

Using the Nova Scotia Assessment: Analytic Writing Rubric

The rubric includes four criteria (Ideas, Organization, Language Use, and Conventions), and there are four levels of performance for each criterion. Level 3 and above is the expectation for writing assessments, so it's important to look at these levels first when reviewing the rubric. The following information is provided to teachers prior to scoring student writing at provincial scoring sessions. It may also be helpful for teachers who wish to use this rubric with students in their classrooms. Please keep in mind that the expectations for specific assessments are anchored in the writing samples in a scoring guide, as they are relative to specific grade levels (end of grades 3, 5,8). The scoring guide provides two student writing samples that illustrate each performance level outlined in the rubric. A sample scoring guide is available in Appendix G of this document.

- 1) Read the rubric as a whole before looking at each criterion in more detail.
- 2) **Ideas:** Read the four levels of performance under Ideas. Ideas includes the presence and quality of a main idea, the extent to which the main idea is developed through details, and the quality of the details used to support the main idea.
- 3) Underline the elements that are same across all four levels in Ideas: *main idea, developed, details*
- 4) Circle key words that are unique to each level in Ideas:
 - a. Level 3: *clear, relevant*
 - b. Level 4: *distinct, vivid, relevant*
 - c. Level 2: *evident, somewhat, may be irrelevant* (Even if details are relevant, a piece of writing can be a Level 2 if it's only somewhat developed.)
 - d. Level 1: *not present, or, not developed*
- 5) **Organization:** Read the four levels of performance under Organization. Organization includes the way the writing is organized as a whole as well as how it is organized throughout (internal and external organization). There should be a beginning, middle, and end and a logical sequence between ideas. Transitions include transitional words or phrases, but also the way the writer transitions from one idea to the next.
- 6) Underline the elements that are same across all four levels in Organization: *writing, organized/organization, transitions*
- 7) Circle key words that are unique to each level in Organization:
 - a. Level 3: *effective, varied*
 - b. Level 4: *skillfully, skillful, varied*
 - c. Level 2: *somewhat, vague, and/or mechanical* (Even if transitions are not vague or mechanical, a piece of writing can be a Level 2 if it's only somewhat organized.)
 - d. Level 1: *lacking, little or no evidence*
- 8) **Language Use:** Read the four levels of performance under Language Use. Language Use includes voice, word choice, sentence style, syntax. Sentence structure is considered in terms of writing

style in this criterion, not the grammatical correctness of sentence structure since correctness is assessed under the Conventions criterion.

- 9) Underline the elements that are same across all four levels in Language Use: *Language use, writing*
- 10) Circle key words that are unique to each level in Language Use:
 - a. Level 3: *clear, fluid*
 - b. Level 4: *vivid, skillful*
 - c. Level 2: *vague, and/or mechanical*
 - d. Level 1: *confusing, or, little evidence of language use*
- 11) **Conventions:** Read the four levels of performance under Conventions. Conventions includes spelling of commonly used words (including homonyms), punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, verb tense agreement, noun/pronoun agreement – these are grounded in what’s appropriate for a given grade level
- 12) Underline the elements that are same across all four levels in Conventions: *conventions, communication*
- 13) Circle key words that are unique to each level in Conventions:
 - a. Level 3: *variety, generally correct, effective*
 - b. Level 4: *variety, consistently correct, enhanced*
 - c. Level 2: *errors, noticeable, coherent*
 - d. Level 1: *errors, confusing, or, little evidence of conventions*
- 14) **Not Enough Evidence:** This designation would only be used in rare cases when there is not enough evidence to assess a student’s writing (e.g., indecipherable, blank paper, response written in a language other than the language being assessed).

Once teachers have become familiar with the rubric, they may wish to use it in their classrooms to support student writing. Looking at the rubric with students may facilitate useful conversations about Ideas, Organization, Language Use, and Conventions and how these elements work together in a piece of writing. Through these discussions, writing samples (either students’ own samples or scoring guide samples) could be used to illustrate the various writing components outlined in the rubric. When students have an opportunity to engage in these conversations, they may begin to enhance their own writing processes.

