

The Essential Skill of Writing

Participant's Training Packet Voice and Word Choice For Content Area Teachers

An In-Depth Training Session

Information provided by Oregon Department of Education
Office of Assessment and Information Services



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The Essential Skill of Writing

Voice and Word Choice
For Content Area Teachers

An In-Depth Training Session



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.



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.



- 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

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



Voice

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



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
Conversational
Casual

Objective
Academic
Formal

Personal Narrative

Researched Academic Paper

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



“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.



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

Peter Elbow

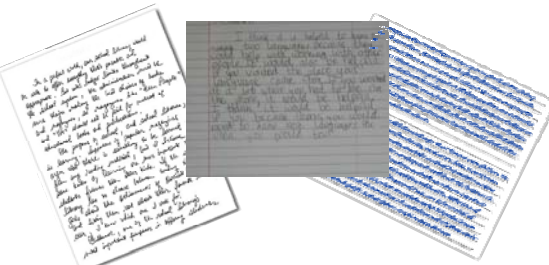


Let's Review the Scoring Guide



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

Let's Score some Papers!



WORD CHOICE

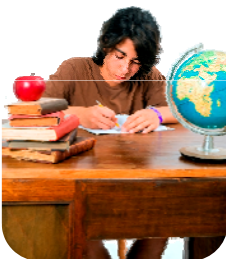


"The difference between the almost right word & the right word is really a large matter--it's the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning."

Mark Twain

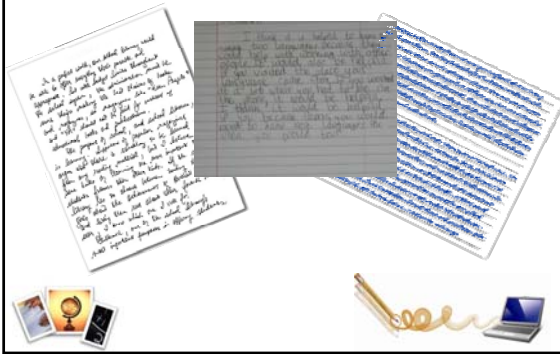


Let's Review the Scoring Guide



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

Let's Score some Papers!



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>



Thank you for your attention!



APPROPRIATE VOICE

1. Consider:

- Purpose (mode)
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- Topic: What is the writer writing about?
- Form (short story, personal essay, research paper, letter)
- Audience: Who are the intended readers?

2. Decide:



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>6</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"> • 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.). • 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. • a sense that the topic has come to life; when appropriate, the writing may show originality, liveliness, honesty, conviction, excitement, humor, or suspense. 	<p>5</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"> • 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.). • 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. • a sense that the topic has come to life; when appropriate, the writing may show originality, liveliness, honesty, conviction, excitement, humor, or suspense.
<p>4</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"> • a suitable level of closeness to or distance from the audience. • 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. • liveliness, sincerity, or humor when appropriate; however, at times the writing may be either inappropriately casual or personal, or inappropriately formal and stiff. 	<p>3</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"> • a limited sense of audience; the writer’s awareness of the reader is unclear. • 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. • a limited ability to shift to a more objective voice when necessary. • text that is too short to demonstrate a consistent and appropriate voice.
<p>2</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"> • little engagement of the writer; the writing tends to be largely flat, lifeless, stiff, or mechanical. • a voice that is likely to be overly informal and personal. • a lack of audience awareness; there is little sense of “writing to be read.” • little or no hint of the writer behind the words. There is rarely a sense of interaction between reader and writer. 	<p>1</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"> • no engagement of the writer; the writing is flat and lifeless. • a lack of audience awareness; there is no sense of “writing to be read.” • 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.

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICIAL SCORING GUIDE, WRITING

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