

# Facilitator's Packet for

## Essential Skill of Writing: In-Depth Training

### Voice & Word Choice

### For Content Area Teachers

This packet contains the following:

- Facilitator's Agenda
- PowerPoint Slides with Facilitator's notes
- Scoring Guides for Voice & Word Choice Sources



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**Essential Skill of Writing: In-Depth Training  
for Content Area Teachers  
Voice & Word Choice  
AGENDA: 90 minutes to 2 hours**

<b>5 -7 minutes</b>	<p>1. Welcome and Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be done by the host or by the presenter.</li> <li>• Focus on making participants feel welcome and let them know what to expect</li> <li>• Take care of any housekeeping details</li> <li>• <b>Handout:</b> Participant's Packet</li> </ul>
<p>PowerPoint Overview Introduction &amp; Goals Slides 1 – 2</p> <p><b>5 minutes</b></p>	<p>2. The Essential Skill of Writing: <b>Voice &amp; Word Choice</b> for Content Teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Materials:</b> Laptop with PowerPoint &amp; projector</li> <li>• <b>Participant Packet: Voice &amp; Word Choice for Content Area Teachers</b> contains all handouts referred to in the PowerPoint presentation.</li> <li>• <b>Facilitator's Packet:</b> contains PowerPoint notes and other handouts used in PowerPoint</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> General scoring issues and rater bias were covered in Session One – Ideas/Content &amp; Organization. You may want to reference them briefly, depending on the amount of time that has elapsed between workshops. Information on the Common Core State Standards for Writing was also included in the workshop for Ideas/Content &amp; Organization and is not repeated here.</p>
<p>Focused training &amp; paper scoring</p> <p><b>60 - 75 minutes</b></p>	<p>3. <b>PowerPoint Presentation:</b> Slides 3 - 10 introduce Voice and provide background – leading to practice scoring papers; Slides 13 - 15 do the same for Word Choice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Student Writing Packet:</b> contains student papers that will be used for scoring during this session and have been used in other in-depth trainings on previous traits.</li> <li>• <b>Facilitator's Guide to Leading the Scoring Session:</b> contains key to student writing packet, commentaries on each paper, and suggestions for sequencing use of the papers through all 6 traits</li> </ul> <p>Facilitators have been provided with Commentary for each student paper which is not included in the participant's packet. It is recommended that you wait to distribute these commentaries until the in-depth training sessions are completed.</p>
<b>20 – 30 minutes</b>	<p>4. <b>Optional Practice Scoring all Traits</b> – If you have the time available, teachers will benefit from practice in scoring some papers for all 6 traits. You have the complete key in your Facilitator's Packet for Student Writing Samples.</p>
<b>5 - 10 minutes</b>	<p>5. <b>Optional Question &amp; Answer or Summary:</b> PowerPoint Slides 17 &amp; 18 list resources and provide a final slide to end the session.</p>
<b>Total = 90 minutes to 2 hours</b>	

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# The Essential Skill of Writing

## Voice and Word Choice For Content Area Teachers

An In-Depth Training Session



Intro slide – get participants comfortable and oriented.

This is the third in a series of 3 in-depth training sessions. For Content Area teachers, this session will focus on increasing their comfort in scoring Voice and Word Choice by emphasizing the key components of each trait.

Some content teachers may not currently value the traits of Voice and Word Choice, especially because they appear to be “devalued” by virtue of not counting for Essential Skill proficiency. One goal for this session is to help teachers see the value of including these traits in their content instruction and in classroom assessments.

The purpose of this session is to assure that teachers around the state are operating from the same reference for each score point on the scale, but especially in distinguishing between a score of 3 and a 4 which tends to be the balancing point in these traits as well. It is easy to recognize a high paper (5 or 6) and low papers (1 or 2) are often low in these traits because they are so short that it is difficult to see enough evidence of the trait to award a 3. The majority of papers fall into the 3 versus 4 category.

## Goals for this Workshop

Participants will

1. Understand the key components of the traits of Voice and Word Choice
2. Recognize student performance at different score levels for Voice and Word Choice
3. Develop expertise in scoring student writing for classroom purposes in Voice and Word Choice.



These are the main goals for this session. Emphasis is on becoming comfortable and accurate in scoring Voice and Word Choice.

Remind teachers that Voice and Word Choice do not have required scores for Essential Skills proficiency, but that they are both critical skills for students to develop as part of becoming capable writers.

# VOICE



Time to dig into the meat of the session! Use your experience and skills to help participants internalize the important considerations in Voice.

The position of a writer and his or her concept of the audience impose style constraints on the writing.

