

What Teachers Value in Writing

IDEAS

- Clear—makes sense
- Topic narrowed to manageable size
- Has a key message (or messages)
- Teaches me something
- Holds my attention
- Fresh, original perspective
- Important, telling details
- Details go beyond common knowledge
- Minimal filler (unneeded information)
- Insight
- Authenticity
- New information

ORGANIZATION

- Inviting lead that draws me in
- Starts somewhere, goes somewhere
- Compelling sense of direction
- Provides connections—detail to detail, thought to thought, paragraph to paragraph
- Well-paced, spending time where it matters
- Easy to follow—like a good road map
- Satisfying conclusion—sense of resolution
- An occasional surprise
- Not formulaic or too predictable
- Organization supports the message or story

VOICE

- Sounds like this writer and no other
- Writer is “at home” in the writing
- Writer seems engaged by the topic
- Brings topic to life for me, the reader
- Shows concern for me as a reader
- Individual, distinctive—unlike others
- Makes me cry, laugh, get chills
- Confident—the writer knows his/her stuff
- Lively, energetic, passionate
- Writing I want to reread or share

WORD CHOICE

- “Just right” words
- Memorable words—worth highlighting, quoting
- Creates word pictures, movies in the mind
- Accurate, precise
- Enlightening—helps me “get it”
- Strong verbs
- Easy on the modifiers (adjectives, adverbs)
- Simple, everyday language used well
- Repeats as necessary—or for effect
- Concise and to the point
- Uses language to teach, not impress
- Uses terminology well (as needed)

SENTENCE FLUENCY

- Easy to read on the first try
- Has rhythm, flow, cadence
- Easy to read with voice, expression
- Carefully crafted sentences
- Variety in length, structure . . . OR
- Repetition of patterns for effect
- Concise, direct sentences in informational or technical writing
- Fragments used only for effect
- Run-ons used only for effect (as in dialogue)
- Authentic dialogue
- Consistency in tense (past, present, future)

CONVENTIONS & PRESENTATION

- Clean, carefully edited text
- No distracting errors
- No “mental editing” needed
- Conventions guide reader
- Conventions support meaning and voice
- Design draws reader’s eye to key points
- Design makes information easy to find
- Free of distracting visuals, hard-to-read fonts
- Uses graphics as needed to enhance text
- Makes good use of white (open) space