

Beginning Writers Scoring Guide



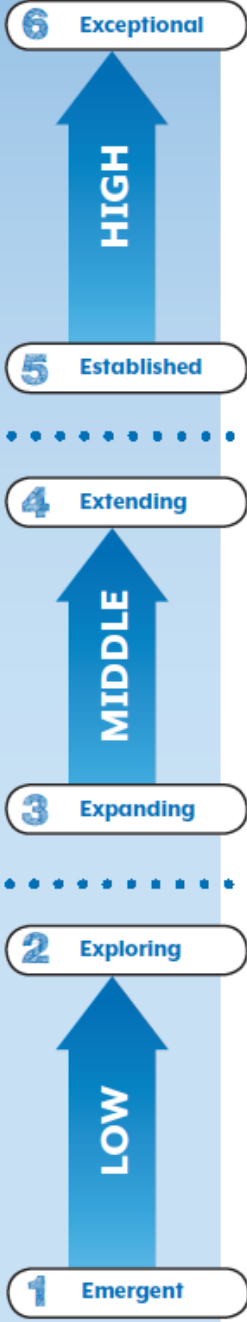
Grades 1 -2





Beginning Writers Continuum: **Ideas**

The piece's content—its central message and details that support that message.



- A. **Finding a Big Idea:** The writer shows understanding of the topic through personal experience or research. The big idea is clear, coherent, and original.
- B. **Focusing on the Big Idea:** The writer gets at the heart of the topic and writes about it using original and complex thinking. The big idea is narrow and specific.
- C. **Staying With the Big Idea:** The writer creates meaning for the reader by elaborating with details that develop the big idea. Pictures (if present) enhance that idea but aren't necessary for comprehension.
- D. **Using Juicy Details:** The writer anticipates what the reader might want to know by providing details that clarify the big idea. He or she has carefully selected details to create meaning for the reader and show what is important.

- A. **Finding a Big Idea:** The writer explains a simple idea or tells a simple story with words and pictures. His or her topic is clear, but may not be original.
- B. **Focusing on the Big Idea:** The writer remains true to his or her topic, but in a general way. His or her piece may be too broad, fuzzy, and/or predictable.
- C. **Staying With the Big Idea:** The writer offers clear thinking, but the information he or she provides is incomplete or irrelevant. He or she fails to flesh out the big idea or veers into a new topic without realizing it.
- D. **Using Juicy Details:** The writer provides details, though not consistently. He or she settles for the simplest way to convey information or tell the story, rather than reaching for details that create a clear picture in the reader's mind.

- A. **Finding a Big Idea:** The writer conveys little information in text or pictures; at most, only the beginning of an idea comes through. An oral reading by the writer is needed to identify the topic.
- B. **Focusing on the Big Idea:** The writer provides text, pictures, and other elements that are so unrecognizable or random that the reader can't pinpoint the big idea. What matters to the writer about this topic is not clear.
- C. **Staying With the Big Idea:** The writer does not extend a clear message. Letter strings indicate that he or she is trying to express something about the topic, but the reader cannot discern precisely what it is.
- D. **Using Juicy Details:** The writer must read his or her writing aloud and explain the drawings for the reader to understand what he or she has to say about the topic. He or she has left many of the reader's questions unanswered.



Beginning Writers Continuum: **Organization**

The internal structure of the piece—the thread of logic, the pattern of meaning.

