

WRITING GUIDE

Oxford Area High School English Department

NAME: _____

OAHS English Department Writing Guide

This packet contains a guide and samples created for a standard five-paragraph expository essay. However, these guidelines can be expanded and applied to writing assignments of any type or length. The expectation is that every student in English classes grades 9-12 will be adhering to these guidelines when completing formal writing assignments beginning with the 2015-2016 school year.

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MLA Format

ALL essays must adhere to the following formatting guidelines*:

- MLA formatted header, heading, and title – see example below.
- Typed in Times New Roman 12 pt. font
- Double-spaced with 1-inch margins
- NO extra spaces between paragraphs
- *Italicize* novels, plays, and magazine titles
- Indicate poems, short stories, chapters of books, and articles with “quotation marks”

*Unless otherwise instructed by a teacher to use an alternative format such as APA or Chicago Style.

MLA Header, Heading & Title EXAMPLE

	Your last name [insert] page #
Your name	
Your teacher’s name (ex: Mrs. Jones)	
Your course (ex: 9 College Prep English)	
The current date (ex: 10 June 2017)	
Title	

In-Text Citations

When referring to the works of others in an essay or paper you must use what are known as parenthetical, or in-text, citations.

General rules for using **in-text citations**:

- Any time you use a direct quotation from a source *or* a paraphrase of a source's ideas, you must cite it.
- Citations are placed at the end of the sentence **after** the quotation marks and **before** the period (they are part of the sentence).
- In parentheses, type the author's name followed by a space and the relevant page number(s).

EXAMPLE: When Moishe the Beadle is first introduced in the novel he is accepted because he does not bother anyone and has “mastered the art of rendering himself insignificant, invisible” (Wiesel 10).

- If the author's name appears in the sentence itself you do not have to include it in the citation, **but the page number(s) should always appear** in the parentheses, not in the text of the sentence.

EXAMPLE: Wiesel first introduces Moishe the Beadle as an “invisible” character who is accepted because he does not bother anyone and appears “insignificant” (10).

- Once the source is cited in a paragraph, if it does not change, then only the page numbers need to change in the remaining citations. If the source changes or goes back and forth, the citations must reflect this. Each paragraph begins anew.

Works Cited Page

When citing the works of others in an essay or paper you must follow up with a Works Cited page.

General rules for creating a **Works Cited page**:

- The Works Cited will be the last page of your paper/essay and its OWN page.
- It should have the same header, font, spacing and margins as the rest of your paper.
- The title of the page will be: Works Cited. The title should be centered, **NOT** underlined, in bold, caps, italics, quotation marks, etc.
- Your sources should be listed in alphabetical order.
- Do not skip spaces between entries.
- Do not use bullets or number the sources
- Indent the second and subsequent lines of citations by 0.5 inches to create a hanging indent.

Works Cited Entry for Print Source

The proper way to cite a source in print (such as a novel) is below.

Author's Lastname, Author's Firstname. *Title of Book*. City of Publication: Publisher,
Year of Publication. Source type.

Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*. New York: Penguin, 1993. Print.

For any and all other in-text citation and/or Works Cited page questions, to see samples, or for variations of source types (non-print, articles, sources with no author, etc.), visit:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

Introductory Paragraph

Your introductory paragraph is one of the most important parts of your essay. It should be focused, written entirely in your own words, and follow the structure outlined below. A SOLID introductory paragraph is **3-6 sentences** long.

(Sample Essay Prompt: Discuss three events in the novel Night by Elie Wiesel that had major impact on or significance in his life.)

