

Argumentative Writing: A Key to Teaching Constructed Response

Resources for the Classroom

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Extended Response Answer Guidelines – RLA Test

Please use the guidelines below as you answer the Extended Response question on the Reasoning Through Language Arts test. Following these guidelines as closely as possible will ensure that you provide the best response.

1. **Please note that this task must be completed in no more than 45 minutes.** However, don't rush through your response. Be sure to read through the passage(s) and the prompt. Then think about the message you want to convey in your response. **Be sure to plan your response before you begin writing.** Draft your response and revise it as needed.
2. As you read, think carefully about the **argumentation** presented in the passage(s). "Argumentation" refers to the assumptions, claims, support, reasoning, and credibility on which a position is based. Pay close attention to **how the author(s) use these strategies to convey his or her positions.**
3. When you write your essay, be sure to:
 - **determine which position presented** in the passage(s) is **better supported** by evidence from the passage(s)
 - **explain why the position you chose is the better-supported one**
 - **remember, the better-supported position is not necessarily the position you agree with**
 - **defend your assertions with multiple pieces of evidence** from the passage(s)
 - **build your main points thoroughly**
 - **put your main points in logical order** and tie your details to your main points
 - **organize your response carefully** and consider your **audience, message, and purpose**
 - **use transitional words and phrases** to connect sentences, paragraphs, and ideas
 - **choose words carefully** to express your ideas clearly
 - **vary your sentence structure** to enhance the flow and clarity of your response
 - **reread and revise your response** to correct any errors in grammar, usage, or punctuation

Retrieved from the World Wide Web at:

<http://www.gedtestingservice.com/uploads/files/74e3cf83a8cae5b05e5627fd2754e87f.pdf>

2014 GED® Program Free Practice Test RLA – Stimulus Material

An Analysis of Daylight Saving Time

- 1 Twice a year, most Americans adjust their clocks before bedtime to prepare for Daylight Saving Time (DST). Every spring, clocks are moved ahead one hour. In the fall, they are moved back one hour, and all to maximize the benefits of the sun. DST was first implemented in the United States in 1918 to conserve resources for the war effort, though proponents encouraged its adoption long before then. Benjamin Franklin, for example, touted the idea of DST to citizens of France way back in 1784!

DST in America

- 2 For years following DST's U.S. debut, cities could choose if and when they wanted to participate. However, by the 1960s, the open choice resulted in various cities throughout the United States using different times. These varying times created confusion, particularly for entertainment and transportation schedules. Imagine traveling across several states, each adhering to its own little time zone!
- 3 In order to remedy the confusing situation, Congress established a start and stop date for DST when it passed the Uniform Time Act of 1966. Although this act helped clarify when DST went into effect around the country, cities were not required to use DST. To this day, parts of Arizona and all of Hawaii, for example, do not use DST.

Benefits of DST

- 4 Many studies have investigated the benefits and costs of DST. Research in the 1970s found that DST saved about 1% per day in energy costs. On average, most electricity used is for lighting and appliances. It makes sense that more sun at the end of the day meant less need for electricity. This follows right along with Ben Franklin's argument over 200 years ago.
- 5 Supporters of DST also claim that more sunlight saves lives. Studies have indicated that traveling home from work or school in daylight is safer. Nearly three decades of research shows an 8-11% reduction in crashes involving pedestrians and a 6-10% decrease in crashes for vehicle occupants after the spring shift to DST.
- 6 Other studies reveal that, following a similar logic, DST reduces crime because people are out completing chores after their business or school day in sunlight, lessening their exposure to crimes that are more common after dark.