Analytic Writing Rubric

Nova Scotia Assessments: Analytic Rubric for Scoring Writing (LM3/RWM6/RWM8)



Ideas	
4	A main idea is distinct and is developed through vivid and relevant details.
3	A main idea is clear and is developed through relevant details.
2	A main idea is evident and is somewhat developed through details, some of which may be irrelevant.
1	A main idea is not present, or a main idea is not developed with details.
Organization	
4	The writing is skillfully organized with skillful use of varied transitions.
3	The writing is organized with effective use of varied transitions.
2	The writing is somewhat organized with vague or mechanical transitions.
1	The writing is lacking organization; there is little or no evidence of transitions.
Language Use	
4	Language use contributes to vivid and skillful writing.
3	Language use contributes to clear and fluid writing.
2	Language use contributes to vague or mechanical writing.
1	Language use contributes to confusing writing, or there is little evidence of language use.
Conventions	
4	A variety of consistently correct conventions contribute to enhanced communication.
3	A variety of generally correct conventions contribute to effective communication.
2	Errors in conventions are noticeable, but communication is coherent.
1	Errors in conventions contribute to confusing communication, or there is little evidence of conventions.
Not Enough Evidence	
There is not enough evidence to assess the student's writing (e.g., indecipherable, blank paper, response written in a language other than the language being assessed).	

Using the Nova Scotia Assessment: Scoring Guide Sample

Student writing is scored using the analytic writing rubric and scoring guide. It is important to have a solid understanding of the analytic writing rubric before reviewing the scoring guide. The scoring guide includes the writing prompt and one or two samples at each performance level in the following order: Level 4, 3, 2, 1. Please note that permissions have been obtained for the student writing samples in the following scoring guide.

Although adherence to writing task is important during classroom instruction and assessment, it is important to note that this is not the focus of provincial writing assessments. Provincial assessment writing prompts are designed to allow for a broad interpretation of the prompt. This allows students from across the province with a variety of life experiences to connect to the prompt in some way so they can provide a response that can be assessed for writing quality based on the rubric (ideas, organization, language use, and conventions).

Each writing sample includes an annotation at the bottom of the page that provides the rationale for the scores using language from the rubric and the student's writing. Level 3 and above is the expectation for writing assessments, so it's important to look at these levels first when reviewing the scoring guide. Below are a few suggestions for reviewing the scoring guide:

- 1) Review the rubric criteria for Level 3 in Ideas, Organization, Language Use, and Conventions
- 2) Read the Level 3 Scoring Guide samples and annotations
- 3) Review the rubric criteria for Level 4 in Ideas, Organization, Language Use, and Conventions
- 4) Read the Level 4 Scoring Guide samples and annotations
- 5) Review the rubric criteria for Level 2 in Ideas, Organization, Language Use, and Conventions
- 6) Read the Level 2 Scoring Guide samples and annotations
- 7) Review the rubric criteria for Level 1 in Ideas, Organization, Language Use, and Conventions
- 8) Read the Level 1 Scoring Guide sample and annotation

Once teachers become familiar with the scoring guide, they may wish to use some of the writing samples with their students for talking about elements of writing.

Since writing is personal and involves risk-taking, students may be more comfortable critiquing anonymous writing samples from the scoring guide. After students have had an opportunity to understand the rubric, teachers could begin with showing them a sample of writing at Level 3, Level 4, then Level 2 and Level 1. (This would be spaced out over several mini-lessons at the teacher's discretion.) The samples could anchor some wonderful conversations about what students notice about how main ideas are developed through supportive details, as well as other elements of writing. The level 2 and 1 samples could be used as a springboard for students to discuss how the writing could be enhanced in each of the criterion of the rubric. Finally, once students have had an opportunity to engage in these discussions with teachers about writing, they should feel more comfortable to begin pulling out some of their own writing from their portfolios. They could work with an existing piece of writing from their writing portfolio to focus on each criterion at a time to gradually enhance the same piece of writing

each time. Students can engage in peer review and conversations to support their revisions. At the end of the process, they will be able to compare their original piece of writing with the revised piece of writing and reflect on their process and progress.

