

Ideas

The heart of the message, the content of the piece, the main theme, with details that enrich and develop that theme.

5 This paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme.

The topic is narrow and manageable
Relevant, telling, quality details go beyond the obvious

Reasonably accurate details.

Writing from knowledge or experience; ideas are fresh and original.

Reader's questions are anticipated and answered
Insight.

3 The writer is beginning to define the topic, even though development is still basic or general.

The topic is fairly broad.

Support is attempted.

Ideas are reasonably clear.

Writer has difficulty going from general observations to specifics.

The reader is left with questions.

The writer generally stays on topic.

1 The paper has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. The reader must make inferences based on sketchy or missing details.

The writer is still in search of a topic.

Information is limited or unclear or the length is not adequate for development.

The idea is a simple restatement or a simple answer to the question.

Topic not defined.

Everything is equally important.

The text may be repetitious, disconnected and contains too many random thoughts.

Key Question: Did the writer stay focused and share original and fresh information or perspective about the topic?

Word Choice

The use of rich, colorful, precise language that moves and enlightens the reader.

5 Words convey the intended message in a precise, interesting, and natural way.

Words are specific and accurate.

Striking words and phrases.

Natural, effective and appropriate language.

Language enhances and clarifies meaning.

Precision is obvious.

3 The language is functional, even if it lacks much energy.

Words are adequate and correct in a general sense.

Familiar words and phrases communicate.

Attempts at colorful language.

Passive verbs, everyday nouns, mundane modifiers.

Functional, with one or two fine moments.

Occasionally, the words show refinement and precision.

1 The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary.

Words are nonspecific or distracting.

Many of the words don't work.

Language is used incorrectly.

Limited vocabulary, misuse of parts of speech.

Words and phrases are unimaginative and lifeless.

Jargon or clichés, persistent redundancy.

Key Question: Do the words and phrases create vivid pictures and linger in your mind?

Sentence Fluency

The rhythm and flow of the language, the sound of word patterns, the way in which the writing plays to the ear, not just to the eye.

5 The writing has an easy flow, rhythm, and cadence. Sentences are well built.

Sentences enhance the meaning.

Sentences vary in length as well as structure.

Purposeful and varied sentence beginnings.

Creative and appropriate connectives.

The writing has cadence.

3 The text hums along with a steady beat, but tends to be more pleasant or businesslike than musical.

Sentences get the job done in a routine fashion.

Sentences are usually constructed correctly.

Sentence beginnings are not ALL alike; some variety is attempted.

The reader sometimes has to hunt for clues.

Parts of the text invite expressive oral reading; others may be stiff, awkward, choppy, or gangly.

1 The reader has to practice quite a bit in order to give this paper a fair interpretive reading.

Sentences are choppy, incomplete, rambling, or awkward. Phrasing does not sound natural.

No "sentence sense" present.

Sentences begin the same way.

Endless connectives.

Does not invite expressive oral reading.

Key Question: Can you FEEL the words and phrases flow together as you read it aloud?