6 Exceptional

HIGH

5 Established

4 Extending

MIDDLE

3 Expanding

2 Exploring

LOW

1 Emergent

- A. Starting With a Bold Beginning:** The writer provides an original beginning. He or she tries to grab the reader's attention right off the bat.
- B. Creating a Mighty Middle:** The writer presents at least one well-developed paragraph. He or she elaborates on ideas and connects one idea to the next, using sophisticated sequence and transition words: *later, otherwise, either*.
- C. Finishing With an Excellent Ending:** The writer ends the piece in a logical place. He or she tries to wrap up all the loose ends and give the reader something to think about.
- D. Adding a Terrific Title:** The writer provides a title that captures the piece's big idea. He or she has put a lot of thought into the title.
- A. Starting With a Bold Beginning:** The writer provides a clear beginning, but it is predictable: "Once upon a time," "One time," "First," or something along those lines.
- B. Creating a Mighty Middle:** The writer presents two or more sentences on the topic—the beginning of a paragraph—that contain a few standard sequence and transition words: *first, next, but*. Or, he or she presents one sentence and pictures that develop the big idea.
- C. Finishing With an Excellent Ending:** The writer provides a pat summary: "the end," "thank you," "that's it." He or she seems to have run out of steam and chooses the easy way out.
- D. Adding a Terrific Title:** The writer provides a title, but it's just a word or key phrase. It's generic and would work for almost anyone's paper on this topic.
- A. Starting With a Bold Beginning:** The writer doesn't provide a clear beginning. He or she has simply filled the page with letters, words, and/or pictures in no particular order.
- B. Creating a Mighty Middle:** The writer presents text that contains letters, words, or approximations of both, but no sentences. He or she does not attempt to coordinate written elements.
- C. Finishing With an Excellent Ending:** The writer has given no thought to how the piece ends. There is no sense of closure; the piece simply stops.
- D. Adding a Terrific Title:** The writer provides no title at all or, at most, a title that gives no indication of what the piece is about: "My paper," "Writing," or his or her name.



Beginning Writers Continuum: **Voice**

The tone and tenor of the piece—the personal stamp of the writer, which is achieved through a strong understanding of purpose and audience.

6 Exceptional

HIGH

5 Established

4 Extending

MIDDLE

3 Expanding

2 Exploring

LOW

1 Emergent

- A. Expressing a Feeling:** The writer expresses a distinct tone: bittersweet, compassionate, funny, frustrated, scared, and so on. He or she uses language that speaks to the intended audience.
- B. Communicating With Sparkle and Pizzazz:** The writer takes real risks to create a truly individual piece of writing. He or she has found an original way to address the topic and satisfy the reader.
- C. Reaching Out to the Reader:** The writer is mindful of the audience and connects purposefully to the audience. Clearly, it matters to the writer that the reader “gets it.”
- D. Saying Things in New Ways:** The writer expresses him- or herself in unique ways. He or she “owns” the topic by addressing the big idea behind it distinctively.
- A. Expressing a Feeling:** The writer expresses a tone, but it’s general: happy, sad, mad. Oversize letters, exclamation points, underlining, repetition, and pictures are used for emphasis.
- B. Communicating With Sparkle and Pizzazz:** The writer offers a fresh word, interesting image, and/or unusual detail here and there. But, for the most part, he or she uses routine language.
- C. Reaching Out to the Reader:** The writer connects with the reader intermittently. He or she only allows a sneak peak into what matters or is interesting to him or her.
- D. Saying Things in New Ways:** The writer approaches the topic predictably. What he or she thinks or feels about the big idea shows up in pictures or in an occasional colorful word or phrase.
- A. Expressing a Feeling:** The writer doesn’t express a tone. He or she has not provided any evidence of how he or she feels about the topic.
- B. Communicating With Sparkle and Pizzazz:** The writer offers “Plain Jane” letters, words, and/or sentences. The writing feels like it came off an assembly line.
- C. Reaching Out to the Reader:** The writer provides no evidence that he or she has considered the audience; the writing may be copied from another source. He or she writes generically about the topic.
- D. Saying Things in New Ways:** The writer’s work lacks a point of view. He or she produces drawing and/or writing that feels forced, as if responding to a simple question.



Beginning Writers Continuum: **Word Choice**

The specific vocabulary the writer uses to convey meaning and enlighten the reader.

6 Exceptional

HIGH

5 Established

4 Extending

MIDDLE

3 Expanding

2 Exploring

LOW

1 Emergent

A. Choosing Zippy Verbs: The writer uses “action words” effectively: verbs that add energy to the writing.

B. Picking “Just Right” Words: The writer selects words with care and intent. Places in the writing catch the reader’s attention because the words or phrases work so well.