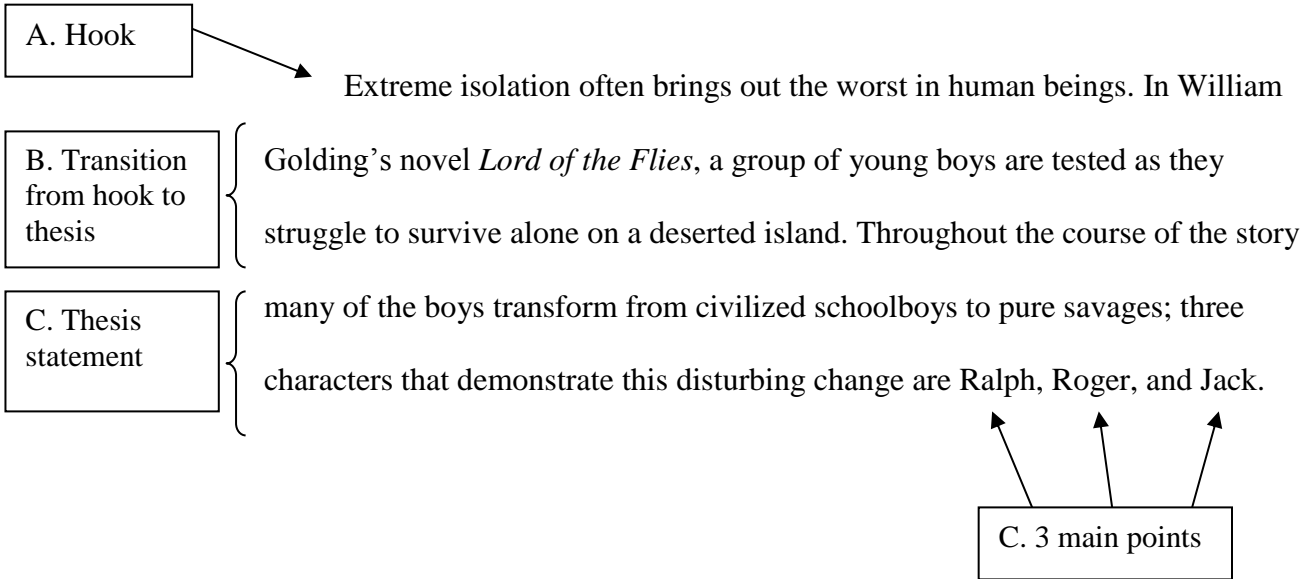
General format for an **introductory paragraph**:

- A. Hook:** an interesting statement that draws the reader in while subtly introducing the topic of your essay – see examples below.
- B. Transition from hook to thesis:** a statement that introduces the text and author you will be discussing and connects to the hook
 EXAMPLE: Elie Wiesel accepted the Nobel Peace Prize for his novel *Night*, which chronicles his own experiences in the concentration camps of the Holocaust.
- C. Thesis statement:** the central argument of your paper, including your (3) main points
 EXAMPLE: During this horrendous period in Wiesel’s life, many events and people had an impact on him including the change in Moishe the Beadle, (argument 2), and (argument 3).

Hook EXAMPLES

1. **General Statement:**
 A history book can offer facts, but a more poignant way to learn about the atrocities that millions of people suffered during the Holocaust is to read a first hand account of someone who actually lived through it.
2. **Quotation from notable source/person or novel/character in novel:**
 During his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize, Elie Wiesel said, “...I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”
3. **Relevant Statistic** (make sure it is accurate):
 An estimated 5,962,129 Jewish people unjustly lost their lives, and even more were tortured, during the Holocaust in Europe during World War II.
4. **Historical Fact:**
 The Holocaust was governmental persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its supporters. The Nazis came to power in Germany in January 1933 and believed that Germans were "racially superior" to the Jews, who were a threat to the so-called “German racial community.”