Arguments against DST

- 7 Opponents of DST cite other studies that disagree with these outcomes. A 2007 study in California indicated that DST had little or no effect on energy consumption that year. A three-year study of counties in Indiana showed that residents of that state spent \$8.6 million more each year for energy, and air pollution increased after the state switched to DST. The researchers theorized that the energy jump was caused in part by increased use of air conditioning as a result of maximizing daylight hours.
- 8 Recent research has also brought into question the safety aspect of the yearly switch to and from DST. In one study, pedestrian fatalities from cars increased immediately after clocks were set back in the fall. Another study showed 227 pedestrians were killed in the week following the end of DST, compared with 65 pedestrians killed the week before DST ended.
- 9 The adjustment period drivers endure each year is a dangerous time for pedestrians, and Daylight Saving Time may be the reason. Instead of a gradual transition in the morning or afternoon by just minutes of sunlight each day, the immediate shift of one hour forward or backward fails to provide drivers and pedestrians time to adjust.
- 10 When you also consider the cost of the abrupt transition in terms of confusion caused by people who forget to adjust their clocks, opponents say, any benefits gained by DST are simply not worth the trouble.

Prompt

The article presents arguments from both supporters and critics of Daylight Saving Time who disagree about the practice's impact on energy consumption and safety.

In your response, analyze both positions presented in the article to determine which one is best supported. Use relevant and specific evidence from the article to support your response.

Type your response in the box below. You should expect to spend up to 45 minutes in planning, drafting, and editing your response.

RLA Writing Sample

Between the two positions in this article, the one against Daylight Saving Time is better supported. Although both positions are well organized and supported with several examples, the evidence supporting the view against DST is more specific and thorough.

The first position makes some valid points, ones that are sure to catch any reader's attention. The writer brings up expenses, safety, and crime rates, all of which are supposedly improved through the use of DST. However, the evidence he uses to support this claim seems general and outdated. In paragraph four, he mentions that one study took place in the 1970s. He also uses phrases such as "many studies" and "other studies." While the points he makes are interesting, there are no specifics. One is left wondering just how outdated or reliable these studies are, and if they even apply to the average American. Had he used less generalized phrases, he may have sounded more convincing.

The second position is much better supported, especially compared to the somewhat lacking arguments of the previous position. The writer's information is precise, and he seems to use more studies than the first author. While the first author used studies from the 1970s, this one mentions a study done in 2007. The specifics of each study also improve the quality and seeming validity of the arguments made. The writer gives the states in which the studies were conducted and the reasons why the researchers believed they got those results. Also, like the first author, the issues of which he writes are ones that will catch the reader's attention: energy consumption, safety, and confusion. While they are similar to those points brought up by the first writer, this second position is far better supported through its organization and attention to detail.

From the "The 2014 GED® Test – Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA) Extended Response Resource Guide for Adult Educators" p. 18

Sample Annotated Paper

Test-Taker Anchor Response 7 – Score: 2 [Trait 1]

Thomas Jefferson states very clearly, and without faltering, that while the country will be represented by the desires of the majority, that the rights of the minority will not be infringed upon in the process. The letter submitted by Ms. Parsons demonstrates that the country continues to uphold this principle almost 150 years after Thomas Jefferson made that statement.

In the issue at hand the United States Supreme Court struck down a mandate that all students recite the Pledge of Allegiance and salute the flag each morning. In some situations, such as in the case of the Jehovah's Witnesses, saying the Pledge while saluting the flag violates their religious beliefs, and so therefore their freedom of religion. However, it was not ruled to be a violation of their freedom of religion, but rather of their freedom of speech, to say or not say what they desired.

There is nothing wrong with asking children to say the Pledge of Allegiance, as pointed out by the author. It is wrong, nevertheless, to require that this be done under penalty of punishment. It resonates with Nazi idealisms of the time, that you would salute Hitler and obey the Nazi regime or face death or internment. We as a people were appalled by these revelations, but West Virginia, in their desire to prove the patriotism of their students, attempted to take the United States one step closer to this fanaticism. Despite that, the Supreme Court struck down the law and prevented one of the most basic freedoms we as Americans hold dear from being trampled upon by a majority opinion.

Annotation

The writer of this response generates an argument that demonstrates a clear understanding of how the enduring issue of minority rights expressed in the excerpt from Thomas Jefferson is reflected in the Parsons letter ("Thomas Jefferson states very clearly . . . that while the country will be represented by the desires of the majority, that the rights of the minority will not be infringed upon in the process. The letter submitted by Ms. Parsons demonstrates that the country continues to uphold this principle almost 150 years after Thomas Jefferson made that statement.").

