The AASA Writing Rubric

Grades 6-8 Informative

Introduction

The AASA Writing Rubric outlines the expectations for students on the AASA Writing Task. The Rubric identifies the qualities a student response should have to achieve a particular score point. Understanding the expectations of the AASA Writing Rubric will help educators better prepare students for the AASA assessment.

Objectives:

Key Elements
Identifying the essential aspects of the rubric

Standards Alignment
Understanding the connection between the standards and rubric.

Articulation
Identifying how the rubric is used to differentiate scores.

Resources
More AASA help for teachers and students.

Guidelines

6-8 Informative Rubric

This document is for the Grades 6-8 Informative rubric. This information can easily be applied to the Grades 6-8 Informative rubric. They are very similar. In addition, since the rubrics are banded by grade level, it is important to point out that the expectations for each grade level are still different. Student expectations are guided by the standards at each grade level.

Here are some guidelines to keep in mind while reading the rubric.

- The rubric is not a checklist—a response does not have to contain all the characteristics of a score point to achieve that score point.
- The rubric is not all-encompassing—there are many facets to becoming a great writer. The AASA rubric does not contain them all.
- The rubric is based on the Arizona English Language Arts Standards—the standards guide the expectations of the rubric.
- The rubric requires some level of subjectivity—there is no secret formula for evaluating writing based on the rubric.
- The "most likely" score—a paper will receive the score that it most represents. If the paper is more like a 3 than a 4, then it will be a 3.

Find more resources, including the test blueprint, sample items, and a webinar of this document at www.azed.gov/assessment/aasa.

Key Elements

Purpose, Focus, and Organization

The first step in understanding the rubric is identifying the key elements. These elements, which exhibit quality writing, are present throughout the different score points in varying degrees. It is easiest to first identify these elements by looking at one score point on the rubric.

The first domain on the rubric is Purpose, Focus, and Organization. By focusing on just the 4-point score level, it's easy to see there are eight key elements. They are highlighted in red italics.

Score Point 4 of the rubric

Score	4
Purpose, Focus, and Organization	The response is fully sustained and consistently *focused within the purpose, audience, and task*; and it has a clear *controlling idea* and effective *organizational structure* creating coherence and completeness. The response includes most of the following: • Strongly *maintained controlling idea* with little or no loosely related material • Skillful use of a variety of *transitional strategies* to clarify the relationships between and among ideas • Logical *progression of ideas* from beginning to end with a satisfying *introduction and conclusion* • Appropriate *style* and objective *tone* established and maintained

KEY ELEMENTS

1. Focus within purpose, audience, and task
2. Controlling idea
3. Organizational structure
4. Maintained controlling idea (loose material)
5. Transitional strategies
6. Progression of ideas
7. Introduction and conclusion
8. Style and tone

Key Elements (cont.)

Purpose, Focus, and Organization

This table shows how each individual element is characterized at the score point 4 level.

Key Elements	Score Point 4
Focus within purpose, audience, and task	Fully sustained and consistently focused within the purpose, audience, and task
Controlling idea	Clear controlling idea
Organizational structure	Effective organizational structure creating coherence and completeness
Maintained controlling idea (loose material)	Strongly maintained controlling idea
Transitional strategies	Skillful use of a variety of transitional strategies
Progression of ideas	Logical progression of ideas
Introduction and conclusion	Satisfying introduction and conclusion
Style and tone	Appropriate, objective, established, maintained

Standards

Purpose, Focus, and Organization

Quickly returning to the idea of the standards guiding the rubric, this table displays each of the elements of the rubric and a standard that applies directly to it. There are many other standards which connect to form each element on the rubric, this chart simply verifies that the basis for the rubric is the standards.

Key Elements	Standards
Focus within purpose, audience, and task	6.W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
Controlling idea	6.W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts . . .
Organizational structure	6.W.2.a Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful
Maintained controlling idea (loose material)	6.W.2.b Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
Transitional strategies	6.W.2.c Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
Progression of ideas	6.W.2.a Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts . . .
Introduction and conclusion	6.W.2.f Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.
Style and tone	6.W.2. e Establish and maintain a formal style
All	6.W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. a. Apply grade 6 Reading standards to literature (e.g., "Com- pare and contrast texts in different forms or genres [e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories] in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics"). b. Apply grade 6 Reading standards to literary nonfiction (e.g., "Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not").