Introductory Paragraph EXAMPLE



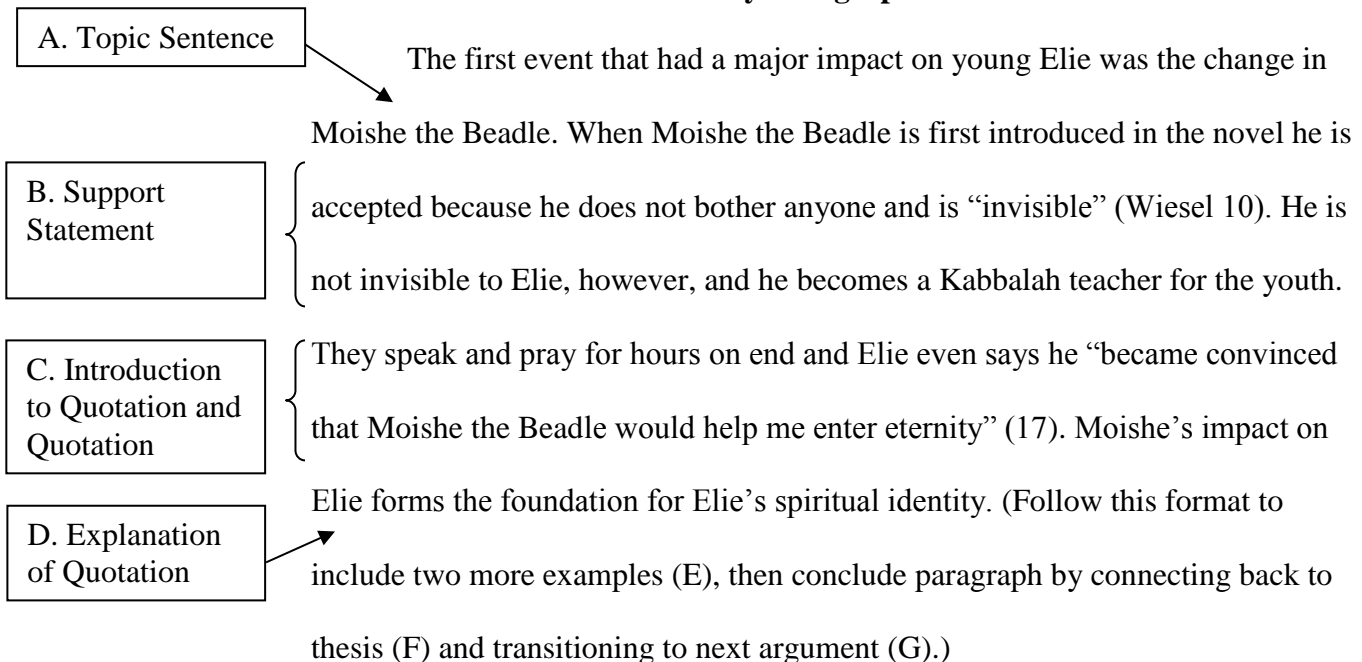
Body Paragraphs

Each body paragraph should be **SPECIFIC** and rely mostly on **YOUR OWN** analysis. In order to support your ideas, you should utilize examples and quotations from the texts. A well-supported body paragraph is **6-7 sentences** long.

General format for a **body paragraph**:

- A. Topic sentence:** a statement that summarizes the main idea of the paragraph (should correspond with three main points in thesis)
- B. Support statements:** statements that provide any appropriate and pertinent plot background on the textual evidence you are using
- C. Introduction to quotation and quotation:** a statement that includes a lead-in to your quotation, the quotation itself, and a citation in MLA format
 EXAMPLE: At the Embassy Ball, Eliza exudes such elegance and grace that the guests in attendance stare at her in awe, while “some of the younger ones at the back stand on their chairs to see” (Shaw 71).
- D. Explanation of quotation:** a statement that elaborates on the textual evidence and its connection to your main idea
- E. Additional evidence/support statements**
- F. Connection to thesis:** a statement that summarizes how the main idea connects to your overall thesis (especially if you have not already made this clear)
- G. Transition to next idea:** (only needed in body paragraph #1 and #2) a statement that **BRIEFLY** previews the next paragraph’s main idea

Body Paragraph EXAMPLE



Concluding Paragraph

The goal of the concluding paragraph is to summarize your argument and provide your reader with a take-away. Like the introductory paragraph, it should be focused, written entirely in your own words, and follow the structure outlined below. A SOLID concluding paragraph is **5-6 sentences** long.

