

Writing Assessment Handbook

California Assessment
Program

Grade Twelve

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Report of Information

(Originally written for high school teachers and students.)

An effective report of information conveys information accurately and convincingly, serving several closely related purposes: to increase readers' knowledge of a subject; to help readers better understand a procedure or process; or to provide readers with an enhanced comprehension of a concept or idea. Writers of reports of information collect, synthesize, and organize the results of their investigation and present their findings as objectively as possible. Their research may include material from both firsthand and secondhand sources.

The process of gathering and reporting information, central to report of information, is basic to other types of writing. Observational writing, for example, depends on the same procedures but focuses on the writer's particular perception of firsthand impressions.

Importance of Report of Information

Reporting information is the fundamental task of much published writing. Journalism; technical writing; court depositions; textbooks; expository essays; research, lab, and weather reports; and even phone messages all attempt to convey knowledge to an audience that wants or needs to understand something. For example, the writing guides represent an effort to report to teachers the findings of the development team. Team members have collected information from research, from student writing, and from their own and colleagues' classroom experiences and tried to organize all of their information in an efficient way.

Readers go to consumer reports, newspapers, handbooks, and training manuals to elicit information quickly and easily. Anyone who has become confused while trying to follow poorly written voting instructions on a ballot form or given up in frustration after struggling to assemble components for a radio-VCR-compact disc player-television unit knows how important it is for writers to be accurate and clear in presenting new information.

Teaching students to synthesize information from a variety of sources deserves high priority in subjects across the curriculum. Students who can use the resources of magazines, books, computer data banks, and community experts to communicate the results of their research will have greater success when they move to the more complex tasks of interpretation or speculation.

They will be better able to evaluate the reporting of others, as well. Learning how to employ the strategies of effective research and reporting is certainly one of the key goals of education as well as one of the primary requirements of workers in government, business, and industry.

Characteristics of Report of Information

The main purpose in writing a report of information is to present information clearly and succinctly to an identified audience. Report writers convey information directly; they do not attempt to persuade readers, to validate opinions, or to argue in favor of a specific viewpoint. The primary characteristics of an effective report of information form the basis of both teaching and evaluating this kind of writing:

- A clearly articulated *controlling idea*
- *Elaborated support* of the controlling idea
- An *organized pattern of development*
- Evidence of an *authoritative and consistent stance*

Controlling Idea

The controlling idea is the writer's primary concern and determines the writer's choice of points for elaboration. While the controlling idea may be either directly stated or implied, it will be clear to the careful reader. The controlling idea may convey the writer's point of view by the writer's choice of elements or by the writer's organizational approach to the subject, but the controlling idea itself will be presented clearly and objectively.

Elaborated Support

The most successful reports of information rely on a variety of elaboration strategies, providing carefully selected examples, facts, and details. The following strategies are useful in elaborating information:

- Naming, describing, or differentiating parts
- Demonstrating claims or assertions
- Comparing or contrasting with other subjects
- Examining the history of a subject
- Narrating a relevant anecdote
- Narrating the process of
- Explaining the benefits or limitations of a subject
- Providing a scenario to illustrate a point
- Indicating facts about or qualifies of a subject

Organized Pattern of Development

The organization of a report of information depends on the content, the writer's purpose, and the intended audience. Writers may organize the information using any governing framework, such as chronological or historical, specific to general, general to specific, causal, or sequential. The writer of a report of information attempts to enable readers to follow the pattern of development easily as they read to understand and remember key points. Organization in the best reports will seem to be almost inevitable, arising from the writers' carefully focused goals.

Stance

The writer of a report of information conveys a sense of authority about the subject, selecting an audience, then choosing a pattern of organization and elements for elaboration. This stance, or attitude toward the subject and audience, remains stable throughout the report. Through consistency and authority, the writer conveys a sense of commitment to the sharing of information.

Rhetorical Effectiveness Scoring Guide for Report of Information

An effective report of information conveys information accurately and convincingly, serving several closely related purposes: to increase readers' knowledge of a subject, to help readers better understand a procedure or process, or to provide readers with an enhanced comprehension of a concept or idea. Writers of reports of information collect, synthesize, and organize the results of their investigation and present their findings as objectively as possible. Their research may include material from both firsthand and secondhand sources.

Teaching students to synthesize information from a variety of sources deserves high priority in subjects across the curriculum. Students who can use the resources of magazines, books, and computer data banks, as well as those of the community and other people, to communicate the results of their research will have greater success when they move to the more complex tasks of interpretation or speculation. They will be much better able to evaluate the reporting of others, as well. Learning how to employ the strategies of effective research and reporting is certainly one of the key goals of education.