- Scholarly writing, for example, usually avoids **figures of speech** and prefers precise descriptions to colloquial terms that might be found more often in more familiar forms of writing, such as text messages or personal blogs.
- News reporting requires precise words, even if colloquial, and shorter sentences, to be easy to read by a general audience.



This and the next slide offer examples of different approaches to Voice based on the type of writing.

Point out that Style here includes both Voice and Word Choice.



- Fiction writing, in contrast, is designed to entertain and arouse the reader and is improved by the judicious use of figures of speech.
- A judge's verdict needs to explain how the verdict corresponds to other rulings, but often uses literary devices to persuade the reader of its correctness.



*Wikipedia*

Ask participants: What type of writing do students do most frequently in your classes? What type of voice is most appropriate in those assignments? How do your students know what “voice” to use in writing for you?

# Voice

- Voice is the author's style, the quality that makes his or her writing unique, and which conveys the author's attitude, personality, and character;
- OR
- Voice is the characteristic speech and thought patterns of a first-person narrator; a persona



Basic definition -- overview

## Voice

- Voice present? (commitment to topic, sincerity, other possible indicators in Scoring Guide)
- Voice appropriate for topic, mode, writing situation?
- Voice consistent enough?



These are key elements addressed in the 4 level of the scoring guide. It is important for participants to see that a paper that scores a 4 in Voice may not reach emotional heights of grandeur – but it has more strengths than weaknesses.

Recommended: Teachers use highlighters to mark words or phrases that help them understand this trait here or later in this training.

### **General Comments about VOICE:**

- Be VERY aware of mode before assigning score; straightforward tone appropriate for expository and persuasive
- When students are not allowed to use outside resources, a personal voice is usually appropriate. A formal, more academic voice is usually more appropriate for classroom work samples in which outside resources are utilized.
- On the state assessment, it is common to see a 3 given when a narrative that should be exciting or suspenseful is conveyed in a flat tone

### APPROPRIATE VOICE

1. Consider:


- Purpose (mode)
  - to tell a personal story (Narrative)
  - to explain something; to inform (Expository)
  - to convince (Persuasive)
  - to make up a fictional story (Imaginative)
- Topic: What is the writer writing about?
- Form (short story, personal essay, research paper, letter)
- Audience: Who are the intended readers?

2. Decide:

Personal	Objective
Conversational	Academic
Casual	Formal

← Personal Narrative                      Researched Academic Paper →

NOTE: COMMITMENT TO TOPIC IS ONE INDICATOR OF VOICE REGARDLESS OF MODE, TOPIC, OR AUDIENCE



Participants have this handout in their packets. Have them pair and share or work in small groups and report out to explain the 4 purposes (modes). You could divide the group into 4 and give them chart paper and have each group explain what characteristics that mode calls for in Voice.

Be sure to discuss point #2. Many expository papers in content areas call for the writer to take a more distant, objective stance.

“Writing with no voice is dead,  
mechanical, faceless. It lacks any sound.

Writing with no voice may be saying  
something true, important, or new; it may  
be logically organized; it may even be a  
work of genius. But it is as though the  
words came through some kind of mixer  
rather than being uttered by a person.



First part of quote on importance of voice – especially as it relates to informational (non-literary) writing.

Extreme lack of voice is characteristic of bureaucratic memos, technical engineering writing, much sociology, many textbooks.”

Peter Elbow



Conclusion of quote – ready to move into scoring papers

## Let's Review the Scoring Guide



Highlight words  
and phrases that  
help distinguish a  
score of 3 from a 4  
in Voice

The most critical differentiation occurs at the 3 and 4 score points. Don't neglect the other scores, however.

# Let's Score some Papers!

Refer to Facilitator's Instructions for Scoring Student Papers.

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# WORD CHOICE



Introduction to Word Choice

“The difference between the almost right word & the right word is really a large matter--it's the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning.”

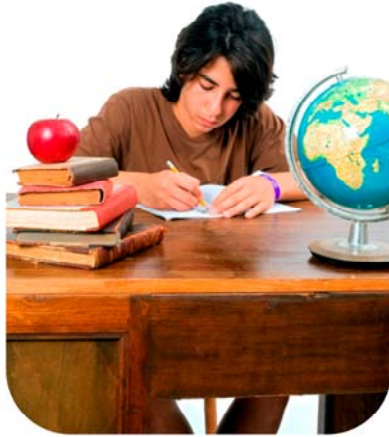
Mark Twain



Famous, often used quote – but to the point about word choice.

Have participants discuss the importance of using correct technical terms related to their subject area – this is part of word choice also.