General format for a **concluding paragraph**:

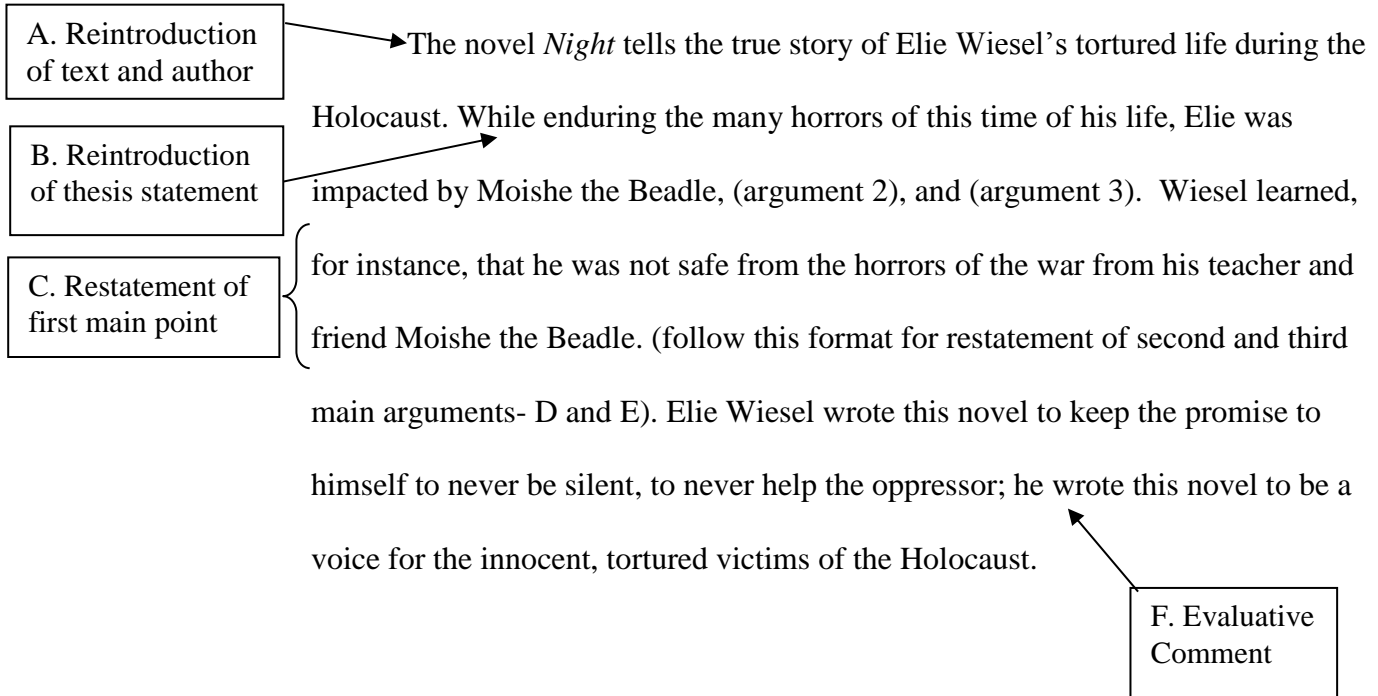
- A. Reintroduction of text and author***: a statement that reintroduces the text and author you have discussed and provides a brief summary of the work
 EXAMPLE: The novel *Night* tells the true story of Eli Wiesel’s tortured life during the Holocaust, a life filled with significant events and people the impacted him greatly.
- B. Reintroduction of thesis statement***: a statement that summarizes the central argument of your essay, including your three main points.
 EXAMPLE: Wiesel learned, for instance, that he was not safe from the horrors of the war from his teacher and friend Moishe the Beadle, (argument 2), and (argument 3).
- C. Restatement of first main point**: a statement that summarizes your first main point and the main evidence you used to support it
- D. Restatement of second main point**: a statement that summarizes your second main point and the main evidence you used to support it
- E. Restatement of third main point**: a statement that summarizes your third main point and the main evidence you used to support it
- F. Evaluative comment**: a statement that extends the topic of the essay and ties back to hook – see examples below.