Nova Scotia Assessment: Scoring Guide Sample

2013–2014 Nova Scotia Assessment:
Reading, Writing, and Mathematics in Grade 6

SCORING GUIDE **Writing Task: Letter**

October/November, 2013

Writing Task: Letter

Instructions: Imagine that the principal of your school will soon be making a decision about how technology should be used for learning in your school.

Choose to do **one** of the following:

Write a letter to your principal supporting why you think technology **helps** students learn in school.

or

Write a letter to your principal supporting why you think technology **does not help** students learn in school.

Tips:

- Be sure to respond to the instructions above.
- Be sure to explain and support your ideas.
- Be sure to present your ideas in an organized manner.
- Be sure to use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- Use the box below to plan your letter.
- Use no more than the 2 pages provided.

Begin writing your letter on the next page. →



Letter

Begin writing your letter on this page.

Dear Principal: (Do not write the principal's name.)

Personally, I believe technology does help us learn and should remain available for students. I'm sure most children would find that it would save much more time to search for something on a computer rather than searching hopelessly through textbooks or other books such as encyclopedias and dictionaries. Also, sites such as Cool Math Games and Jumblebooks are great to use in free time.

There are many educational and fun apps for devices like iPads. You can find lots of math games or reading games, even apps to help you learn French! Plus, you can type your work on them, and take pictures of homework so you won't forget it. There's also quite a few relaxing apps for stressed or perhaps not the best behaved students.

If you have not completed your letter, continue on the next page. →



Level 4 (page 6)

- Ideas (4): A main idea is distinct and is developed through vivid and relevant details: "technology does help us learn and should remain available....it would save much more time to search....great to use in free time....many educational and fun apps for devices like iPads....even apps to help you learn French!"
- Organization (4): The writing is skillfully organized with skillful use of varied transitions: "I'm sure most children would find that....Also, site such as Cool Math Games....Plus, you can type your work...."
- Language Use (4): Language use contributes to vivid and skillful writing: "rather than searching hopelessly through textbooks....many educational and fun apps for devices like iPads....quite a few relaxing apps for stressed or perhaps not the best behaved students"
- Conventions (4): The writing consistently demonstrates correct use of a variety of conventions.

Technology is very helpful when used correctly, and I think it should still be available to students.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]



Please go back and check your work.
Be sure you have answered every question for Day 1.
Then close your booklet.
You are finished for today.



* 2 3 1 1 4 *

Letter

47

Day 1 | Page 11

Begin writing your letter on this page.

Dear Principal: (Do not write the principal's name.)

Children these days are growing up in a world of technology, so my view is [REDACTED] we should know how to use it. Obviously, knowing the proper way to wield a sword would help you use it, it is the same with technology. Having knowledge of this can help you in a great variety of real world problems as well. Learning with even an iPod is both more fun and quicker than hand writing it. I could already finished this on a computer as an added bonus, it is faster to go onto google or bing etc. and find the name of giant prehistoric scorpion (Brotoscopia, its in latin or something) than it would be to go to a dictionary, get the alphabeticle order in your head, waste another 5 mins. finding the page memorize it and write it down. Whereas on an iPod or something like that, go to safari type in what you want to find and BAM! there it is. badda bing, badda boom, as an Italian Mafia leader would say. plus just about everyone in my school has an iPod or a 3DS or both so its not like there going to have to go to the nearest apple shop and buy one, is it. But wait theres more, not letting people go on electronics is like making ants illigle, its never ever going to happen

If you have not completed your letter, continue on the next page. →



Level 4 (page 47)