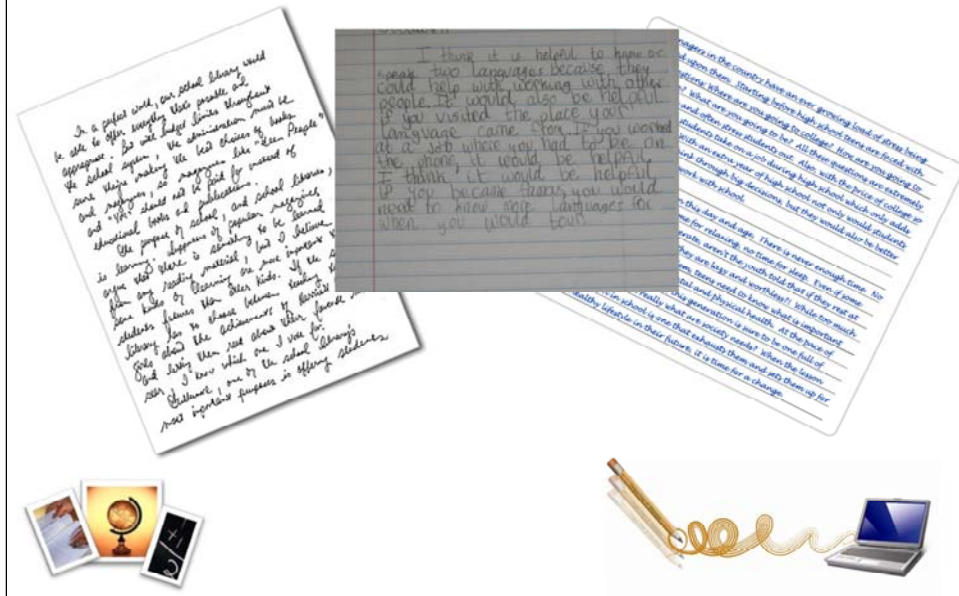
## Let's Review the Scoring Guide



Highlight words and phrases that help distinguish a score of 3 from a 4 in Word Choice

Again, focus is on helping participants distinguish between a 3 and 4, but go over other score points as well.

## Let's Score some Papers!



You have a set of papers with scores and commentary. Suggestions are included in the facilitator's packet for which papers to score for Word Choice. Participants have the student papers, but no commentary. Papers may be referenced again during other in-depth training session on the traits.

You may wish to provide commentaries on scores and papers to participants who have completed all three in-depth training sessions – **A.** Ideas/Content and Organization; **B.** Sentence Fluency and Conventions; **C.** (optional) Voice and Word Choice.

## Resources to Practice Scoring

- ODE High School Writing Samples:  
<http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?=527>
- OPEN Scoring Site:  
<http://www.openc.k12.or.us/scoring/>
- Clackamas ESD Writing Samples  
<http://www.clackesd.k12.or.us/cie/writing.html>



These are three resources where teachers can find papers to score for all traits and then compare their scores with the official scores.

Thank you for your attention!



Final slide

Recommendation of an excellent book on writing for content teachers – Writing to Learn: How to Write – and Think – Clearly About Any Subject At All by William Zinsser. It is out of current printing, but can be purchased on Amazon.com

# APPROPRIATE VOICE

## 1. Consider:

- Purpose (mode)
  - to tell a personal story (Narrative)
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  - to make up a fictional story (Imaginative)
- Topic: What is the writer writing about?
- Form (short story, personal essay, research paper, letter)
- Audience: Who are the intended readers?

## 2. Decide:

Personal  
Conversational

Objective

Casual

Personal Narrative

Research Paper  
Academic Paper

NOTE: COMMITMENT TO TOPIC IS ONE INDICATOR OF VOICE REGARDLESS OF MODE, TOPIC, OR AUDIENCE

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# OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## OFFICIAL SCORING GUIDE, WRITING