*Sentences A and B can be combined depending on the stylistic preference of the writer.

Evaluative Comment EXAMPLES

1. A history book could never offer the emotion and impact that reading this true eyewitness account of Elie Wiesel gives to the world.
2. Elie Wiesel wrote this novel to keep the promise to himself to never be silent, to never help the oppressor; he wrote this novel to be a voice for the innocent, tortured victims of the Holocaust.
3. This novel is a voice for the almost six million innocent lives lost during the Holocaust, and a lesson for those living in the world today.
4. This novel is the true story of what can happen in a dictatorship run through fear, and the evil of believing one group of people superior to another.

Concluding Paragraph EXAMPLE



5-Paragraph Essay Skeletal Outline

Use the following skeletal outline as a reference to ensure you are using the correct format and including all of the relevant information in your essay.

Your last name [insert] page #

Your name

Your teacher's name (ex: Mrs. Jones)

Your course (ex: 9 College Prep English)

The current date (ex: 10 June 2017)

Title

- I. Introductory paragraph
 - A. Hook
 - B. Transition from Hook to thesis (should mention text and author)
 - C. Thesis (central argument + three main points you are using to prove it)

- II. Body paragraph #1
 - A. Topic sentence (explains focus of paragraph, should correspond with *first* main point in thesis)
 - B. Support statement(s)
 - C. Introduction to quotation and quotation
 - D. Explanation of quotation
 - E. Additional evidence/support statements
 - F. Connection back to thesis
 - G. Transition to second main point

III. Body paragraph #2

- A. Topic sentence (explains focus of paragraph, should correspond with *second* main point in thesis)
- B. Support statement(s)
- C. Introduction to quotation and quotation
- D. Explanation of quotation
- E. Additional evidence/support statements
- F. Connection back to thesis
- G. Transition to third main point

IV. Body paragraph #3

- A. Topic sentence (explains focus of paragraph, should correspond with *third* main point in thesis)
- B. Support statement(s)
- C. Introduction to quotation and quotation
- D. Explanation of quotation
- E. Additional evidence/support statements
- F. Connection back to thesis

V. Concluding paragraph

- A. Reintroduction of text and author
- B. Restatement of thesis
- C. Restatement of first main point
- D. Restatement of second main point
- E. Restatement of third main point
- F. Evaluative comment (should tie back to hook)

Style Tips

Use the following tips to ensure you are not making any minor mistakes that could cost you points in the ‘Style’ category.

In general, throughout your essay **DO**:

- Use a thesaurus to vary your word choice.
- Vary your sentence structures and lengths.
- Write *specifically* and use words that express the exact meaning you want. Words like “bad,” “good,” etc. do not express a specific meaning.
- Choose the proper verb tense. Stick to PRESENT TENSE when you are discussing aspects of a literary work.

EXAMPLE: Cassius *hates* Caesar and *thinks* he is unworthy of the crown.

In general, throughout your essay **DO NOT**:

- Use 1st person (“I”, “me”, “we,” etc.)
EXAMPLE: I think Julius Caesar is the tragic hero because...
- Use 2nd person (“you”)
EXAMPLE: The theme of the short story is you should follow your dreams.
TIP: Simply do a search of the word processing document for first and second person pronouns. For example, search for the word “you” and fix all the occurrences.
- Use contractions
- Use informal language or slang of any kind

Academic Language

In order to strengthen the sophistication and academic nature of an expository essay, as well as to communicate clearly and effectively, it is important to build and utilize an academic vocabulary. The list below is a sampling of terms; a further list, including definitions and sample sentences, can be found in the Pearson textbook “Introductory Unit.”