The writer cites evidence from the letter to support the analysis in the second and third paragraphs of the response (example: ". . . the United States Supreme Court struck down a mandate that all students recite the Pledge of Allegiance and salute the flag each morning. In some situations, such as in the case of the Jehovah's Witnesses, saying the Pledge while saluting the flag violates their religious beliefs, and so therefore their freedom of religion. However, it was not ruled to be a violation of their freedom of religion, but rather of their freedom of speech, to say or not say what they desired.").

Additionally, the response includes information from the writer's own knowledge of the broader historical context to support the argument ("It resonates with Nazi idealisms of the time, that you would salute Hitler and obey the Nazi regime or face death or internment."). As a whole, this response is well-connected to both the prompt and the source texts.

Therefore, Response 7 earns a score of 2 for Trait 1.

Trait Score 2 – 1

Trait Score 3 - 1

Sample Anchor Response for Science – Prompt 1

Wind energy is far more resourceful compared to coal. Coal has ongoing fuel costs, and has many more impacts to the environment as wind energy does not. Wind does not produce any Co2 emissions, as where coal produces 200 pounds of CO2 emissions per kWh. Coal has many impacts that will affect the environment in the long run, as to wind energy. Simple inconveniences are the main issue. The effects of wind energy would help with the coal consumption. Projections show that coal resources will only last 100 years if we don't find alternate energy sources.

Annotation

Score Explanation: This test-takers response includes complete support from the table. (Coal has ongoing fuel costs, and has many more impacts to the environment as wind energy does not) and (Wind does not produce any Co2 emissions, as where coal produces 200 pounds...). Additionally, the test-taker provides a holistically complete explanation for how the energy supply of coal will be affected, (wind energy would help coal consumption. Projections show that coal resources will only last 100 years if we don't find alternate energy sources.). Although the explanation lacks some of the development that is typical for responses that receive scores of 3, this particular response uses high quality support from the data table, which helps compensate for the lack of detail in the explanation.

Resources

Classic Model for an Argument

No one structure fits all written arguments. However, argumentative writing consists of the following elements. Below is a basic outline for an argumentative or persuasive essay.

I. Introductory Paragraph – Set up Your Claim

Your introductory paragraph sets the stage or the context for the position for which you are arguing. The introduction should include a thesis statement that provides your claim (what you are arguing for) and the reasons for your position on an issue.

Your thesis or claim:

- states what your position on an issue is
- usually appears at the beginning or ending of the introduction in a short essay
- should be clearly stated and should contain emphatic language (should, ought, must)

II. Body of your Argument – Support Your Claim

A. Background Information – Lays the foundation for proving your argument

This section of your paper gives the reader the basic information he or she needs to understand your position.

This section will often include:

- A summary of works being discussed
- A definition of key terms
- An explanation of key theories

B. Reasons or Evidence to Support your Claim

All evidence you present in this section should support your position. This is the focus of your essay. Generally, you begin with a statement that you back up with specific details or examples. Make sure to connect the evidence to the claim. The reader should be able to see that there is a logical, persuasive connection between the claim, reasons, and data (evidence). Depending on how long your argument is, you will need to devote one to two well-developed paragraphs to each reason/claim or type of evidence.

Sample Format for Supporting Evidence Paragraph

- **Topic Sentence:** What is one item, fact, detail, or example you can tell your readers that will help them better understand your claim/paper topic? Your answer should be the topic sentence for this paragraph.
- **Introduce Evidence:** Introduce your evidence either in a few words (As Dr. Brown states . . .) or in a full sentence (To understand this issue, we first need to look at statistics).
- **State Evidence:** What supporting evidence (reasons, examples, facts, statistics, and/or quotations) can you include to prove/support/explain your topic sentence?

