

Scoring Guide: Narrative Writing

Narrative writing re-creates a real or imagined experience. It usually contains four elements: characters, a setting, a chronological sequence of events, and a conflict or problem to be solved. The writer typically builds in high points by putting characters into interesting situations, weaving in plot twists, incorporating vivid details, and creating a central conflict or problem that builds suspense and holds the piece together.

6 ↑ HIGH	EXCEPTIONAL <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Starts with a lead that sets up the story and draws in the reader.• Contains characters that are believable, fresh, and well described. The characters grow and learn.• Describes a setting that is unique and rich.• Features events that are logically sequenced and move the story forward. Time and place work in harmony.• Is a complete story that has never been told or is an original twist on a familiar story. The plot is well developed. There is a key conflict or problem that is compelling and eventually solved.• Features well-used literary techniques, such as foreshadowing and symbolism.• Leaves the reader feeling intrigued, delighted, surprised, entertained, and/or informed.• Ends satisfyingly because the key conflict or problem is solved thoughtfully and credibly.
5 ↑ MIDDLE	STRONG
4 ↑ MIDDLE	REFINING <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Starts with a lead that sets the scene, but is predictable or unoriginal.• Contains characters that are a bit too familiar. The characters show little change in their thinking or understanding as the story moves along.• Offers a setting that is not described all that well.• Features events that are given the same level of importance. Significant ones mingle with trivial ones, and sometimes stray from the main story line.• Is a nearly complete story that may not contain new or original thinking. The plot moves forward, but then stumbles. Minor conflicts and problems distract from major ones.• Contains examples of literary techniques such as foreshadowing and symbolism that are not all that effective.• Leaves the reader engaged at some points, detached at others.• Ends by providing the reader with a sense of resolution, but he or she may also feel unsatisfied or perplexed.
3 ↑ LOW	DEVELOPING
2 ↑ LOW	EMERGING <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Starts with a lead that is perfunctory: "I'm going to tell you about the time..."• Contains characters that don't feel real. The unconvincing characters are stereotypes or cardboard cutouts.• Offers a setting that is not at all described clearly and/or completely.• Features simple, incomplete events that don't relate to one another and/or add up to anything much. There is a mismatch between the time and place.• Is a story that jumps around illogically. There is no clear conflict or problem to be solved.• Contains no examples of literary techniques—or, at most, poor, purposeless ones• Leaves the reader frustrated and/or disappointed. He or she feels the story was not thought out before it was committed to paper.• Finishes with no clear ending or, at most, a halfhearted attempt at an ending, leaving the reader wondering why he or she bothered to read the piece.
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Scoring Guide: Expository Writing

The primary purpose for expository writing is to inform or explain, using reliable and accurate information. Although usually associated with the research report or traditional essay, expository writing needn't always contain "just the facts." The writer might include personal experiences, details from his or her life, to enliven the piece. Strong expository writing has an authoritative, knowledgeable, and confident voice that adds credibility.

6 ↑ HIGH	EXCEPTIONAL <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delves into what really matters about the topic.• Offers an insider's perspective.• Provides unexpected or surprising details that go beyond the obvious.• Is focused, coherent, and well organized.• Invites the reader to analyze and synthesize details to draw his or her own conclusions.• Is bursting with fascinating, original facts that are accurate and, when appropriate, linked to a primary source.• Contains anecdotes that bring the topic to life.• Anticipates and answers the reader's questions.• Stays on point and contains a compelling voice until the end.
5 ↑ MIDDLE	STRONG
4 ↑ MIDDLE	REFINING <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides an overview of the topic and only a few key facts.• Offers the perspective of an outsider looking in.• Lacks fresh thinking or surprises. Relies too heavily on common knowledge. Provides mostly mundane, predictable details about the topic.• Is relatively focused, coherent, and organized. Generally stays on topic.• Contains focused descriptions, but also fuzzy ones. The writer doesn't consistently connect the dots.• Includes facts that are somewhat suspicious and not linked to primary sources.• Features few, if any, anecdotes to bring the topic to life• Does not anticipate the reader's questions.• Speaks in a spotty voice—commanding one moment, cautious the next.
3 ↑ LOW	DEVELOPING
2 ↑ LOW	EMERGING <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Misses the main point completely. The writer's purpose is not clear.• Offers a complete outsider's perspective.• Contains details that are completely unrelated to the main topic.• Is unfocused, incoherent, and poorly organized.• Makes sweeping statements. Nothing new is shared.• Lacks fascinating, original facts. Any facts the piece does contain are seemingly inaccurate or unsupported.• Contains no anecdotes to bring the topic to life.• Does not anticipate the reader's questions. In fact, the piece contains no evidence that the writer has thought about audience at all.• Requires energy to read from beginning to end.
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Scoring Guide: Persuasive Writing

Persuasive writing contains a strong argument based on solid information that convinces the reader to embrace the writer's point of view. Sometimes persuasive writing is a call to action, such as a donation solicitation from a charitable organization. Other times, it's an attempt to change attitudes, such as an op-ed piece in your local newspaper. Regardless of the format, the writing needs to be clear, compelling, and well supported. The writer should not waver in his or her position.

6	↑	HIGH	EXCEPTIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Influences the reader's thinking through sound reasoning and a compelling argument.• Contains opinions that are well supported by facts and personal experiences. Differences between opinion, facts, and personal experiences are clear.• Takes a position that is defensible and logical.• Exposes weaknesses of other positions.• Avoids generalities and exaggerations.• Includes many moments of sound reasoning and judgment.• Reveals only the best evidence to make the strongest statement possible.• Connects to a larger "truth."
			5	STRONG
4	↑	MIDDLE	REFINING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raises questions for the reader, but may fail to persuade him or her because the thinking is superficial and only hints at something deep.• Mixes opinions, facts, and personal experiences. The piece relies on emotion more than truth. Data may be present, but not used to full effect.• Contains an argument that starts out strong, but fades. Offers few new insights into the topic.• Attempts to expose holes in other opinions, with mixed results.• Features generalities or exaggerations, but also concrete information and clear examples.• Includes a few moments of sound reasoning and judgment.• Contains some evidence that hits the mark and some that veers off course.• Waffles. Many statements are plausible while others are far-fetched, leaving the reader unconvinced.
			3	DEVELOPING
2	↑	LOW	EMERGING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not influence the reader. The writer's thinking and reasoning is vulnerable to attack.• Abounds with opinions that are not supported by facts or personal experiences.• Takes a position that is not clear or not credible. The argument is illogical or implausible.• Ignores the opposing side of the argument.• Offers only generalities and exaggerations—no hard facts that could sway the reader.• Includes no moments of sound reasoning and judgment.• Lacks the evidence necessary for the reader to take a stand.• Does not question or does not probe. The piece misses the target.
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