- Ideas (4): A main idea is distinct and is developed through vivid and relevant details: "Children these days are growing up in a world of technology...we should know how to use it...it is faster to go on google or bing etc. and find the name of giant prehistoric scorpion (Brotoscopia, its in latin or something) than it would be to go to a dictionary, get the alphabeticle order in your head, waste another 5 mins. finding the page memorize it and write it down"
- Organization (4): The writing is skillfully organized with skillful use of varied transitions: "Obviously, knowing the proper way to wield a sword would help you use it, it is the same with technology...as an added bonus...plus just about everyone in my school...But wait theres more"
- Language Use (4): Language use contributes to vivid and skillful writing: "Where as on an iPod or something like that, go to safari and type in what you want to find and BAM! there it is. badda bing badda boom"
- Conventions (3): The writing generally demonstrates correct use of a variety of conventions.

Sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]



Please go back and check your work.
Be sure you have answered every question for Day 1.
Then close your booklet.
You are finished for today.



* 2 3 1 1 4 *

Letter

17

Day 1 | Page 11

Begin writing your letter on this page.

Dear Principal: (Do not write the principal's name.)

I think technology helps students learn in school because if they do not understand something they can look it up on the computer. They could also use an ipad if given one by a teacher to look up something. There is so much technology that can be used to help learn.

Students could use ipads to play math games, addition and subtraction games, or multiplication and division games. They could also play word games to help with punctuation and grammar. There are so many games a student can play to help with math, english, science, etc.

There are so many other things technology can be used for, but I can't write it all. The last

If you have not completed your letter, continue on the next page. →



Level 3 (page 17)

- Ideas (3): A main idea is clear and is developed through relevant details: "technology helps students learn in school because if they do not understand something they can look it up on the computer....could use ipads to play math games, addition and subtraction games or multiplication and division games"
- Organization (3): The writing is organized with effective use of varied transitions: "I think...because....They could also play word games to help with....There are so many other things technology can be used for"
- Language Use (3): Language use contributes to clear and fluid writing: "They could also use an ipad if given one by a teacher to look up something."
- Conventions (3): The writing generally demonstrates correct use of a variety of conventions.

Thing I want to write about
is how on a computer or ipad
you can type up a story instead
of writing it by hand. On a
computer it may look neater than
by hand. Those are only a few
reasons why technology helps.



Please go back and check your work.
Be sure you have answered every question for Day 1.
Then close your booklet.
You are finished for today.



Letter

49

Day 1 | Page 11

Begin writing your letter on this page.

Dear Principal: (Do not write the principal's name.)

I am writing to you today to convince you that technology does not help students learn. I have come up with three good reasons on why I feel this way.

My first reason is it would save money. The school has to pay for electricity, books, teachers, staff, and renovations, so why go out and buy some technology? Technology is very expensive and the school has to save money for extra stuff like school trips.

Secondly we already have books. We already have books for every subject so why do we need technology? The school has been using books for many years and there has never been a problem. If we already have the books we don't need to go and buy technology.

If you have not completed your letter, continue on the next page. →



Level 3 (page 49)

- Ideas (3): A main idea is clear and is developed through relevant details: "technology does not help students learn....would save money....we already have books....it would be less work"
- Organization (3): The writing is organized with effective use of varied transitions: "My first reason....so why go out and buy some technology?....why do we need technology?"
- Language Use (3): Language use contributes to clear and fluid writing: "The school has been using books for many years and there has never been a problem."
- Conventions (3): The writing generally demonstrates correct use of a variety of conventions.

Finally it would be less work. If we didnt have technology it would be less work for teachers and staff. They wouldnt have to worry about spending money, getting someone to hook up the computer, and getting someone to fix it when it breaks.

It is for the reasons I've listed that I dont think technology will helps us learn. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and I hope you consider my idea.

Sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]



Please go back and check your work.
Be sure you have answered every question for Day 1.
Then close your booklet.
You are finished for today.