- Explain Evidence: How should we read or interpret the evidence you are providing us? How does this evidence prove the point you are trying to make in this paragraph? Can be opinion based and is often at least 1-3 sentences.
- Concluding/Transitional Sentence(s): End your paragraph with a concluding sentence that reasserts how the topic sentence of this paragraph helps up better understand and/or prove your paper's overall claim and how it transitions to the next idea.

III. Addressing the Opposite Side – Refute the Objections

Any well-written argument must anticipate and address positions in opposition to the one being argued. Pointing out what your opposition is likely to say in response to your argument establishes that you have thought critically about your topic. Addressing the opposite side actually makes your argument stronger! Generally, this takes the form of a paragraph that can be placed either after the introduction or before the conclusion. Often this is phrased as an opposing view and the refutation to the view.

Sample Format for Supporting Evidence Paragraph

- Introduce the Counterargument – this could be one or more arguments against your thesis
- State the Evidence – what evidence is provided in the text(s)
- Refute the Evidence – argue against the evidence and why the stance that you have selected is the better supported
- Concluding/Transitional Sentence(s) – end the paragraph with information that reasserts your position as a whole.

IV. Conclusion

The conclusion should bring the essay to a logical end. However, your conclusion should not simply restate your introductory paragraph. Your conclusion should explain what the importance of your issue is in a larger context. Your conclusion should also reiterate why your topic is worth caring about. Some arguments propose solutions or make prediction on the future of the topic.

Adapted from:

Odegaard Writing and Research Center. <http://www.depts.washington.edu/owrc>

Purdue OWL Writing Lab. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

The Writing Center at UNC Chapel Hill. <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/>

The Writer's Workplace. Ed. Sandra Scarry and John Scarry. 6th ed. Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008.

Graphic Organizers for Argumentative Writing

Unpacking Prompts

Do	What

Close Reading Questions

After they have read the excerpt(s), can your students answer these questions?

- What is the author's argument?
- What position does the author take (for or against)?
- What is one point that supports the author's argument?
- What evidence does the author give to support this point?
- What is the point of view of the author?
- What is one point that refutes the author's point of view?

Both Sides Now

When reading argumentative non-fiction text, materials often present one side or viewpoint on a particular issue. Sometimes, the text may provide evidence to support both sides. Then, it is up to the reader determine which is best supported. Analyzing and evaluating the evidence for both sides is one way to identify a claim and the reasons for making a specific decision/claim.

Both Sides Now			
Evidence that Supports	Question or statement Which position is best supported?	Evidence that Opposes	
Decision (Claim)			
Reasons (Analysis/Evaluation)			

Prewriting Organizer: Toulmin Model for Argumentation

A Claim: Is your point
 Is debatable
 Is demonstrated by reason and logic

Thesis/Claim Statement: - _____

Warrants: *Just like a search warrant from the police, the argument warrant gives the writer authority to proceed with his/her argument.*

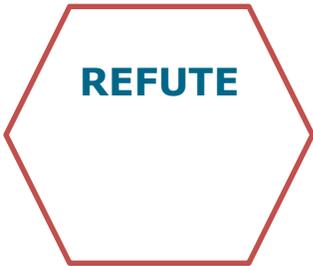
- ❖ is the assumption that makes your claim plausible
- ❖ questions the evidence
- ❖ shows a logical, persuasive connection between claim, reasons, data (evidence)
- ❖ gives authority to proceed with your argument
- ❖ can be stated, but usually is assumed

Reason

Reason

Reason

Reason



Conclusion

Constructed Response Organizer

Prompt/Question:			
<p>Restatement of question in own words (unpack it)</p> <p>Claim</p> <p>Evidence Detailed body of evidence or reasons that support answer – include enough details to answer the question. Make sure all details support the claim and are not off-topic.</p> <p>Counterargument(s)</p> <p>Restated question Concluding thoughts</p>			
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Text 1</td> <td>Text 2</td> </tr> </table>	Text 1	Text 2
	Text 1	Text 2	
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Claim</td> <td>Rebuttal</td> </tr> </table>	Claim	Rebuttal
Claim	Rebuttal		

Sample Thesis/Claim Frames

A thesis is an answer to a specific question. A thesis statement makes a claim or proposition that reflects a specific point of view. The thesis statement should recognize both sides of a question, yet focus on two to three specific points (discussion points) sometimes called points of analyses. A thesis statement is the roadmap for the written response. The placement of the thesis statement is generally located in the introduction and summarized in the conclusion of a writing sample.

