

The “What is Good Writing?” Organizer For Beginning Writers

★ IDEAS

CRITERIA

- **My writing has an important message.** What’s the one most important thing you want the audience to know?
- **I included lots of interesting details.** Which details are the most interesting?
- **I wrote this for a good reason.** Why did you write this piece? Why is this a good reason?

COMPLETIONS

- ★ **The one most important thing I want my audience to know is...** (This is the main idea. Make it a complete sentence.)
- ★ **The most interesting thing about my topic is...** (Sometimes it’s good to move this part up to the beginning of the piece.)
- ★ **I wrote this because...** (The end of this sentence often makes a good ending.)

★ WORD CHOICE

CRITERIA

- **I used words that I know and understand.** Are there any words in your piece that you don’t understand?
- **I used some interesting words that you’ll remember.** Which words are the most interesting?
- **I used just the right words to say exactly what I wanted to say.** Did you think about different ways to say what you wanted to say?

COMPLETIONS

- ★ **The best words in my piece are...** (Try to include at least one or two interesting words if you can.)
- ★ **You’ll remember these words from my piece because...** (Unusual words are often the easiest for people to remember.)
- ★ **I chose these words because...** (Why are some words better than other words?)

★ ORGANIZATION

CRITERIA

- **My beginning will make you want to find out more about my piece.** What will the audience want to know about?
- **My ending will make you think about something important.** What do you want your audience to think about?
- **I put everything in the best order.** Are there any places where your audience might get confused?

COMPLETIONS

- ★ **You’ll be interested in my story because...** (Sometimes you can turn this into a good beginning.)
- ★ **You should remember my piece because...** (This can make a good ending.)
- ★ **The most important part of my piece is...** (Make sure this part stands out.)

★ SENTENCE FLUENCY

CRITERIA

- **I wrote my piece in sentences.** Does each sentence sound right?
- **I used words that sound good when you read them together.** Which words sound the best?
- **My writing sounds good when I read it out loud.** Is it easy to read with lots of expression?

COMPLETIONS

- ★ **The best sounding sentence in my piece is...** (Try to write other sentences that sound like this one.)
- ★ **The best sounding words in my piece are...** (Think about the sounds in these words and why they sound so good.)
- ★ **My piece is fun to read because...** (The more fun you have reading it, the more fun your audience will have.)

★ VOICE

CRITERIA

- **I like this piece, and my audience will like it, too.** Why do you like it? Why will your audience like it?
- **I really care about my topic.** Why do you care about it so much? Did you put that in the piece?
- **You can tell exactly how I feel.** How do you feel about this topic? Did you write that down?

COMPLETIONS

- ★ **I like this piece because...** (The more you like it, the more your audience will probably like it, too.)
- ★ **I wanted to write about this topic because...** (The best things to write about are the things you choose yourself.)
- ★ **The feelings I have about this piece are...** (Make sure you write those feelings down.)

★ CONVENTIONS

CRITERIA

- **I put capital letters at the beginning of each sentence and periods at the end.** How did you know where to put the periods and capitals?
- **I used capitals for the word “I” and for the names of people and places.** How did you know which words to capitalize?
- **I did my best to spell each word correctly.** What did you do to check your spelling?

COMPLETIONS

- ★ **The conventions I know are...** (Make sure all of these are correct in your published writing.)
- ★ **The conventions I am learning are...** (Make sure you try to correct these conventions; then get some help.)
- ★ **You can tell I edited my piece because...** (Think about the different things you did to make your piece more correct.)

The “What is Good Writing?” Organizer For Maturing Writers

★ IDEAS

- **An important main idea.** What’s the one most important thing the author wants the audience to know? Why is it important to the author? Why is it important to the audience?
- **Interesting details.** Which details are the most interesting? How do they help the audience understand the main idea?
- **“Showing,” not just telling.** Where does the author use “showing” details? How does the “showing” help to improve the audience’s understanding?
- **A clear and meaningful purpose.** Why did the writer write this? Why is this a good reason to write something? What does the author want the audience to think and/or do?
- **Something surprising or unusual that works.** What is surprising or unusual about the writing? How does this differ from other things you’ve read?

