

WRITE TRAITS TECHNICAL ONE-PAGER

IDEAS & DEVELOPMENT

5 The paper is clear, focused, and purposeful. It thoroughly answers a well-defined key question in understandable, convincing and expansive terms.

- The main idea, thesis, or research question is clearly defined. There could be more than one key point, but the paper is not simply a list.
- The writer seems well-informed. As appropriate, he/she draws on relevant information from a variety of sources, including personal, experience, research, reading, observations, etc., to amplify the main point.
- The writer continuously anticipates and responds to readers' informational needs.
- Supporting details (examples, facts, anecdotes, quotations) are accurate, relevant, and helpful in clarifying the main idea(s).

3 The paper addresses an identifiable key question by offering the reader general, basic information.

- The reader can identify or infer at least one main thesis or assertion.
- Some support seems grounded in solid research or experience. Some seems based more on common knowledge or best guesses.
- The writer sometimes responds to readers' informational needs. At other times, important issues or questions are left hanging.
- More investigation, stronger support, and greater attention to detail would strengthen this paper.

1 The writer has not yet clarified an important question or issue that this paper will address. One or more of these problems may be evident:

- The writer does not have enough information on this topic.
- The writer has some information, but has a hard time clarifying issues or answering questions.
- The paper wanders or dissolves into a list of disjointed ideas.
- Support is missing or too vague or questionable to be helpful.
- The writer does not seem to have the readers' questions or informational needs in mind.
- The paper has no clear main point.
- This paper would not be helpful to someone who did not already know this topic well.

ORGANIZATION

5 A strong internal structure highlights the main ideas and leads readers' right to the key points or conclusions the writer wants to emphasize.

- The introduction engages readers and offers important clues about what is to come.
- The order and placement of details, anecdotes, facts and examples seems designed to promote readers' understanding.
- Purposeful transitions help the reader see how each point connects to a larger concept.
- The closing effectively resolves questions and reinforces important conclusions or assertions offered earlier.
- The reader's understanding of the topic grows throughout the paper.

3 A mix of key points and generalities requires readers to make some inferences about what is most significant – or where they should direct their attention.

- The introduction is clear, but may not showcase the writer's most important point(s).
- Details, examples, facts, and anecdotes are loosely linked to main ideas, though support is not always strong.
- Transitions are attempted, but the writer sometimes misses opportunities to show readers how ideas connect.
- The conclusion clearly wraps up the discussion – but may or may not strengthen the writer's position.
- Despite some questions, the reader can follow what is said.

1 A lack of organizational structure leaves readers confused about what to focus on or what conclusions to draw. One or more of the following problems may be evident:

- There is no real lead; the paper just starts in.
- Ideas seem randomly ordered; the reader often wonders where the writer is headed, or what he/she means to emphasize.
- Support is either missing or too weak and general to be convincing.
- It is very hard to see how ideas link to each other – or to any main point.
- There is no real conclusion; the paper just stops.
- The reader struggles to see some pattern that would give logical structure to the writer's message or argument.

VOICE & TONE

5 As appropriate, the writer addresses a general audience in a voice that is lively, engaging, and right for the topic and purpose. In very technical pieces, the writer keeps the voice controlled so that it is not distracting.

- The writer's enthusiasm for the topic is evident throughout the piece.
- The writer seems to know the audience well, and to speak right to them, drawing them into the discussion and showing a concern for their understanding.
- The reader finds him/herself caught up in the topic – regardless of previous knowledge or interest.
- In highly technical pieces, voice is restrained so that it does not overshadow the topic.

3 The writer projects a tone that is sincere and generally appropriate for the topic and audience.

- The writer's enthusiasm for the topic is sometimes evident, sometimes not.
- Moments of spontaneity intermingle with a more prosaic, encyclopedic voice.
- The writer sometimes – but not always – seems concerned with involving the audience.
- The reader must work to remain engaged.
- In technical or business writing, voice may be inappropriately informal or personal, taking attention away from the message.

1 The writer seems indifferent to both topic and audience – or has a hard time suiting tone to the context and purpose. As a result, the tone may be distant, flat, jargonistic, stilted, or just inappropriate. One or more of the following problems may be evident:

- The writer does not reach out to the audience or think how voice and tone might affect their response.
- The writer seems bored, distracted, or just anxious to be done with it.
- Moments of enthusiasm, which could have brought this topic to life, are missing.
- The writer may be writing more to show off specialized knowledge than to interest or inform the reader.
- The voice and tone are noticeably inappropriate for the purpose and audience.