The general argument made by _____ in his/her work _____ is that _____ because _____.

Although _____ (believes, demonstrates, argues) that _____, _____ supports/provides the clearest evidence _____.

A key factor in both _____ can be attributed to _____.

When comparing the two positions in this article, _____ provides the clearest evidence that _____.

Looking at the arguments regarding _____, it is clear that _____.

In discussion of _____, one controversial issue has been _____. _____ believes that _____. On the other hand, _____ asserts that _____. _____ is clearly the best supported argument on the issue of _____.

How Do You Know? – Frames for Incorporating Evidence

In the article, “_____,” _____ maintains that _____.

_____’s point is that _____

_____’s claim rests upon the questionable assumption that _____

One reason that _____ maintains the position of _____ is that _____

According to the text/article/passage/report, _____

An example of _____, is _____

_____. This proves/supports that _____

The author states that _____

In addition, the author/article/research supports that _____

_____. This proves that _____.

Examples/data supporting _____, include _____

Explain the Evidence

Teach students how to identify evidence through direct quotes, paraphrase the information, and explain how the evidence supports the claim/thesis.

Claim	Using a Direct Quote (What direct quote supports the claim?)	Paraphrasing (How can you rewrite the direct quote in your own words?)	Explanation (How does the evidence support the claim?)

Sentence Structures: Helping Students Discuss, Read, and Write About Texts

Students at all levels struggle to find language that expresses their ideas and helps them achieve their rhetorical purpose. Sentence structures offer a useful means of getting students up and running with academic language through either sentence starters or sentence frames. Both approaches are useful for writing about and discussing different types of texts.

Sentence Starters	Sentence Frames
<p>Making Predictions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I predict that... • If x happens, then... • Because x did y, I expect z. <p>Making Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • X reminds me of... • X is similar to y because... • X is important to y because... <p>Making Inferences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • X means . . . since x is... • Early on the author says... which suggests • X is... • X causes y as a result of... which shows... <p>Summarizing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main (central) idea is... • The author argues that... • In _____, (author's name) implies... <p>Evaluating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The author's point is/is not valid because... • The author does/does not do a good job of... • The most important aspect/event/idea is... <p>Analyzing the Text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The author uses _____ to show/achieve... 	<p>Summarizing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readers often assume that.... • While many suggest x, others say y.... • (Author's name) agrees/disagrees with x, pointing out... <p>Responding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • X claims...which I agree/disagree with because.... • X's point assumes x, which I would argue means... • While I agree that_____, you could also say... <p>Agreeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most will agree that... • I agree with those who suggest that... • X offers an effective explanation of why y happens, which is especially useful because most think that.... <p>Disagreeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would challenge x's point about y, arguing instead... • X claims y, but recent discoveries show this is... • While X suggests y, this cannot be true since... <p>Taking the Third Path: Agreeing and Disagreeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While I agree that..., I reject the larger argument that...since we now know... • I share X's belief that..., but question...due to...

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The author assumes _____ which is/is not true... • The use of _____ strengthens/weakens the author's argument by... <p>Clarifying</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What the author is saying is... • Given that x happened, the author is trying to show... • X is not _____ but is, instead, _____ since.... <p>Synthesizing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These elements/details, when considered together, suggest... • Initial impressions suggested x, but after learning _____ it is now clear that... It is not a question of x but rather of y because.... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most concede x though few would agree that y is true... <p>Arguing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although x is increasing/decreasing, it is not y but z that is the cause... • While x is true, I would argue y because of z. • X was, in the past, the most important factor but y has changed, making it the real cause. <p>Explaining Importance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on x, people assumed y, which made sense at the time, but now we realize z, which means.... • This change questions our previous understanding of x, which means that now we must assume... • While this conclusion appears insignificant, it • challenges our current understanding of x, which means that...
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Sentence starters and frames from: "A Cognitive Strategies Approach to Reading and Writing Instruction for English Learners in Secondary School," by Olson and Land in *Research in the Teaching of English* (Feb 2007) and *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, by Graff and Birkenstein (Norton 2006/2010).