Ambiguous	Concept	Differentiate	Interpret
Appreciate	Context	Identify	Interpretation
Argument	Credible	Illuminate	Speculate
Clarify	Determine	Indicate	Verify

Transition Words & Phrases

In order to transition between body paragraphs and increase the flow of ideas throughout your essay, consult the following list of transition words and phrases.

Sequence: again, also, and, and then, besides, finally, first...second...third, furthermore, last, moreover, next, still, too

Time: after a bit, after a few days, after a while, afterward, as long as, as soon as, at last, at length, at that time, before, earlier, immediately, in the meantime, in the past, meanwhile, now, presently, shortly, simultaneously, since, so far, soon, then, thereafter, until, when

Comparison: again, also, in the same way, likewise, once more, similarly

Contrast: although, but, despite, even though, however, in contrast, in spite of, instead, nevertheless, nonetheless, notwithstanding, on the contrary, on the one hand...on the other hand, regardless, still, though, yet

Examples: after all, even, for example, for instance, indeed, in fact, of course, specifically, such as, the following example, to illustrate

Cause and Effect: accordingly, as a result, because, consequently, for this purpose, hence, so, then, therefore, thereupon, thus, to this end

Place: above, adjacent to, below, beyond, closer to, elsewhere, far, farther on, here, near, nearby, opposite to, there, to the left, to the right

Concession: although it is true that, granted that, it may appear that, naturally, of course

Summary, Repetition, or Conclusion: as a result, as has been noted, as mentioned earlier, in conclusion, in other words, in short, therefore, to summarize

Conventions Tips

Check the following list of **common essay errors** to ensure you are not making any minor mistakes that could cost you points in the ‘Conventions’ category.

Incorrect spelling

- Word processing programs have spell checkers built in. Use them! Additionally, if there is a grammar checker, use it but do not assume the program is always correct.

Sentence fragments

- A fragmented sentence is missing something and leaves a reader confused.
EXAMPLE: Making his decision quickly.
- Fragments are usually corrected by hooking it up with the sentence before it or after it.
EXAMPLE: Making his decision quickly, Jim ordered a dozen red roses for his wife.

Run-on sentences

- Sentences qualify as run-ons if there are two or more independent (subject and verb) sentences not joined by a conjunction (and, but, etc.) or correct punctuation (a period or semicolon).
EXAMPLE: “Walt Whitman was a famous nineteenth-century American poet, he was also a beloved citizen of New York City” can be corrected in one of the following three ways:
 - Walt Whitman was a famous nineteenth-century American poet, and he was also a beloved citizen of New York City.
 - Walt Whitman was a famous nineteenth-century American poet; he was also a beloved citizen of New York City.
 - Walt Whitman was a famous nineteenth-century American poet. He was also a beloved citizen of New York City.

Comma/semicolon use

- When two complete sentences are joined together by a conjunction (and, or, but, nor, yet, so, or for), place a comma *before* the conjunction.
EXAMPLE: Sarah robbed the bank, and then she went out for a slice of pizza.
- Use a semicolon in place of a period to separate two closely related sentences where the conjunction has been left out.
EXAMPLE: Call me tomorrow; I will give you my answer then.

Punctuation within quotation marks

- If the end of the quoted material contains a comma or a period, place the punctuation *within* the quotation marks. If the quoted material contains an exclamation point or question mark, place this punctuation *outside* the quotation marks.

EXAMPLE: My daughter said Jack is “the one.” As her mother, I wanted to make sure Jack was “the one”!

- If the quoted material is dialogue, all punctuation should be contained *within* the quotation marks.

EXAMPLE: She said, “I can’t believe I won the lottery!”

Parallel structure

- Sentences must be balanced.
EXAMPLE: “Mary likes *hiking*, *swimming*, and *to ride* a bicycle” is not parallel. To make it parallel you would change it to: “Mary likes *hiking*, *swimming*, and *bicycling*.”
- EXAMPLE: “The production manager was asked to write his report quickly, accurately, and add thorough details” is not parallel. A good rewrite is: “The production manager was asked to write his report quickly, accurately, and thoroughly.”