Articulation

Purpose, Focus, and Organization

The differentiation among the characteristics of the score point levels is the key aspect of the rubric. This horizontal articulation allows readers to evaluate a response and score it accordingly on the rubric. Understanding what differentiates a score point 4 from a score point 3 and so on will help educators define student expectations for AASA.

The differentiation between the score point 4 and the score point 3 are similar to the types of differences contained throughout the rubric as the score point goes lower. The changes are identified by the qualifiers which are used to describe the key elements.

Focusing on the highest two score points in the domain, it is easy to see the same seven elements contained within the score points. The seven key elements of the domain are in *red italics.* The differentiation occurs with the underlined words which are used to describe how well the student performs on that key element.

	Key Elements in Score Point 4	**Key Elements in Score Point 3**
Score	**4**	**3**
Purpose, Focus, and Organization	The response is fully sustained and consistently focused within the *purpose, audience, and task*; and it has a clear *controlling idea* and effective *organizational structure* creating coherence and completeness. The response includes most of the following: • Strongly maintained *controlling idea* with little or no *loosely related material* • Skillful use of a variety of *transitional strategies* to clarify the relationships between and among ideas • Logical *progression of ideas* from beginning to end with a satisfying *introduction and conclusion* • Appropriate *style* and objective *tone* established and maintained	The response is adequately sustained and generally focused within the *purpose, audience, and task*; and it has a clear *controlling idea* and evident *organizational structure* with a sense of completeness. The response includes most of the following: • Maintained *controlling idea*, though some *loosely related material* may be present • Adequate use of a variety of *transitional strategies* to clarify the relationships between and among ideas • Adequate *progression of ideas* from beginning to end with a sufficient *introduction and conclusion* • Appropriate *style* and objective *tone* established

Articulation (cont.)

Purpose, Focus, and Organization

This table might help display these differences between the two score points better.

Key Elements	Score Point 4	Score Point 3
Focus within purpose, audience and task.	Fully sustained and consistently focused within the purpose, audience, and task	Adequately sustained and generally focused within the purpose, audience, and task
Controlling idea	Clear controlling idea	A clear controlling idea
Organizational structure	Effective organizational structure creating coherence and completeness	Evident organizational structure with a sense of completeness
Maintained controlling idea (loose material)	Strongly maintained controlling idea	Maintained controlling idea, though some loosely related
Transitional strategies	Skillful use of a variety of transitional strategies	Adequate use of a variety of transitional strategies
Progression of ideas	Logical progression of ideas	Adequate progression of ideas from beginning to end
Introduction and conclusion	Satisfying introduction and conclusion	With a sufficient introduction and conclusion
Style and tone	Appropriate, objective, established, maintained	Appropriate, objective, established

Key Elements

Evidence and Elaboration

Moving on to the Evidence and Elaboration domain, we'll begin in the same manner, by identifying the key elements of the domain. These key elements will be consistent throughout the domain and highlight the different expectations for each score point.

By focusing on just the 4-point score level, it's easy to see there are nine key elements in the Evidence and Elaboration domain. They are highlighted in red italics.

Score Point 4 of the rubric

Score	4
Evidence and Elaboration	The response provides thorough and convincing *support,* citing *evidence* for the *controlling idea or main idea* that includes the effective use of *sources, facts, and details*. The response includes most of the following: • Smoothly *integrated*, thorough, and relevant *evidence*, including precise *references to sources* • Effective use of a variety of *elaborative techniques* (including but not limited to definitions, quotations, and examples), demonstrating an understanding of the topic and text • Clear and effective *expression of ideas*, using precise *language* • Academic and domain-specific *vocabulary* clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose • Varied *sentence structure*, demonstrating language facility

KEY ELEMENTS

1. Support/Evidence
2. Use of sources
3. Evidence integration
4. Reference to sources
5. Elaborative techniques
6. Expression of ideas
7. Language
8. Vocabulary
9. Sentence structure

Evidence and Elaboration

This table shows how each individual element is characterized at the score point 4 level.

Key Elements	Score Point 4
Support/Evidence	Thorough and convincing support/citing evidence
Use of sources	Effective use of sources
Evidence integration	Smoothly integrated, thorough, and relevant evidence
Reference to sources	Precise references to sources
Elaborative techniques	Effective use of a variety of elaborative techniques
Expression of ideas	Clear and effective expression of ideas
Language	Precise language
Vocabulary	Academic and domain-specific vocabulary clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose
Sentence structure	Varied sentence structure

Standards

Evidence and Elaboration

Quickly returning to the idea of the standards guiding the rubric, this table displays each of the elements of the rubric and a standard that applies directly to it. There are many other standards which connect to form each element on the rubric, this chart simply verifies that the basis for the rubric is the standards.