Connecting Ideas – Using Transitional Words and Phrases (Odell Education)

Transitional words and phrases create link between your ideas when you are speaking and writing. They help your audience understand the logic of your thoughts. When using transitional words, make sure that it is the right match for what you want to express. Remember, transition words work best when they are connecting two or more strong ideas that are clearly stated. The following is a list of transitional words and phrases that you can use for different purposes.

Add Related Information	Give an Example or Illustrate an Idea	Make Sure Your Thinking is Clearly Understood	Compare Ideas or Show How Ideas Are Similar	Contrast Ideas or Show How They Are Different
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · furthermore · moreover · too · also · again · in addition · next · further · finally · and, or, nor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · to illustrate · to demonstrate · specifically · for instance · as an illustration · for example 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · that is to say · in other words · to explain · i.e., (that is) · to clarify · to rephrase it · to put it another way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · in the same way · by the same token · similarly · in like manner · likewise · in similar fashion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · nevertheless · but · however · otherwise · on the contrary · in contrast · on the other hand
Explain How One Thing Causes Another	Explain the Effect or Result of Something	Explain Your Purpose	List Related Information	Qualify Something
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · because · since · on account of · for that reason 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · therefore · consequently · accordingly · thus · hence · as a result 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · in order that · so that · to that end, to this end · for this purpose · for this reason 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · First, second, third... · First, then, also, finally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · almost · nearly · probably · never · always · frequently · perhaps · maybe · although

From Odell Education

Assessing the Claim

Response	Notes
	<p>The Claim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it debatable? • Is the focus narrow enough for the writing required? • Does it establish the argument? • Is it valid? <p>The Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it support the claim? • Does it include facts or statistics? • Does it include examples? • Is it based on an expert's or the writer's personal opinion? <p>The Warrant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it explain the pieces of evidence? • Does it connect evidence to the claim? • Is it reasonable? • Does it make assumptions? • Is it logical? <p>The Counterclaim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the writer include information that disagrees with the original claim? • Is it reasonable? • What is the evidence that supports the counterclaim? <p>The Rebuttal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it explain why the counterclaim does not work? • What is the evidence used to support the rebuttal?

Revising and Editing Checklist

Introduction

- Does your introduction begin with a sentence that grabs the reader's attention?
- Does your paper contain a thesis that is a clear summary of your main point or argument?
- Is your thesis arguable? Your thesis should not simply be the statement of a fact because a statement is NOT arguable.
- Does your thesis match your assignment? A thesis for a compare-contrast paper is constructed differently than a thesis for a personal narrative or a research paper.
- Is your thesis placed correctly? Normally the thesis should be the last sentence of your introductory paragraph, but it can also appear either as the first sentence or within the first paragraph.
- Does your thesis provide a clear outline for the entirety of your paper?
- Does your thesis answer a question? Keep in mind, a thesis should never be written as a question.

Body Paragraphs

- Does the topic sentence of each body paragraph summarize the entirety of the points that paragraph covers?
- Does each topic sentence correspond with your thesis statement?
- Does all of the information in your paragraph support your topic sentence?
- Is the final sentence in each body paragraph a sentence that either summarizes the paragraph or transitions to the next point?
- Do you acknowledge an opposing point of view and then explain why you think it isn't strong enough to change the point of view selected?

Conclusion

- Does the last paragraph remind readers of the main points of the essay, without going into too much detail repeating everything readers just read?
- Is the conclusion free of new information (such as another supporting point)?
- Does the last sentence leave readers with a strong final impression?

