

Evaluating Written Argumentation

The *Rubric for Evaluating Written Argumentation (REWA)* is designed to provide detailed feedback on written material intended to argue persuasively on behalf of a given claim, opinion, or recommendation. REWA addresses eight different aspects of sound and effective writing: Purpose and Focus, Depth of Thought, Thesis, Reasoning, Organization, Voice, Grammar and Vocabulary, and Mechanics of Presentation. REWA presents the criteria for effective written communication. ‘Highly Developed’ writing (leftmost column) describes the desired performance in each area and ‘Developed’ writing describes a minimal standard for effective communications. Lesser ratings detail degrees of error or shortcoming.

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	Highly Developed	Developed	Underdeveloped	Substandard
Purpose and Focus	The writer has made insightful and mature decisions about focus, organization, and content to communicate clearly and effectively. The purpose and focus of the writing are clear to the reader and the organization and content are well chosen, sophisticated, and/or persuasive.	The writer has made good decisions about focus, organization, and content to communicate clearly and effectively. The purpose and focus of the writing are clear to the reader and the organization and content achieve the purpose as well.	The writer’s decisions about focus, organization, or content sometimes interfere with clear, effective communication. The purpose of the writing is not fully achieved.	The writer’s decisions about focus, organization, or content interfere with communication. The purpose of the writing is not achieved.
Depth of Thought	The information presented reveals the writer’s assimilation and understanding of the material. The writer is convincingly aware of implications beyond the immediate subject.	The information presented reveals the writer appreciates and understands the material. The writer seems aware of implications beyond the immediate subject.	The information presented reveals that the writer has only partially assimilated or understood the material. The writer shows some awareness of implications beyond the immediate subject.	The information presented reveals the writer’s lack of assimilation and understanding of the material. The writer’s assertions lack awareness of implications beyond the immediate subject.
Thesis	Has a highly developed, defensible assertion that provides focus and direction to the essay. Uses sources to support, extend, and inform, but not substitute for the writer’s own development of ideas.	Has a clear recognizable assertion that provides focus and direction to the essay. Uses sources to support and inform writer’s own development of ideas.	Uses relevant sources but lacks variety of sources and/or the skillful combination of sources necessary to support a central assertion.	Lacks a clear, recognizable assertion and/or lacks adequate sources.
Reasoning	Substantial and well-reasoned development of ideas. All key assumptions are made explicit. Credible evidence is germane, and accurately analyzed and fairly interpreted. Displays strong critical thinking skills and habits of mind (See <i>Holistic Critical Thinking Scoring Rubric.</i>)	Offers solid reasoning. Most key assumptions are recognized or made explicit. Most inferences are accurate, most examples are on point.	Offers some supporting evidence. The case includes some examples that are too general, not interpreted, or not clearly relevant to thesis.	Offers simplistic, underdeveloped, fallacious, circular, or irrelevant arguments. Includes exaggerations, faulty reasoning, factual errors, biased statements, etc. (See <i>Holistic Critical Thinking Scoring Rubric.</i>)

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	Highly Developed	Developed	Underdeveloped	Substandard
Organization	Sequencing of ideas within paragraphs and transitions between paragraphs flow smoothly and coherently throughout the paper. The writer shows clear effort to assist the reader in following the logic of the ideas expressed.	Sequencing of ideas within paragraphs and transitions between paragraphs make the writer's points coherent and easy to follow.	Sentence structure and/or word choice sometimes interfere with clarity and coherence. Needs to improve sequencing of ideas within paragraphs and transitions between paragraphs to make the writing easy to follow.	Ineffective sentence structure, word choice, transitions, and/or sequencing of ideas make reading and understanding difficult.
Voice	The writer's tone or control of language consistently reflects a confident or authoritative central "voice" or "personality." The writer shows clear discernment of and effective engagement of intended audience.	The writer's tone or control of language generally reflects a confident or authoritative central "voice" or "personality." The writer shows appropriate and consistent awareness of intended audience.	A central "voice" or "personality" is evident, though inconsistent in minor ways. The writer shows little or inconsistent awareness of a particular audience.	The writer's tone or general control of language is so lacking in consistency that little central "voice" or "personality" is evident. The writer lacks awareness of a particular audience.
Grammar and Vocabulary	Sentence structure is complex and powerful. The writer has used vivid, purposefully crafted and varied sentence styles and lengths. The writer displays a broad range of vocabulary, with effective, accurate, and contextually appropriate word usage.	Sentences are effective and varied in style and length. Grammar or usage errors are minimal and do not distract the reader from understanding the intended meaning. The writer displays a satisfactory range of vocabulary and accurate and appropriate word usage.	Sentences show errors in structure. The writer uses limited variety in sentence style and length. The writer displays a limited range of vocabulary. Errors of diction and usage are evident but do not interfere significantly with readability.	Sentence structure is simple, with practically no variety in sentence style and length. Frequent errors in sentence structure interfere with readability. The writer displays an extremely limited vocabulary. Diction and syntax errors make communication confusing or unintelligible.
Mechanics and Presentation	Written response is virtually free of punctuation, spelling, or capitalization errors. The writer utilizes an appropriate and attractive format, presentation, and style (citations) for the assignment.	Written response contains only occasional punctuation, spelling, or capitalization errors. The writer utilizes an appropriate format, presentation, and style (citations) for the assignment.	Written response contains many punctuation, spelling, or capitalization errors. Errors interfere with meaning in some places. The writer makes some errors in format, presentation, or style (citations) for the assignment.	Written response contains many severe punctuation, spelling, or capitalization errors that hinder communication. The writer utilizes inappropriate format, presentation, or style (citations) for the assignment or the formatting is absent.

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