

6 Traits of Writing - Descriptors

Ideas	Organization	Voice
<p>Ideas are the heart of any piece of writing. Ideas are all about information. In a good creative piece, ideas paint pictures in a reader's mind. In an informational piece, strong ideas make hard-to-penetrate text reader friendly. Two things make ideas work well: clarity and details. Good writing always makes sense. And it includes details-not just any old details, mind you, but those beyond-the-obvious bits of information that thoughtful, observant writers notice.</p> <p>Keys: MAIN IDEA, FOCUS, DETAILS, CLARITY, RESEARCH</p>	<p>Organization is the internal structure of the piece. Once a writer has assembled his/her information and thoughts, it's time to put things together in a way that makes sense and that holds the reader's attention. The writer must ask, "Where do I begin?" "What do I say next?" "And after that?" "How do I wrap it all up?" Good organization makes writing as easy to follow as a well-laid-out road map. The reader moves effortlessly from one thought to the next, and his/her interest and understanding grow throughout the piece until-boom! The power of a just-right conclusion brings the discussion to a close (for now).</p> <p>Keys: LEAD, SEQUENCING, PATTERN MATCHES PURPOSE, TRANSITIONS, PACING, CLOSURE</p>	<p>Voice is many things: individuality, perspective, expressiveness, sensitivity to audience, enthusiasm for a topic, confidence-and so much more. Voice has the power to hold a reader's attention and to make the reading more enjoyable. It also reveals something of the writer, and the stronger the voice, the deeper the revelation. Even informational pieces can (and should) have strong voice, the kind of voice that resonates from a writer's knowledge of and respect for his/her topic, along with the desire to bring that topic to life for the reader.</p> <p>Keys: SOUND, TONE CONNECTION TO AUDIENCE, STRONG VERBS, DETAIL, RESK, HONESTY</p>
<p>Word Choice</p> <p>In good writing, the word choice is clear, precise and colorful. It is marked by thoughtful selection of that "just right" word that conveys both the meaning and attitude the writer wishes to project. Good writers learn to spend words like money, making each one count. They also learn that strong verbs give writing energy, while truckloads of adjectives and adverbs do little more than weigh the text down. Strong word choice is free of ponderous, heavy language, written only to impress. It's also free of fluffy language: nice, fun, wonderful, great. IT is clean, clear, and to the point-sometimes quotable.</p> <p>Keys: VERBS! CLARITY, PRECISION, FRESH WORDS AND PHRASES, SIMPLICITY, NATURAL SOUND, AVOIDING WORDINESS, INFLATION, JARGON & "WEARY" WORDS</p>	<p>Sentence Fluency</p> <p>Sentence fluency is the rhythm and flow of sentences that makes a text both easy and pleasurable to read. When sentence fluency is strong, it is easy to read a text aloud with lots of interpretation and inflection; it dances gracefully from one sentence to the next. Strong sentence fluency is also marked by variety in both sentence length and structure. Variety lends interest to the text and helps keep sleepy readers awake.</p> <p>Keys: VARIETY, SMOOTH FLOW, TRANSITIONAL PHRASES, DIALOGUE, THE WAY IT SOUNDS TO THE EAR.</p>	<p>Conventions</p> <p>Anything a copy editor might deal with falls under the heading of conventions: spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, grammar and usage. Layout and presentation can be included as well.</p> <p>Keys: "EDITING CONCERNS" CONVENTIONAL vs. NON-STANDARD (based on specific purpose)</p>