Entire Paper

General

- Is the writing in formal, third person?
- Does one idea flow smoothly into the next?
- Do the sentence structures and lengths vary?
- Does every sentence relate to the thesis?
- Does everything make sense?
- Is the essay convincing?
- Are the grammar, punctuation, and spelling correct?

Sentence Composition

- Have you removed unnecessary hedges that weaken your arguments such as *probably*, *might be*, *somewhat*, or *kind of*?
- Have you removed unnecessary words that do not add to the sentence such as *really* or *a lot*?
- Have you varied your vocabulary by utilizing a thesaurus and dictionary when necessary in order to avoid repetition or incorrect word choices?
- Are your sentences of varied lengths and complexities? A paper is stronger when it has a mixture of sentences versus all short sentences or all long sentences.
- Are all transitions from one idea to another smooth and clearly explained, so the reader does not need to make any leaps in logic?
- Has all slang and conversational language been removed?
- Have you removed any offensive language, such as gender-based or biased language?

Verbs

- Do your verb tenses match?
- Are your verb tenses consistent?
- Have you replaced unnecessary "to be" verbs (be, been, is, are, were, was) with stronger verbs?
- Are you using "active" verbs?

Integration of Information

- Are all of your quotes and paraphrases correctly cited?
- Are all of your quotes introduced and explained properly?
- Is all of your information, such as quotes and data, pertinent to your topic? Does your information correspond with the topic sentence of your current paragraph?

Grammar and Mechanics

- Have you used parallel structure?
- Do your pronouns agree with the antecedents they are replacing?
- Is your paper free of fragments and run-on sentences?
- Is your paper properly punctuated?
- Is your paper free of spelling errors?
- Have you read through your paper (slowly) in order to catch errors that you would miss otherwise?

Resources from the World Wide Web

Reasoning through Language Arts

Aspen Institute. Materials for teaching close reading skills that are tied to standards. This site also provides leadership materials. <http://www.aspendri.org/portal/Home>

Free Resources for Educational Excellence. Teaching and learning resources from a variety of federal agencies. This portal provides access to free resources. <http://free.ed.gov/index.cfm>

National Council for Teachers of English. This site provides lessons and strategies for teaching nonfiction text. <http://www.ncte.org/kits/nonfictionlessons>

Newsela. A site with nonfiction articles available in 4-5 different Lexile Levels with many of them providing a quiz that is aligned to a specific anchor standard. It is necessary to sign up for the free account to see the different level of articles. <https://newsela.com/>

PBS Teacher Source. Lesson plans and lots of activities are included in the teacher section of PBS. <http://www.pbs.org/teachers>

ProCon.org. A website that provides both sides of the argument. Useful for use in teaching argumentative writing. <http://www.procon.org/>

Purdue University's OWL. One of the most extensive collections of advice about writing found on the web. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

RAFTS Northern Nevada Writing Project. The project includes print materials that may be purchased, as well as access to RAFTS prompts that can be generated electronically. <http://www.unr.edu/educ/nnwp/index.html>

ReadWriteThink. From the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English, this site has classroom resources and professional development activities in the area of integrated reading, writing, and thinking skills. <http://www.readwritethink.org/>

Teach 4 Results. A list of resources for teaching the writing process. http://iteach4results.wikispaces.com/*Writing

Teaching That Makes Sense. A K-12 site with lots of free resources and graphic organizers from Steve Peha. <http://ttms.org/>

The Writing Studio – Colorado State University. A step-by-step guide for argumentative writing. <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=58>

Tools for Teachers: Engaging in Academic Writing. Resources from the Aspen Institute on implementing more rigorous reading and writing skills.

<http://www.aspendri.org/portal/browse/CategoryList?categoryId=281>

Writer's Web. Materials from the University of Richmond's Writing Center.

<http://writing2.richmond.edu/writing/wweb.html>

A Few Websites for Common Errors in Writing

The Everyday Writer 20 Common Errors in Writing

http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/everyday_writer/20errors/

Twelve Common Errors

<https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/CommonErrors.html>

15 Grammar Goofs That Make You Look Silly

<http://www.copyblogger.com/grammar-goofs/>

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