

Pennsylvania Department of Education
Grade 8 Writing
Performance Level Descriptors

A student scoring at the **Advanced Level** produces narrative, informational, and persuasive pieces of writing that demonstrate a comprehensive command of composition skills. A student writing at this level

1. writes with a sharp, distinct focus that identifies topic and task
2. shows a sophisticated awareness of audience and mode
3. establishes a single point of view when appropriate
4. gathers valid and reliable information and organizes substantial, effective content appropriate for topic
5. employs most effective format for purpose and audience
6. develops paragraphs with illustrative supporting details specific to the topic and relevant to the focus
7. crafts effective introductions that establish topic and purpose; crafts effective conclusions that reiterate topic and purpose
8. uses logical and sophisticated organizational structures and strategies within sentences and between paragraphs to thoroughly develop content
9. uses a variety of effective transitions to develop a controlling idea
10. varies lengths and patterns of simple, compound, and complex sentences
11. utilizes vivid and precise language to maintain a consistent voice and tone
12. revises writing to effectively improve logic and organization, content, paragraph development, detail, style, tone, and word choice
13. demonstrates skill in editing to eliminate most errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, usage, and sentence structure

A student scoring at the **Proficient Level** produces narrative, informational, and persuasive pieces of writing that demonstrate a thorough understanding of composition skills. A student writing at this level

1. writes with a clear focus that identifies topic and task
2. shows a general awareness of audience and mode
3. establishes a single point of view when appropriate
4. gathers valid and/or reliable information and organizes content appropriate for topic
5. employs effective format for purpose and audience
6. develops paragraphs with supporting relevant details specific to the topic and relevant to the focus
7. produces adequate introductions that establish topic and purpose; produces adequate conclusions that reiterate topic and purpose
8. uses logical organizational structures and strategies within sentences and between paragraphs to sufficiently develop content
9. uses functional transitions to develop a controlling idea
10. varies lengths and patterns of simple, compound, and complex sentences
11. utilizes precise language to maintain a consistent voice and tone
12. revises writing after rethinking to sufficiently address logic and organization, content, paragraph development, detail, style, tone, and word choice

13. demonstrates skill in editing to eliminate common errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, usage, and sentence structure

A student scoring at the **Basic Level** produces narrative, informational, and persuasive pieces of writing that demonstrate a limited understanding of composition skills. A student writing at this level

1. writes with a vague or indistinct focus to identify topic and/or task
2. shows a limited awareness of audience and mode
3. may not establish a single point of view
4. needs assistance to gather valid and/or reliable information and organize content appropriate for topic
5. may employ ineffective format for purpose and/or audience
6. constructs under-developed paragraphs with insufficient supporting details
7. produces inadequate introductions and/or conclusions
8. shows limited ability to use logical organizational strategies within sentences and/or between paragraphs
9. uses few and/ineffective transitions
10. lacks variety in lengths and patterns of simple, compound, and/or complex sentences
11. utilizes vague or imprecise language often leading to an ineffective voice and/or tone
12. demonstrates limited ability to revise writing
13. shows a limited ability to eliminate errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, usage, and sentence structure

A student scoring at the **Below Basic Level** produces writing that demonstrates a below grade-level understanding of composition skills and requires extensive assistance with composing, revising, and editing.