While the *rhetorical* aspect of the assessment focuses on the distinctive features of writing types, the *effectiveness* aspect guides us to look carefully at the more comprehensive features of coherence and style. Coherence, a sense of organization, flow, and focus, is essential to all good writing. The coherent essay has a clear direction, each section flowing naturally from the preceding one. Coherence is demonstrated to readers through recurrences of language, syntax, and ideas. Style, for the purposes of this assessment, is observable in two written language features: (1) *sentence control* and (2) *word choice or diction*. In assessment of the effectiveness of style, the primary considerations are *appropriateness, precision, and control*.

The main purpose in writing a report of information is to present information clearly and succinctly to an identified audience. Report writers convey information directly; they do not attempt to persuade readers, to validate opinions, or to argue in favor of a specific viewpoint. The primary characteristics of an effective report of information provide the framework for the scoring guide.

Score Point 6 - Exceptional Achievement

Controlling Idea. The six-point report has an explicit or implicit controlling idea that determines the writer's choice of points for elaboration. The controlling idea provides coherence, clarity, and focus to the report.

Elaboration and Support. The most successful reports of information rely on a variety of strategies of elaboration, providing carefully selected examples, facts, and details. Strategies used by writers of six-point papers include several of the following, with at least some points fully developed and all elaborated as appropriate for the writer's purpose:

- Name, describe, or differentiate parts.
- Demonstrate claims or assertions.
- Compare or contrast with other subjects.
- Examine the history of a subject.
- Cite an anecdote relevant to the narrating, the process of making, the use of, or the participation in a subject.
- Explain the benefits or limitations of a subject.
- Provide a scenario to illustrate a point.
- Indicate facts about or qualities of a subject.

Elaboration and Support. Language is precise and appropriate. The writer exhibits an exceptional control of a variety of sentence structures.

Organizational Pattern. Writers of six-point reports create an organizational pattern by focusing on components of the subject, developing one or more elements with specific information. The organizational pattern—chronological, historical, specific to general, general to specific, causal, sequential—depends on the content, the writer's purpose, and the intended audience.

Each section of the essay is developed fully, and the essay as a whole is coherent.

Stance. The writer of a six-point paper conveys a sense of authority about the subject. Considering the intended audience, the writer chooses a pattern of organization and elements for elaboration appropriate to that audience. This stance, or attitude toward the subject and audience, remains stable throughout the report. Through consistency and authority, the writer conveys a sense of commitment to the sharing of information.

Score Point 5 - Commendable Achievement

Controlling Idea. A five-point report has an explicit controlling idea that determines the writer's choice of points for elaboration. The controlling idea provides coherence and focus to the report. The five-point paper may lack the special clarity of the six-point report.

Elaboration and Support. Like the six-point paper, the five-point report relies on a variety of strategies of elaboration, providing carefully selected examples, facts, and details; however, a five-point report lacks the depth and richness of detail found in a six-point report. A five-point report shows the writer's ability to use words precisely and appropriately and to use a variety of sentence structures. Word choice may show less versatility than in the six-point essay; however, the diction is still consistently strong and controlled throughout the essay. Strategies used by writers of five-point essays include several of those used in six-point essays.

Organizational Pattern. A five-point report is well-organized. It begins and ends effectively, but it may not be so clearly patterned, and the transitions or organizational strategies may not display the control of the six-point report.

Stance. The writer of a five-point paper conveys a sense of authority about the subject. The stance, or attitude toward the subject and audience, remains consistent.

Score Point 4 - Adequate Achievement

Controlling Idea. A four-point report has an explicit controlling idea that provides coherence and general focus to the report.

Elaboration and Support. Writers of four-point reports often provide a considerable amount of general information, some of which may seem extraneous and is not supported by concrete and specific examples. The four-point report uses some of the elaboration strategies listed.

Organizational Pattern. A four-point report reveals some organization. The information is arranged in a logical order but does not exhibit the conscious skill of effective movement of elements. The four-point paper may shift in coherence and focus, but it has a clear beginning; the ending, which often seems hurried, at least brings the report to some sense of conclusion. Although the language in the four-point report is generally appropriate, it may be somewhat conventional and predictable.

The report shows a sustained control of sentence structure, but it may have less variety than does the five- or six-point essay.

Stance. The writer of a four-point paper usually conveys less of a sense of authority about the subject. The stance, or attitude toward the subject and audience, may seem shaky or inconsistent.

Score Point 3 - Some Evidence of Achievement

Controlling Idea. A three-point report may have a simple statement of subject; it sometimes has a controlling idea.

Elaboration and Support. The three-point report, like the four-point paper, often provides a considerable amount of general information, but it often seems to be randomly presented. The writer shows basic control of simple sentences, but the three-point essay has little sentence variety. Word choice is usually appropriate to the content; however, the writer may rely on general rather than specific language. Elaboration may be sketchy.