* 2 3 1 1 4 *

Letter

31

Day 1 | Page 11

Begin writing your letter on this page.

Dear Principal: (Do not write the principal's name.)

I think that technology is really good for kids and addaltes too because it tells you stuff and shows you stuff like math and science and dose more than that. kids should use technology you can look up stuff you can do up bills on technology and there is so much stuff out there that can help you like science test if they did not have the technology that we all have today we would not know some things that we know now. I think that we should all have technology the pore and the rich. Technology can be fun. technology can be bad for you and be usefill or not usefill

by

[REDACTED]

If you have not completed your letter, continue on the next page. →



Level 2 (page 31)

- Ideas (2): A main idea is evident and is somewhat developed through details, some of which may be irrelevant: "technology is really good for kids and addaltes too because it tells you stuff and shows you stuff like math and science and does more than that"; although some additional details are present, they only somewhat develop the main idea.
- Organization (2): The writing is somewhat organized with vague or mechanical transitions: although the information within the piece is connected to the main idea, it seems like a mechanical listing of ideas without the presence of transitional techniques to guide the reader from one idea to the next.
- Language Use (2): Language use contributes to vague or mechanical writing: the language used throughout is vague: "it tells you stuff and shows you stuff....can look up stuff....there is so much stuff out there....technology can be bad for you and be usefill or not usefill"
- Conventions (2): Errors in conventions are noticeable, but communication is coherent: although there are errors in spelling (addaltes, dose, pore, usefill), capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure (run-on sentence), the communication is still coherent.

Letter

81

Day 1 | Page 11

Begin writing your letter on this page.

Dear Principal: (Do not write the principal's name.)

Dear Principal: I think that technology helps students a lot. Because it gives students a chance to experenise technology if they have not before. I no that it is a lot of fun because I used it at my old school. I used them for math, English and scince. They helped me a lot with all of those classes. that is why I think that it is usfull to students and staff.

from:



Level 2 (page 81)

- Ideas (2): A main idea is evident and is somewhat developed through details, some of which may be irrelevant: "technology helps students a lot....gives students a chance to experenise technology if they have not before....a lot of fun....helped me with all of those classes"; these are all relevant details, but they are not expanded upon in order to more fully develop the main idea.
- Organization (2): The writing is somewhat organized with vague or mechanical transitions: the repetition of "I think that....Because...that is why I think..." creates a mechanical feeling throughout this short piece.
- Language Use (2): Language use contributes to vague or mechanical writing: Some of the language is vague throughout: "I no that it is a lot of fun because I used it at my old school. I used them for math...."
- Conventions (2): Errors in conventions are noticeable, but communication is coherent: although there are errors in spelling (experenise, no, scince, usfull), capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure (fragment), the communication is still coherent.

Letter

27

Day 1 Page 11

Begin writing your letter on this page.

Dear Principal: (Do not write the principal's name.)

Technology helps us find stuff
faster gives us moor infomathian,
about stuff.

Level 1 (page 27)

- Ideas (1): A main idea is not present, or a main idea is not developed with details: The response includes a main idea, but it is not developed with details.
- Organization (1): The writing is lacking organization; there is little or no evidence of transitions: There is no evidence of transitions in this short piece.
- Language Use (1): Language use contributes to confusing writing: "helps us find stuff faster...moor infomathian. about stuff"; it is unclear to what "stuff" the writer is referring, and this impedes the overall communication.
- Conventions (1): Errors in conventions contribute to confusing writing: errors in spelling (moor, infomathian), punctuation, and sentence structure (fragment) impede the writer's communication of meaning.

When thinking about "confusing writing," it is important to note that there is a difference between simply being able to decode the writer's words and being able to understand the writer's meaning.

Letter

Begin writing your letter on this page.

Dear Principal: (Do not write the principal's name.)

I think technology

If you have not completed your letter, continue on the next page. →



Not Enough Evidence: there is not enough evidence to assess the student's writing performance