Overuse of “to be” verbs and passive voice

- Think of limiting “to be” verbs (am, are, is, was, were, be, being, been) as completing a jigsaw puzzle. You will need to move around the words to avoid overuse of these verbs. By limiting these verbs, you are forced to use more interesting, active verbs. Active voice is simply a sentence in which the subject performs the action of the verb and the direct object is the goal or the recipient.
- EXAMPLE: “The car was fixed by the mechanic” is in passive voice. To make it active you would change it to: “The mechanic fixed the car.”

Writing out numbers

- Spell out numbers one through nine; use numerals for 10 and above.
- To make plurals out of numbers, add *s* only, with no apostrophe (the 1950s).

There/They’re/Their

- Use *there* to signify location: “Put the plate there.” Use *they’re* only if you can substitute the words they are: “They’re going to be excited.” Use *their* only when referring to the possession of nouns: “Their cat has fleas.”

To/Too/Two

- Use *to* when you mean going towards something: “I am going to the theatre.” Use *too* to mean more than enough or also: “I am too tired,” or “I would like to go, too.” Use *two* when you want to spell the number 2: “He had two pancakes for breakfast.”

Than/Then

- Use *than* when you want to make a comparison: “Alex is smarter than I am.” If you are talking about time, choose *then*: “First you separate the eggs; *then* you beat the whites.”

Grading Rubrics

For **expository** pieces:

ENGLISH COMPOSITION

MODULE 1

KEYSTONE EXPOSITORY SCORING GUIDELINES

Scoring Domain	Score Point 4 At this score point, the writer—	Score Point 3 At this score point, the writer—	Score Point 2 At this score point, the writer—	Score Point 1 At this score point, the writer—	Score Point 0 At this score point, the writer—
Thesis/Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishes and sustains a precise controlling idea/thesis displays a clear understanding of task, purpose, and audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishes a controlling idea/thesis displays an understanding of task, purpose, and audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides an inconsistent idea/thesis displays a limited understanding of task, purpose, and audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides a vague or indistinct controlling idea displays a minimal understanding of task, purpose, and audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides no evidence of a controlling idea/thesis displays no understanding of task, purpose, and audience <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not respond to prompt
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides relevant content and specific and effective supporting details that demonstrate a clear understanding of purpose uses sophisticated transitional words, phrases, and clauses to link ideas and create cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides relevant content and effective supporting details uses transitional words, phrases, and clauses to link ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides insufficient content and ineffective supporting details may use simplistic and/or illogical transitional expressions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides minimal content uses few or no transitional expressions to link ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides little to no content does not use transitional expressions to link ideas <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not respond to prompt
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chooses sophisticated organizational strategies appropriate for task, purpose, and audience includes a clear and well-defined introduction, body, and conclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chooses appropriate organizational strategies for task, purpose, and audience includes a clear introduction, body, and conclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays some evidence of organizational strategies may not include an introduction, body, and/or conclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays little evidence of organizational strategies may not include an identifiable introduction, body, and/or conclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays no evidence of organizational strategies does not include an identifiable introduction, body, and/or conclusion <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not respond to prompt
Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses consistently precise language and a wide variety of sentence structures chooses an effective style and tone and maintains a consistent point of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses precise language and a variety of sentence structures chooses an appropriate style, tone, and point of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses imprecise language and a limited variety of sentence structures may choose an inappropriate style or tone and may shift point of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses simplistic or repetitious language and sentence structures demonstrates little or no understanding of style, tone, or point of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses repetitious language and simple sentence structures demonstrates no understanding of style, tone, or point of view <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not respond to prompt

For **persuasive** pieces:

KEYSTONE PERSUASIVE SCORING GUIDELINES

Scoring Domain	Score Point 4 At this score point, the writer—	Score Point 3 At this score point, the writer—	Score Point 2 At this score point, the writer—	Score Point 1 At this score point, the writer—	Score Point 0 At this score point, the writer—
Thesis/Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishes and sustains a precise claim or position displays a clear understanding of task, purpose, and audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishes a claim or position displays an understanding of task, purpose, and audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides an inconsistent claim or position displays a limited understanding of task, purpose, and audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides vague or indistinct claim or position displays a minimal understanding of task, purpose, and audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides no evidence of claim or position displays no understanding of task, purpose, and audience OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not respond to prompt
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides relevant content and specific and effective supporting details that demonstrate a clear understanding of purpose uses sophisticated transitional words, phrases, and clauses to link ideas and create cohesion considers possible counterclaims (alternate or opposing arguments) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides relevant content and effective supporting details uses transitional words, phrases, and clauses to link ideas acknowledges possible counterclaims (alternate or opposing arguments) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides insufficient content and ineffective supporting details may use simplistic and/or illogical transitional expressions may not acknowledge possible counterclaims (alternate or opposing arguments) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides minimal content uses few or no transitional expressions to link ideas does not acknowledge possible counterclaims (alternate or opposing arguments) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides little to no content does not use transitions to link ideas OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not respond to prompt
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chooses sophisticated organizational strategies appropriate for task, purpose, and audience presents fair and relevant evidence to support claim or position includes a clear and well-defined introduction, body, and conclusion that support or reinforce the argument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chooses appropriate organizational strategies for task, purpose, and audience presents relevant evidence to support claim or position includes a clear introduction, body, and conclusion that support the argument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays some evidence of organizational strategies presents insufficient evidence to support claim or position may not include an introduction, body, and/or conclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays little evidence of organizational strategies presents little or no evidence to support claim or position may not include an identifiable introduction, body, and/or conclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> displays no evidence of organizational strategies presents no evidence to support claim or position does not include an identifiable introduction, body, and/or conclusion OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not respond to prompt
Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses consistently precise language and a wide variety of sentence structures chooses an effective style and tone, and maintains a consistent point of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses precise language and a variety of sentence structures chooses an appropriate style, tone, and point of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses imprecise language and a limited variety of sentence structures may choose an inappropriate style or tone, and may shift point of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses simplistic or repetitious language and sentence structures demonstrates little or no understanding of tone or point of view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses repetitious language and simple sentence structures demonstrates no understanding of style, tone, or point of view OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not respond to prompt

For pieces scored solely on **Conventions**:

ENGLISH COMPOSITION CONVENTIONS SCORING GUIDELINES

Scoring Domain	Score Point 4 At this score point, the writer—	Score Point 3 At this score point, the writer—	Score Point 2 At this score point, the writer—	Score Point 1 At this score point, the writer—	Score Point 0 At this score point, the writer—
Grammar and Usage	demonstrates command of standard English grammar and usage	demonstrates control of standard English grammar and usage	demonstrates limited or inconsistent control of standard English grammar and usage	demonstrates minimal control of standard English grammar and usage	demonstrates little or no control of standard English grammar and usage
Mechanics	demonstrates command of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling	demonstrates control of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling	demonstrates limited or inconsistent control of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling	demonstrates minimal control of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling	demonstrates little or no control of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
Sentence Formation	demonstrates command of sentence formation	demonstrates control of sentence formation	demonstrates limited or inconsistent control of sentence formation	demonstrates minimal control of sentence formation	demonstrates little or no control of sentence formation
Summation	At this score point, the writer makes few errors, and errors do not interfere with reader understanding.	At this score point, the writer makes few errors, and errors seldom interfere with reader understanding.	At this score point, the writer makes errors, and errors may interfere with reader understanding.	At this score point, the writer makes errors, and errors often interfere with reader understanding.	At this score point, the writer makes errors, and errors consistently interfere with reader understanding.