great variety in sentence beginnings, lengths, and patterns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The writing is easy to read out loud. It sounds natural.</li> <li>Sentences begin in different ways.</li> <li>Some sentences are shorter and some are longer.</li> <li>Simple sentences read smoothly, but more complex sentences may not be as smooth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parts of the writing are easy to read out loud, but other parts are difficult.</li> <li>Some sentence beginnings are the same and some are different.</li> <li>Many sentences are about the same length.</li> <li>Simple sentences read smoothly, but more complex sentences are awkward.</li> <li>The writing may be too short to show variety and control.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most of the writing is difficult to read out loud. The reader has to slow down or re-read.</li> <li>The writing does not sound natural.</li> <li>Many sentences begin in the same way.</li> <li>Sentences may be short and choppy or long and rambling.</li> <li>Words in sentences may be out of order.</li> </ul>
<b>CONVENTIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sentences are complete and have correct punctuation. There are no run-ons, comma splices, or fragments.</li> <li>A wide range of conventions including higher-level punctuation (e.g., colons, semi-colons, ellipses, parentheses, etc.) are used correctly.</li> <li>Even difficult words are spelled correctly.</li> <li>Grammar is correct.</li> <li>Capital letters are correct.</li> <li>Few errors. Little or no need for editing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sentences are complete and have correct punctuation. There are few if any run-ons, comma splices, or fragments.</li> <li>Punctuation within sentences is usually correct.</li> <li>Spelling is usually correct.</li> <li>Grammar is usually correct.</li> <li>Verb tense is usually correct. Subjects and verbs go together.</li> <li>Capital letters are usually correct.</li> <li>Errors require moderate editing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most sentences are complete and have correct punctuation. There may be run-ons, comma splices, or fragments.</li> <li>Sentences may contain errors in punctuation.</li> <li>Spelling of common words is sometimes incorrect.</li> <li>Verb tense, subject and verb agreements, and other grammatical errors may appear.</li> <li>Capitalization errors are present.</li> <li>Errors distract the reader and require significant editing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sentences may be incomplete. There are many run-ons, comma splices, and/or fragments.</li> <li>Sentences contain many errors in punctuation.</li> <li>Many spelling errors make reading difficult.</li> <li>Many grammatical errors.</li> <li>Capitalization may seem random.</li> <li>Errors require extensive editing.</li> </ul>

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<b>USE OF SOURCES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writer uses relevant information from several sources.</li> <li>• Multiple credible print and digital sources are used.</li> <li>• A variety of transitions are used to introduce quotations or paraphrases.</li> <li>• Quoted materials are punctuated correctly.</li> <li>• All sources are correctly cited with in-text documentation.</li> <li>• When required, a bibliography page lists all sources cited.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writer uses relevant information from several sources.</li> <li>• Several credible print and digital sources are used.</li> <li>• Quoted materials are usually punctuated correctly so that errors do not block meaning.</li> <li>• All sources are cited with in-text documentation.</li> <li>• When required, a bibliography page lists major sources cited.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writer uses some relevant information from one or two sources.</li> <li>• More than one source may be used, but the writing tends to rely on one source. Not all sources may be credible.</li> <li>• Punctuation of quoted materials may contain errors.</li> <li>• Some sources are cited with in-text documentation.</li> <li>• When required, a bibliography page may be incorrectly formatted or is missing some cited sources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The writer uses little if any information from sources.</li> <li>• Only one source may be used, or the source(s) are not credible, or there is no evidence of the use of outside sources.</li> <li>• Ideas taken from source(s) may be changed or incorrectly presented.</li> <li>• Source material has been copied from the original without setting them off using quotation marks.</li> <li>• Citations may be omitted or are not correct.</li> <li>• When required, a bibliography page is not correctly formatted or is not provided.</li> </ul>