C. Stretching for Never-Before-Tried Words: The writer tries words that are new to him or her because they communicate precisely what he or she is trying to say. He or she doesn’t settle for the first word that comes to mind.

D. Using Words to Create Meaning: The writer uses everyday words well—words that are correct, colorful, and creative. He or she may even have tried using figurative language, such as metaphors and alliteration.

A. Choosing Zippy Verbs: The writer uses verbs correctly, but doesn’t choose zippy ones. He or she may use forms of “to be” almost exclusively.

B. Picking “Just Right” Words: The writer offers only one or two moments that sparkle or show precision. Most of the words and phrases are basic and unoriginal.

C. Stretching for Never-Before-Tried Words: The writer seems comfortable with the first word that comes to mind. He or she makes no attempt to draw from the large bank of words in his or her vocabulary.

D. Using Words to Create Meaning: The writer uses ordinary and/or imprecise words to explain or tell, making it hard for the reader to get a clear picture of what he or she is trying to convey. Occasional misused words bog down the reader.

A. Choosing Zippy Verbs: The writer seems confused about how to apply verbs. He or she neglects to use them, or uses them incorrectly, in places where they could be effective.

B. Picking “Just Right” Words: The writer is trying to create words, but with very limited success. He or she is only writing simple words, which, at times, are lost in a string of letters.

C. Stretching for Never-Before-Tried Words: The writer uses only words he or she knows: name, simple high-frequency words, words around the room, and so on. Few words are original.

D. Using Words to Create Meaning: The writer uses words that are obvious choices such as labels on pictures or key names or places. Readers are challenged to understand the words because there are standard and nonstandard letters throughout.



Beginning Writers Continuum: **Sentence Fluency**

The way the words and phrases flow through the piece. It is the auditory trait because it's "read" with the ear as much as the eye.



- A. Building Complete Sentences:** The writer crafts solid sentences throughout the piece—sentences that are varied and grammatically correct. Any fragments add to the flow of the piece.
- B. Starting Sentences in Different Ways:** The writer begins sentences differently. If any sentences begin the same way, it is a deliberate move to create a pleasing rhythm.
- C. Varying Sentence Lengths:** The writer creates sentences of various lengths. Some are short, some are long, and some are in-between; the variety enhances the piece's fluency.
- D. Making Smooth-Sounding Sentences:** The writer creates sentences that flow together smoothly. He or she may use conjunctions to connect ideas and make the piece a breeze to read aloud.

- A. Building Complete Sentences:** The writer offers simple, grammatically correct sentences, with a few exceptions. Fragments, if present, are unintentional or ineffective, which disrupts the piece's flow.
- B. Starting Sentences in Different Ways:** The writer begins sentences the same way, for the most part. Only a couple of sentences begin differently from the rest.
- C. Varying Sentence Lengths:** The piece contains short sentences of almost equal length or, perhaps, one or two extremely long sentences that go on seemingly endlessly.
- D. Making Smooth-Sounding Sentences:** The writer uses simple conjunctions (*and* or *but*) to connect ideas and make sentences flow. Despite a few awkward moments, the piece can be read aloud without too much trouble.

- A. Building Complete Sentences:** The writer struggles with sentence construction. There are no correctly formed sentences in the piece, only short and/or repetitive words and phrases.
- B. Starting Sentences in Different Ways:** The writer begins each line in much the same way. Repeating words and phrases make reading a challenge.
- C. Varying Sentence Lengths:** The writer puts words down, but without much regard to how they sound together. Some words stand alone.
- D. Making Smooth-Sounding Sentences:** The writer must read the piece aloud for the reader to hear how the words flow. Only the writer can read the piece with any sense of continuity.



Beginning Writers Continuum: Conventions

The mechanical correctness of the piece. Correct use of conventions (spelling, capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing, and grammar and usage) guides the reader through the text easily.

