

Grade 8 Writing—Performance-Level Descriptors

Advanced: Students demonstrate superior performance on written responses that are fully developed using relevant text-based facts, concrete or descriptive details, quotations, and/or other examples. Content is appropriate for audience and purpose. Arguments are fully developed, using relevant and compelling claims and counterclaim(s), accurate evidence from the passages, and logical reasoning. The argument, topic, story, or experience is clear and expresses an insightful perspective, sustained topic, clearly defined context, or point of view. The writer quotes or paraphrases evidence effectively and does not plagiarize. Narrative techniques are used to develop experiences, events, and/or characters. Organization is strong and moves the reader through the text using coherent and appropriate transitions. The introduction engages the reader, establishes the argument, presents a clear topic, and/or orients the reader. Information is logically ordered and examples are presented in a well-executed progression. The conclusion enhances and supports the argument or flows naturally from the information or narrated experiences presented. Figurative language and word relationships are demonstrated effectively. Concrete words and phrases, sensory details, and domain-specific vocabulary are used to clearly convey ideas. Writing demonstrates a rich variety of sentence structures, types, and lengths, and paragraphing is appropriate. The writer effectively shows a command of Standard English grammar and usage as well as capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Errors are minor and do not affect readability.

Proficient: Students demonstrate mastery on written responses that are adequately developed using text-based facts, concrete details, quotations, and/or other examples. Content is largely appropriate for audience and purpose. Arguments are partially developed using claims and counterclaim(s), evidence from the passages, and reasoning. The argument, topic, story, or experience is evident and gives a sustained perspective, topic, or point of view throughout the composition. The writer attempts to quote or paraphrase information appropriately to provide supporting evidence. Some narrative techniques such as dialogue and description are evident to develop experiences and/or characters. Organization and paragraphing are evident with information ordered using transitions to link ideas. Introduction presents an argument or a topic or orients the reader to a story or experience. Information is presented in a logical progression. The conclusion supports or relates to the information or experiences presented. Figurative language and word relationships are demonstrated. Concrete words and phrases, sensory details, and/or domain specific vocabulary are used when appropriate. The writer uses a variety of sentence structures, types, and lengths with few fragments or run-ons. The writer demonstrates a command of Standard English grammar and usage as well as capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. While errors may be noticeable, they do not significantly affect readability.

Limited Knowledge: Students demonstrate partial mastery on written responses that are minimally developed using few details or examples. Content is limited for audience and purpose. An insufficient argument is presented using claims; a counterclaim may not be addressed. A perspective or point of view is not clearly expressed. The writer does not attempt to quote or paraphrase information. Narrative techniques may be minimal. Organization lacks appropriate structure, and details may be randomly placed. Limited transitions are evident. Figurative language, word relationships, concrete words, sensory details, and domain-specific language are limited. The writer uses a limited variety of sentence structures, types, and lengths with little or no paragraphing attempted. Errors with grammar and usage as well as capitalization, punctuation, and spelling, significantly interfere with readability.

Unsatisfactory: Students have not performed at least at the Limited Knowledge level. Students scoring at the Unsatisfactory level should be given comprehensive writing instruction.