

6 Exceptional Achievement / Exceptional writer

Paragraph provides a unified, well-argued response to the topic and maintains a central focus. Ideas are expressed in a sophisticated manner with appropriate vocabulary. A clear, well-organized pattern of development is present, without digressions. Transitions are smooth and logical, details are rich and varied and consistently support and extend paragraph the topics. Sentences reflect an overall command of standard written English—syntax, grammar, punctuation and spelling are correct. No mechanical errors.

5 Commendable Achievement / Commendable writer

Paragraph provides a fairly well-organized response to the topic. Thoughts are expressed in clear language most of the time. Sentence beginnings and endings are clear, transitions are mostly smooth and logical. Details are generally varied and consistent with the topic. Vocabulary is appropriate, avoiding oversimplification or distortion. Sentences are mostly correct, although a *few* syntax, punctuation, or spelling errors may be present when sentence structure is more complex.

4 Adequate Achievement / Competent writer

Paragraph shows a basic grasp of organization. Controlling idea is present, but focus and development of ideas may be incomplete. Endings may sometimes be awkward or abrupt. Transitions are logical but may lack depth and/or relevance. Vocabulary is appropriate but oversimplified. Sentences reflect an adequate command of standard English to ensure clarity, but forms of agreement and grammar are not always correct. Writer generally displays good sentence control through punctuation and combination, and by including subjects and verbs. Words are spelled with a reasonable degree of accuracy.

3 Some Evidence of Achievement / Developing writer

Paragraph responds to the topic, although possible digressions or unnecessary elaborations exist. A main idea is apparent but unevenly developed. Beginnings and endings may be awkward or abrupt. Key elements are omitted and details are used inconsistently. Writer uses informal or conversational speech. Relationships are signaled, but vocabulary is limited, syntax is rudimentary, and common words are misspelled. Writer does not demonstrate a consistent understanding of when and how to begin and end sentences.

2 Limited Evidence of Achievement / Emerging writer

Paragraph begins with a response to the topic but does not develop it fully. Ideas are repeated or are presented at random. Topics, ideas, or plans are unclear, and use of supporting details or events may not be logical. Digressions or over-elaborations interfere with understanding. Poor sense of beginnings or endings, with few transitions. Words are misused, vocabulary is limited, syntax is tangled and unclear. Errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling occur frequently enough to interfere with basic understanding.

1 Minimal Evidence of Achievement / Insufficient writer

Paragraph suffers from general incoherence with no apparent pattern of organization. Topic may be clear, but many digressions or unclear elaborations are present, with little real development. Little sense of beginnings or endings. Displays a high frequency of sentence errors: persistent mistakes in punctuation, spelling, grammar and syntax frustrate the reader. Paragraph is too brief to provide a reasonably accurate judgment of the writer's competence.

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