Key Elements	Standards
Support/Evidence	6.W.2.b Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
Use of sources	6.RI.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
Evidence integration	6.W.2.a Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect
Reference to sources	6.RI.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
Elaborative techniques	6.W.2.b Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
Expression of ideas	6.RI.9 Compare and contrast one author's presentation of events with that of another (e.g., a memoir written by and a biography on the same person).
Language	6.L.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
Vocabulary	6.L.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
Sentence structure	6.L.3.a Vary sentence patterns for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style.
All	6.W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. a. Apply grade 6 Reading standards to literature (e.g., "Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres [e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories] in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics"). b. Apply grade 6 Reading standards to literary nonfiction (e.g., "Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not").

Articulation

Evidence and Elaboration

Focusing on the highest two score points in the domain, it is easy to see the same nine elements contained within the score points. The nine key elements of the domain are in *red italics.* The differentiation occurs with the underlined words which are used to describe how well the student performs on that key element.

Key Elements in Score Point 4 **Key Elements in Score Point 3**

Score	4	3
Evidence and Elaboration	The response provides thorough and convincing *support*, citing *evidence* for the *controlling idea or main idea* that includes the effective *use of sources, facts, and details.* The response includes most of the following: • Smoothly *integrated*, thorough, and relevant *evidence*, including precise *references* to sources • Effective use of a variety of *elaborative techniques* (including but not limited to definitions, quotations, and examples), demonstrating an understanding of the topic and text • Clear and effective *expression of ideas*, using precise *language* • Academic and domain-specific *vocabulary* clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose • Varied *sentence structure*, demonstrating language facility	The response provides adequate *support*, citing *evidence* for the *controlling idea or main idea* that includes the *use of sources, facts, and details.* The response includes most of the following: • Generally *integrated* and relevant *evidence* from sources, though *references* may be general or imprecise • Adequate use of some *elaborative techniques* • Adequate *expression of ideas*, employing a mix of precise and general *language* • Domain-specific *vocabulary* generally appropriate for the audience and purpose • Some variation in *sentence structure*

Articulation (cont.)

Evidence and Elaboration

This table might help display these differences between the two score points better.

Elements	Score Point 4	Score Point 3
Support/Evidence	Thorough and convincing support/citing evidence	Adequate support, citing evidence
Use of sources	Effective use of sources	Includes the use of sources
Evidence integration	Smoothly integrated, thorough, and relevant evidence	Generally integrated and relevant evidence
Reference to sources	Precise references to sources	References may be general or imprecise
Elaborative techniques	Effective use of a variety of elaborative techniques	Adequate use of some elaborative techniques
Expression of ideas	Clear and effective expression of ideas	Adequate expression of ideas
Language	Precise language	A mix of precise and general language
Vocabulary	Academic and domain-specific vocabulary clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose	Domain-specific vocabulary generally appropriate
Sentence structure	Varied sentence structure	Some variation in sentence structure

Key Elements

Conventions

In the Conventions domain the highest score point is 2 points. This domain is driven by the standards, too, but it is presented more holistically. The key question is, "Do the errors in conventions obscure the meaning?".

Here are how errors impact the meaning of the paper at each score point level in Conventions.

	Errors do not obscure meaning	Errors may obscure meaning	Errors "often" obscure meaning
	2	**1**	**0**
Conventions	The response demonstrates an adequate command of basic conventions. The response may include the following: • Some minor errors in usage but no patterns of errors • Adequate use of punctuation, capitalization, sentence formation, and spelling	The response demonstrates a partial command of basic conventions. The response may include the following: • Various errors in usage • Inconsistent use of correct punctuation, capitalization, sentence formation, and spelling	The response demonstrates a lack of command of conventions, with frequent and severe errors often obscuring meaning.

{ Focusing on grade-level standards for writing and ensuring student responses do not have a pattern of errors which impact the meaning of the response will allow students to achieve the top score points in the Conventions domain. }

Using the process outlined in this document, educators can identify the key elements of the AASA Writing Rubric and begin to analyze the different aspects of a student response.

As a reminder, the best prep for AASA is always teaching the Standards. Classroom instruction which focuses on the standards will always align with the goals of AASA.

For questions or concerns contact: AASA@azed.gov