

University of West Georgia First Year Writing Rubric, English 1101, Fall 2019

ARGUMENT AND DEVELOPMENT - Successful writing both expresses a controlling idea (a thesis statement) AND develops in a clear and focused way as the essay unfolds. The energy and uniqueness of the writer's controlling idea helps drive the essay forward with an urgency that keeps the essay's readers engaged.

- **STRONG** (focused): controlling idea (thesis) is defined sharply
- **WEAK** (adrift): controlling idea (thesis) is defined vaguely, if at all
- **OK**: shows elements of both Strong and Weak writing for this sub-category

Comments:

- **STRONG** (sophisticated): controlling idea is marked by nuance, alert to subtleties
- **WEAK** (simplistic): controlling idea is obvious, predictable, unadventurous
- **OK**: shows elements of both Strong and Weak writing for this sub-category

Comments:

- **STRONG** (creative): supporting ideas spring from independent thinking
- **WEAK** (derivative): supporting ideas are a rehash of others' ideas
- **OK**: shows elements of both Strong and Weak writing for this sub-category

Comments:

- **STRONG** (engaging): supporting ideas form an argument, essay has a purpose
- **WEAK** (aimless): supporting ideas fit together indifferently, almost at random
- **OK**: shows elements of both Strong and Weak writing for this sub-category

Comments:

ORGANIZATION - Successful writing organizes material logically through well-structured paragraphs, each of which makes a claim (in the topic sentence) that further develops the essay's controlling idea. Successful topic sentences do two important things at the same time: 1) Externally, they "look back" at the thesis statement, aligning the paragraph's claim with the essay's controlling idea, and 2) Internally, they "look forward" to what is coming, announcing to the reader what to expect in the paragraph.

External Organization:

- **STRONG** (argument-driven): controlling idea directs organization, steers paragraph order
- **WEAK** (summary-driven): summary takes over essay, controls the succession of paragraphs
- **OK**: shows elements of both Strong and Weak writing for this sub-category

Comments:

- **STRONG** (purposeful): essay grows to advance central idea, moves confidently along
- **WEAK** (repetitious): controlling idea gets stuck, becomes repetitive, or vanishes
- **OK**: shows elements of both Strong and Weak writing for this sub-category

Comments:

- **STRONG** (flowing): topic sentences connect each paragraph with previous one
- **WEAK** (disconnected): topic sentences fail to show relationship between ideas
- **OK**: shows elements of both Strong and Weak writing for this sub-category

Comments:

Internal Organization:

- **STRONG** (coherent): topic sentences address issues one at a time to make clear points
- **WEAK** (confused): paragraphs wander about, fail to take shape around a single idea
- **OK**: shows elements of both Strong and Weak writing for this sub-category

Comments:

SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT - Successful writers support their ideas with sufficient persuasive evidence. Support can take many forms: paraphrasing, quoting, narrating visual scenes, explicating sensory stimuli, and incorporating secondary research. Successful writers specifically show their readers – through the clarity of evidence presented and the depth of engagement with it – a convincing body of evidence that reveals why the writer’s claim should be taken seriously.

- **STRONG (solid):** evidence to back claims is fully explored, reasoning well laid out
- **WEAK (thin):** claims are unsubstantiated, explanations are lacking
- **OK:** shows elements of both Strong and Weak writing for this sub-category

Comments:

- **STRONG (insightful):** firm grasp of ideas, comprehension of text
- **WEAK (confused):** shaky discussion of concepts, misreading of text
- **OK:** shows elements of both Strong and Weak writing for this sub-category

Comments:

- **STRONG (proportional):** paragraph length is well suited to delivering each idea cogently
- **WEAK (skimpy or overgrown):** paragraphs are too brief or too drawn out to have an impact
- **OK:** shows elements of both Strong and Weak writing for this sub-category

Comments:

- **STRONG (consistent):** examples, quotations, points are framed by a steady, judicious analysis
- **WEAK (scattershot):** textual details seem to crop up from nowhere, don’t fit together
- **OK:** shows elements of both Strong and Weak writing for this sub-category

Comments:

USAGE AND CONVENTIONS - Successful writers don’t all write in the same dialect, and therefore don’t all follow the same usage conventions. However, all writers

must continually strive to make effective choices in usage, punctuation, syntax, and citation appropriate for the discipline and/or genre in which they are writing. Successful writers privilege clarity, simplicity, and directness; they consider how their usage choices affect their own credibility (ethos); and – ultimately – they experiment using language in striking and attractive ways to develop their own style.

USAGE:

- **STRONG (convincing):** usage conventions are largely under control and are not a distraction
- **WEAK (distracting):** sentences are error-prone, and the flaws inhibit understanding
- **OK:** shows elements of both Strong and Weak writing for this sub-category

PUNCTUATION:

- **STRONG (effective):** punctuation marks aid in paper’s readability
- **WEAK (interruptive):** punctuation is erratic or missing, hindering comprehension
- **OK:** shows elements of both Strong and Weak writing for this sub-category

SYNTAX:

- **STRONG (fluent):** sentences vary in structure and length, all handled skillfully
- **WEAK (halting):** sentences are poorly structured and difficult to read
- **OK:** shows elements of both Strong and Weak writing for this sub-category

DICTION:

- **STRONG (precise):** the right words are generally chosen
- **WEAK (errant):** wrong words keep appearing that confuse the reader
- **OK:** shows elements of both Strong and Weak writing for this sub-category

QUOTATIONS:

- **STRONG (adept):** quotations are relevant and worked smoothly into the discussion
- **WEAK (clumsy):** quotations are not well incorporated; lack introductions and explanation
- **OK:** shows elements of both Strong and Weak writing for this sub-category

CITATION:

- **STRONG (proper):** sources are cited accurately throughout essay and in “Works Cited”
- **WEAK (deficient):** citations are neglected, or don’t comply with the standard formats
- **OK:** shows elements of both Strong and Weak writing for this sub-category