6 Exceptional

HIGH

5 Established

4 Extending

MIDDLE

3 Expanding

2 Exploring

LOW

1 Emergent

- A. **Spelling Well:** The writer spells high-frequency words correctly and other types of words phonetically (“ardvrk”). The spelling doesn’t impede the reader.
- B. **Capitalizing Correctly:** The writer applies basic capitalization rules with consistency, such as beginning sentences and proper names with a capital letter, and always capitalizing the pronoun “I.”
- C. **Punctuating Powerfully:** The writer uses punctuation marks correctly to guide the reader. He or she may also try to use them creatively to emphasize points and enhance fluency.
- D. **Applying Basic Grammar:** The writer shows control over basic standard English grammar. He or she applies usage rules consistently and accurately.

- A. **Spelling Well:** The writer spells simple high-frequency words correctly or phonetically (such as *kftn*, *sed*, and *wnt*), making them easy to read. More sophisticated words present a challenge, however.
- B. **Capitalizing Correctly:** The writer is unpredictable when it comes to capitalization. He or she may begin some sentences with a capital, for instance, or only occasionally capitalize the pronoun “I.”
- C. **Punctuating Powerfully:** The writer uses end punctuation marks at most. There is little evidence in the piece of control over punctuation.
- D. **Applying Basic Grammar:** The writer uses standard English grammar inconsistently. He or she attempts to apply rules correctly, but misses the mark as many times as he or she hits it.

- A. **Spelling Well:** The writer uses letter strings and pre-phonetic spelling (such as *gGmkRt.*) The words are not spelled correctly.
- B. **Capitalizing Correctly:** The writer shows no control over the use of capitals. Capital letters are randomly placed throughout the piece.
- C. **Punctuating Powerfully:** The writer rarely uses punctuation. When he or she does use it, it’s applied incorrectly.
- D. **Applying Basic Grammar:** The writer has generated so little text it is difficult to determine what he or she knows about grammar and usage. When the writer reads the piece aloud, however, grammar and usage issues reveal themselves.



Beginning Writers Continuum: **Presentation**

The physical appearance of the piece. A visually appealing text provides a welcome mat. It invites the reader in.

6 Exceptional

HIGH

5 Established

- A. Forming Letters Correctly:** The writer correctly forms letters throughout the piece. Both upper- and lowercase letters are written clearly.
- B. Printing Words Neatly:** The writer is careful to apply the right amount of pressure to create letters that are uniform and pleasing to the eye.
- C. Putting Spaces Between Letters and Words:** The writer uses spacing correctly and consistently. Spaces between letters and words are even and make the piece easy to read.
- D. Turning in a Tidy Final Piece:** The writer has made sure that the piece's overall appearance is inviting to the reader. It's neat.

4 Extending

MIDDLE

3 Expanding

- A. Forming Letters Correctly:** The writer forms some letters using proper form, including upper- and lowercase letters. But there is inconsistency in the way those letters are formed.
- B. Printing Words Neatly:** The writer creates letters that slant in every direction. He or she may apply too much pressure or not enough, making the letters too bold or too light to read easily.
- C. Putting Spaces Between Letters and Words:** The writer puts spaces between letters and words, but the amount of space is uneven. Some letters and words sit very close to one another, making them difficult to read.
- D. Turning in a Tidy Final Piece:** The writer has not sufficiently polished the piece's appearance. The piece may have a few cross-outs or smudges. It may be wrinkled or torn at the corner. It's readable, but not neat.

2 Exploring

LOW

1 Emergent

- A. Forming Letters Correctly:** The writer forms letters randomly. There appears to be no intentional use of upper- and lowercase letters.
- B. Printing Words Neatly:** The writer puts his or her thoughts down hastily and with little care. Pictures are drawn and letters are formed haphazardly.
- C. Putting Spaces Between Letters and Words:** The writer has not used spacing effectively at all. Letters, words, and pictures are jumbled together.
- D. Turning in a Tidy Final Piece:** The writer has written so carelessly that the piece is almost illegible. It contains many cross-outs, smudges, wrinkles, tears, folds, and so forth.