★ WORD CHOICE

- **Strong verbs that tell how actions are performed.** Where has the author used strong verbs? What makes them effective?
- **Adjectives and adverbs that make things more specific.** Where has the author used adjectives and adverbs to make the writing more specific? How does using these adjectives and adverbs improve the reader’s understanding?
- **Words and phrases you can remember long after you’ve finished reading.** Which words and phrases do you remember? Why are they so memorable?
- **Words and phrases used accurately and effectively.** Is the writer’s usage accurate? Are there any improvement or corrections you would suggest? Where has the author used unusual words effectively? Where has the author used common words in new ways?
- **Language that is appropriate to purpose and audience.** Are the words the author has used appropriate for the writer’s purpose and audience? Are there any words or phrases that are too casual, too formal, too hard to understand, or possibly offensive?

★ ORGANIZATION

- **Catches the audience’s attention at the start; makes them want to read more.** How does the beginning catch the audience’s attention? Why would the audience want to read more?
- **Feels finished at the end; makes the audience think.** How does the ending make the piece feel finished? What does it make the audience think about?
- **Parts arranged in the best order.** Can you easily identify the different parts of the piece? Does each part follow logically from the next? Is the sequencing effective and entertaining?
- **Spends the right amount of time on each part.** Why does the author spend more time in some parts than in others? Are there places where the author moves ahead too quickly or hangs on too long?
- **Easy to follow from part to part.** How does the author move from part to part? How do these transitions work?

★ SENTENCE FLUENCY

- **Variety in sentence beginnings.** What are some of the different ways the author begins sentences? Do you notice any patterns? Does the author ever begin two or three consecutive sentences in the same way?
- **Variety in sentence length and structure.** Does the author vary the length and structure of his or her sentences? Do you notice any patterns? Does the author use the same length or structure in two or three consecutive sentences? What sentence structures does the author use most often?
- **Easy to read expressively; sounds great when read aloud.** What are the most expressive parts? What is it about how they sound that makes them so much fun to read out loud?
- **Uses rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, and other “sound” effects.** Where has the author used rhythm, rhyme, alliteration or other effects to make the writing sound interesting? How does this improve the piece?
- **Sentences are structured so they’re easy to understand.** How does the author use connecting words and punctuation marks to make sentences easy to understand? How does the order of sentence parts make the writing easy to understand?

★ VOICE

- **The author cares about the topic.** How can you tell that the author cares about the topic? Where can you find evidence of strong opinions?
- **Strong feelings; honest statements.** Where are the author’s strongest statements? How can you tell that the author is saying what he or she really thinks?
- **Individual, authentic, and original.** Does this writing feel as though it could only have been written by one person? Does the writing sound like it was written by a real person? How original is it?
- **Displays a definite and well developed personality.** How would you describe the author’s personality in this writing? What examples from the text tell you you’re right?
- **Appropriate tone for purpose and audience.** Is the writer using an appropriate tone for this situation? How can you tell? Which parts, if any, seem inappropriate?

★ CONVENTIONS

- **“Outside” punctuation.** Has the author used periods, question marks, and exclamation marks in ways that make sense to the audience? Is it easy to tell where ideas end and begin?
- **“Inside” punctuation.** Does the author’s use of commas, colons, dashes, parentheses, and semicolons make sense to the audience? How does the author’s use of these marks help make sentences with many parts easier to understand?
- **Capitalization.** Has the author used capital letters in ways that make sense to the audience? Is it easy to tell where new ideas begin? Has the author capitalized the word “I”, as well as names, places, and things that are one of a kind?
- **Paragraphing.** Has the author grouped related sentences into paragraphs in ways that make sense to the audience? Has the author started a new paragraph each time a new person starts speaking? Has the author indented or skipped a line to show where new paragraphs start?
- **Spelling.** If the writing has spelling mistakes, do these errors make the piece difficult to read and understand? How does the author’s spelling affect the way the audience feels about the writing and the person who wrote it?