WORD CHOICE & TERMINOLOGY

5 Well-chosen words convey the writer's message in a clear, precise, and highly readable way, taking readers to a new level of understanding.

- The writer consistently chooses explicit, vivid words and phrases that make the message clear and memorable.
- The vocabulary suits the subject and audience.
- The writer uses the language of the content area with skill and ease, always helping to make meaning clear.
- Technical or little known words are clarified or defined as appropriate and as needed, given the audience.
- Jargon and overly technical language are avoided.

3 Words are reasonably accurate and make the message clear on a general level.

- Most language in the paper is both correct and functional. However, the vocabulary is sometimes inappropriate (too technical, difficult, or informal) for the topic, audience or both.
- The writer does not seem completely at home with the language and terminology of the content area.
- Broad, general concepts are communicated clearly; the fine points may be a little fuzzy. Generalities or jargon may leave some readers feeling lost.
- Technical or special terms may sometimes be used without sufficient explanation; the reader occasionally feels on the outside looking in.

1 The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary that will not allow him/her to explore the subject with confidence; OR, the writing is so technical and hard to penetrate that all but the most knowledgeable readers feel left out. One or more of these problems may be evident.

- Vocabulary is inaccurate or too general or informal for the topic, audience, or both.
- The writing is impenetrable; it speaks only to insiders, and has little or no meaning to a general audience.
- Technical language or specialized vocabulary may be overused – OR technical language is missing where it would be helpful in clarifying specialized information.
- The writer simply lacks the knowledge or vocabulary necessary to convey the intended message or to explore a technical topic in detail.

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

5 Sentences are strong, clear and thoughtfully structured. Each builds on the one before. Though variety is important, clarity remains the foremost characteristic of successful pieces.

- Meaningful sentence beginnings (then, therefore, in contrast, to summarize) lend variety and clarity to the text.
- Sentences vary in length, but most are compact.
- No words are wasted.
- Sentences tend to be worded in a straightforward manner that makes the main point clear.
- All sentences are grammatically sound and complete.
- The text can be read quickly and without difficulty.

3 Sentences are clear and (for the most part) grammatical.

- Some meaningful sentence beginnings (First...Second, Finally, In conclusion) give the text moderate clarity and variety. Additional transitions would be helpful.
- Some sentences may be a little long gangly – or too short and choppy.
- Wordiness is sometimes a problem; the writer could cut deadwood from many lines.
- Most sentences are grammatical.
- Given close attention, the text can be read with little difficulty.

1 A number of sentences are unclear, ungrammatical, or both. For this reason, it may be difficult to make out the writer's meaning. Readers will likely notice more than one of these problems.

- The writer rarely uses linking phrases (At this time, For this reason, In response to your inquiry). Readers must work at connecting ideas.
- Some sentences are so long and complicated the reader loses the main thought – while others are so short the writing feels bumpy and jarring.
- Wordiness is common; the writer needs to get to the point.
- The reader must often pause and re-read to get the meaning.
- Grammatical errors are distracting.
- The text is difficult to read, even with close attention.

CONVENTIONS & PRESENTATION

5 The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (grammar, spelling, capitalization, punctuation) and also uses specialized conventions (subtitles, bullets, sidebars, and other graphic devices) to enhance layout and readability, as desirable.

- Conventions are essentially correct. Errors are so few and minor the reader could skip right over them unless searching for them specifically.
- The basic layout of the text is designed to catch a reader's eye and direct his/her attention to key points.
- Titles, sub-titles, bullets and similar devices enhance the organizational structure; a reader can scan through the text and quickly find what he/she is looking for.
- Graphic devices such as charts, graphs or illustrations, are clear, helpful, visually appealing, and supportive of the text.
- Informational sources are correctly cited and would be easy for a reader to check or locate.

3 The writer demonstrates a limited understanding of many writing conventions and uses some specialized conventions to enhance layout and readability.

- Basic conventions are mostly correct. Errors are noticeable to an attentive reader, but do not seriously impair readability.
- The basic layout of the text is visually pleasing and makes most key points stand out.
- Titles, subtitles, bullets and similar devices are sometimes used to help the reader locate information or skim through summaries.
- Graphic devices, if used, are fairly clear and connected to the text.
- Informational citations are adequate.

1 The writer demonstrates a basic understanding of many writing conventions. More than one or the following problems may be evident:

- Errors in conventions are common and impair readability.
- The basic layout of the text may be visually ineffective or confusing; it is hard to identify key points at a glance.
- Titles, subtitles, bullets and similar devices would make text dense copy more clear.
- Graphic devices are seldom used – or their connection to the text is not clear.
- Citations are missing, incomplete, or incorrect.