Voice	
<p><b>6</b></p> <p>The writer has chosen a voice appropriate for the topic, purpose, and audience. 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. The writing is characterized by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an effective level of closeness to or distance from the audience (e.g., a narrative should have a strong personal voice, while an expository piece may require extensive use of outside resources and a more academic voice; nevertheless, both should be engaging, lively, or interesting. Technical writing may require greater distance.).</li> <li>• an exceptionally strong sense of audience; the writer seems to be aware of the reader and of how to communicate the message most effectively. The reader may discern the writer behind the words and feel a sense of interaction.</li> <li>• a sense that the topic has come to life; when appropriate, the writing may show originality, liveliness, honesty, conviction, excitement, humor, or suspense.</li> </ul>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>The writer has chosen a voice appropriate for the topic, purpose, and audience. The writer demonstrates commitment to the topic, and there is a sense of “writing to be read.” The writing is expressive, engaging, or sincere. The writing is characterized by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an appropriate level of closeness to or distance from the audience (e.g., a narrative should have a strong personal voice, while an expository piece may require extensive use of outside resources and a more academic voice; nevertheless, both should be engaging, lively, or interesting. Technical writing may require greater distance.).</li> <li>• a strong sense of audience; the writer seems to be aware of the reader and of how to communicate the message most effectively. The reader may discern the writer behind the words and feel a sense of interaction.</li> <li>• a sense that the topic has come to life; when appropriate, the writing may show originality, liveliness, honesty, conviction, excitement, humor, or suspense.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4</b></p> <p>A voice is present. 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. The writing is characterized by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a suitable level of closeness to or distance from the audience.</li> <li>• a sense of audience; the writer seems to be aware of the reader but has not consistently employed an appropriate voice. The reader may glimpse the writer behind the words and feel a sense of interaction in places.</li> <li>• liveliness, sincerity, or humor when appropriate; however, at times the writing may be either inappropriately casual or personal, or inappropriately formal and stiff.</li> </ul>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>The writer’s commitment to the topic seems inconsistent. A sense of the writer may emerge at times; however, the voice is either inappropriately personal or inappropriately impersonal. The writing is characterized by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a limited sense of audience; the writer’s awareness of the reader is unclear.</li> <li>• an occasional sense of the writer behind the words; however, the voice may shift or disappear a line or two later and the writing become somewhat mechanical.</li> <li>• a limited ability to shift to a more objective voice when necessary.</li> <li>• text that is too short to demonstrate a consistent and appropriate voice.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2</b></p> <p>The writing provides little sense of involvement or commitment. There is no evidence that the writer has chosen a suitable voice. The writing is characterized by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• little engagement of the writer; the writing tends to be largely flat, lifeless, stiff, or mechanical.</li> <li>• a voice that is likely to be overly informal and personal.</li> <li>• a lack of audience awareness; there is little sense of “writing to be read.”</li> <li>• little or no hint of the writer behind the words. There is rarely a sense of interaction between reader and writer.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1</b></p> <p>The writing seems to lack a sense of involvement or commitment. The writing is characterized by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no engagement of the writer; the writing is flat and lifeless.</li> <li>• a lack of audience awareness; there is no sense of “writing to be read.”</li> <li>• no hint of the writer behind the words. There is no sense of interaction between writer and reader; the writing does not involve or engage the reader.</li> </ul>

# OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## OFFICIAL SCORING GUIDE, WRITING

<b>Word Choice</b>	
<p><b>6</b></p> <p><b>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. The writing is characterized by</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accurate, strong, specific words; powerful words energize the writing.</li> <li>• fresh, original expression; slang, if used, seems purposeful and is effective.</li> <li>• vocabulary that is striking and varied, but that is natural and not overdone.</li> <li>• ordinary words used in an unusual way.</li> <li>• words that evoke strong images; figurative language may be used.</li> </ul>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p><b>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. The writing is characterized by</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accurate, specific words; word choices energize the writing.</li> <li>• fresh, vivid expression; slang, if used, seems purposeful and is effective.</li> <li>• vocabulary that may be striking and varied, but that is natural and not overdone.</li> <li>• ordinary words used in an unusual way.</li> <li>• words that evoke clear images; figurative language may be used.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>Words effectively convey the intended message. The writer employs a variety of words that are functional and appropriate to audience and purpose. The writing is characterized by</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• words that work but do not particularly energize the writing.</li> <li>• expression that is functional; however, slang, if used, does not seem purposeful and is not particularly effective.</li> <li>• attempts at colorful language that may occasionally seem overdone.</li> <li>• occasional overuse of technical language or jargon.</li> <li>• rare experiments with language; however, the writing may have some fine moments and generally avoids clichés.</li> </ul>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>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. The writing is characterized by</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• words that work, but that rarely capture the reader’s interest.</li> <li>• expression that seems mundane and general; slang, if used, does not seem purposeful and is not effective.</li> <li>• attempts at colorful language that seem overdone or forced.</li> <li>• words that are accurate for the most part, although misused words may occasionally appear; technical language or jargon may be overused or inappropriately used.</li> <li>• reliance on clichés and overused expressions.</li> <li>• text that is too short to demonstrate variety.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>Language is monotonous and/or misused, detracting from the meaning and impact. The writing is characterized by</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• words that are colorless, flat or imprecise.</li> <li>• monotonous repetition or overwhelming reliance on worn expressions that repeatedly detract from the message.</li> <li>• images that are fuzzy or absent altogether.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1</b></p> <p><b>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. The writing is characterized by</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• general, vague words that fail to communicate.</li> <li>• an extremely limited range of words.</li> <li>• words that simply do not fit the text; they seem imprecise, inadequate, or just plain wrong.</li> </ul>