Organizational Pattern. A three-point report stays on topic but may shift focus. It seems to be developed sentence by sentence with little evidence of a coherent pattern. Although the reader can understand the major ideas, there may be irrelevant details, digressions, or repetitions.

Stance. Writers of three-point reports may seem interested in informing the reader. Each section of the essay is developed fully, and the essay as a whole is coherent.

Stance. The writer of a six-point paper conveys a sense of authority about the subject. Considering the intended audience, the writer chooses a pattern of organization and elements

for elaboration appropriate to that audience. This stance, or attitude toward the subject and audience, remains stable throughout the report. Through consistency and authority, the writer conveys a sense of commitment to the sharing of information.

Score Point 5 - Commendable Achievement

Controlling Idea. A five-point report has an explicit controlling idea that determines the writer's choice of points for elaboration. The controlling idea provides coherence and focus to the report. The five-point paper may lack the special clarity of the six-point report.

Elaboration and Support. Like the six-point paper, the five-point report relies on a variety of strategies of elaboration, providing carefully selected examples, facts, and details; however, a five-point report lacks the depth and richness of detail found in a six-point report. A five-point report shows the writer's ability to use words precisely and appropriately and to use a variety of sentence structures. Word choice may show less versatility than in the six-point essay; however, the diction is still consistently strong and controlled throughout the essay. Strategies used by writers of five-point essays include several of those used in six-point essays.

Organizational Pattern. A five-point report is well-organized. It begins and ends effectively, but it may not be so clearly patterned, and the transitions or organizational strategies may not display the control of the six-point report.

Stance. The writer of a five-point paper conveys a sense of authority about the subject. The stance, or attitude toward the subject and audience, remains consistent.

Score Point 4 - Adequate Achievement

Controlling Idea. A four-point report has an explicit controlling idea that provides coherence and general focus to the report.

Elaboration and Support. Writers of four-point reports often provide a considerable amount of general information, some of which may seem extraneous and is not supported by concrete and specific examples. The four-point report uses some of the elaboration strategies listed.

Organizational Pattern. A four-point report reveals some organization. The information is arranged in a logical order but does not exhibit the conscious skill of effective movement of elements. The four-point paper may shift in coherence and focus, but it has a clear beginning; the ending, which often seems hurried, at least brings the report to some sense of conclusion. Although the language in the four-point report is generally appropriate, it may be somewhat conventional and predictable.

The report shows a sustained control of sentence structure, but it may have less variety than does the five- or six-point essay.

Stance. The writer of a four-point paper usually conveys less of a sense of authority about the subject. The stance, or attitude toward the subject and audience, may seem shaky or inconsistent.

Score Point 3 - Some Evidence of Achievement

Controlling Idea. A three-point report may have a simple statement of subject; it sometimes has a controlling idea.

Elaboration and Support. The three-point report, like the four-point paper, often provides a considerable amount of general information, but it often seems to be randomly presented. The writer shows basic control of simple sentences, but the three-point essay has little sentence variety. Word choice is usually appropriate to the content; however, the writer may rely on general rather than specific language. Elaboration may be sketchy.

Organizational Pattern. A three-point report stays on topic but may shift focus. It seems to be developed sentence by sentence with little evidence of a coherent pattern. Although the reader can understand the major ideas, there may be irrelevant details, digressions, or repetitions.

Stance. Writers of three-point reports may seem interested in informing the reader.

However, writers often rely more on opinion than on facts to develop their reports.

Score Point 2 - Little Evidence of Achievement

Controlling Idea. A two-point report may have a simple statement of subject. Readers may have difficulty discerning the writer's intent.

Elaboration and Support. Writers may provide information, but it is usually random, disconnected, and unfocused. A two-point report lacks specific details, or it is all specific details with no overriding idea or organizational pattern. The writer exhibits little control of sentence structure. Word choice is limited, relying on simple, imprecise words, and some words may be inappropriate or inappropriately used.

Organizational Pattern. A two-point report does not reveal a coherent pattern of organization, has little sense of progression, and is underdeveloped generally.

Stance. Writers of two-point reports lack either interest or self-confidence in their subject.

Score Point 1 - Minimal Evidence of Achievement

Controlling Idea. The report may have a simple statement of subject without a controlling idea.

Elaboration and Support. The one-point report does not deliver much information. It may present opinions rather than details. Occasionally, a one-point paper will contain some details but it may be completely lacking in content.

Organizational Pattern. The one-point report is poorly organized and sometimes incoherent. The reader is frequently unsure about the relationship between sentences and ideas. It may be too brief for a pattern to be discernible.

Stance. The essay will usually reveals little or no awareness of subject and no self-confidence or authority.

Unscorable - Inappropriate Response

Off topic. No response. Written in a foreign language.