

SAGES Writing Rubric

		Proficient	Acceptable	Developing	Unacceptable
Engagement	Content/Ideas	Thoroughly engages a relevant and focused question or problem to reveal significant—perhaps even highly original—insight(s)	Thoroughly engages a relevant and mostly focused question or problem to reveal somewhat important insight(s)	Partially engages a relevant and somewhat focused question or problem to reveal some insight(s)	Inadequately engages a question or problem or merely reports what is already known
	Purpose, Context, and Audience	Thorough and nuanced attention to purpose, context, and audience	Attends to purpose, context, and audience, though sometimes inconsistently or partially	Attends to purpose, context, and audience, though often inconsistently or partially	Little or no attention to purpose, context, and/or audience
Argument	Thesis Statement	Articulates argument through clear, focused, and precise thesis statement	Articulates argument through clear thesis statement, though it may be somewhat imprecise or broad in focus	Thesis statement only partially articulates argument or is too general	No thesis statement or thesis statement unrelated to the argument
	Reasoning/Development	All parts of the argument (major and sub-claims) are developed thoroughly, deeply, and logically	Claims mostly developed, though contains one or two partially developed claims, or minor logical inconsistencies that do not seriously affect overall argument	Many claims are only moderately developed, or argument contains several minor—or one major—logical inconsistencies	Develops all claims superficially, repeats ideas, or wanders from the argument
Evidence	Quality	Always uses relevant evidence from reliable and properly documented sources	Mostly uses relevant evidence from reliable and properly documented sources	Uses evidence from somewhat reliable sources documented to ensure retrievability	Evidence is missing, irrelevant, unreliable, or undocumented
	Use	Consistently integrates and fully explains evidence to support all claims thoroughly and carefully	Mostly integrates and explains evidence to support the primary claim(s)	Uses some evidence, but may struggle to integrate it logically or smoothly into the argument, or to explain it fully	Does not use evidence, merely reports it without explanation, or plagiarizes
Readability	Arrangement	Consistently uses sophisticated transitions to enhance the coherence of sentences and paragraphs	Mostly uses effective transitions to enhance the coherence of sentences and paragraphs	Simple transitions limit the coherence and/or complexity of sentences and paragraphs	Does not use transitions, or sentence and paragraph arrangement interferes with logical coherence
	Sentence Level Correctness and Style	Sentences always mechanically correct and stylistically sophisticated; reader comprehension never impeded	Sentences almost always mechanically correct and stylistically clear; reader comprehension rarely and minimally impeded	Sentences usually mechanically correct and clear; reader comprehension occasionally impeded, though not critically	Mechanically incorrect or stylistically unclear sentences critically impede reader comprehension

SAGES Writing Rubric – Terminology

Engagement – SAGES pushes students to engage with current research and thinking about a wide range of topics. In each writing assignment, students should thoroughly understand – and be able to explain – the central question, problem, or idea that motivates their written work. At its root, this category assesses how well a paper performs the task(s) laid out in the assignment; but good, persuasive writing should be compelling to a smart reader who may not know the specifics of the assignment prompt. So, a proficient writer will provide necessary context in a compelling and audience-aware way.

- *Content/Ideas* assesses the relevance and significance of the paper’s central insight(s). There are many words that can define our expectations for engagement of a problem/question—thorough, careful, creative—but we have found that words like “insightful,” “significant,” and “original” can be helpful in pushing students to go beyond what they read or discussed in class and their old habits of information retrieval in order to begin doing the kind of independent thinking that characterizes college work.
 - *Purpose, Context, and Audience* assesses the writer’s ability to engage respectfully with diverse perspectives and to present her/himself as a credible and persuasive voice on the topic. Purpose: Is the writer able to express the motivation for writing? Context: Does the writer frame the essay’s ideas such that the reader can locate them in a broader conversation? Audience: Does the writer correctly assume what readers should know and properly introduce what they do not? Does the writer acknowledge other points of view, especially ones that may conflict with the writer’s?
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Argument – SAGES asks students not only to engage with questions/problems, but also to respond with persuasive and valuable answers and solutions. This category assesses students’ abilities to present their contributions in the forms of clearly stated and thoroughly developed arguments. The proficient writer will articulate a strong, precise, and insightful thesis that governs the development of the paper.

- *Thesis Statement* assesses the clarity and precision of the governing statement. It is possible for a student to write a great piece without an explicit thesis statement, but it’s so hard for student writers to do so that we encourage them to use one. The thesis is the one-sentence (even if it technically uses more than one) version of the piece. It governs everything that gets said in it, telling the writer (and reader) what should be included (and left out), as well as suggesting the order in which information will be presented.
 - *Reasoning/Development* assesses the depth and nuance of the argument throughout the paper. Do the claims made in the body of the piece link back to the thesis? Is each claim logically persuasive (i.e., does the writer establish premises first, then logically build toward reasonable conclusions)? Does the writer push on the ideas presented to go deeper into them, beyond the obvious or superficial? You may note that there is some overlap here with ENGAGEMENT. One way to think about the difference: a writer may ENGAGE an insight through a flash of brilliance, but it is how thoroughly and well the writer *develops* that idea that should determine the grade for ARGUMENT.
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Evidence – SAGES introduces students to a range of evidence and teaches them to evaluate and make use of credible, persuasive information in their writing. This category assesses students’ abilities to identify appropriate (often scholarly) evidence to support their arguments, as well as their abilities to accommodate and use potentially discrepant data or contradictory ideas.

- *Quality* assesses the relevance and reliability (for researched arguments, the gold standard of reliability is peer-reviewed scholarship) of the evidence used. Evidence refers not only to secondary sources, but also anything that could be used to support a claim, including observational data or personal experience.
 - *Use* assesses the way the writer integrates information into her/his argument. Is the evidence presented necessary *and* sufficient to support the claim(s)? How is evidence introduced, analyzed, and incorporated into the writer’s text? Typically, the logical relationship between evidence and claim is not self-evident and thus must be stated explicitly through an explanatory sentence (often called a warrant).
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Readability – SAGES teaches students to attend to the mechanics and style of their written performances. This category assesses papers on their “surface” features, including mechanical correctness and artful style.

- *Arrangement* assesses the paper’s coherence (sometimes called “flow”) and its intentional structure and wording. Although arrangement might refer to the order of paragraphs, it also refers to the transitions used between paragraphs, as well as the inclusion and order of sentences within them. So for example, if a paragraph begins with a non-sequitur, but then introduces an evidence-supported claim that logically links back to the thesis, we might say that the point is *argued* logically, but that the paragraph is not yet as readable as it could be.
 - *Sentence Level Correctness and Style* assesses the paper’s technical consistency. This criterion refers to what many graders call “grammar,” but what linguists would refer to as a writer’s control of “Standard Edited English.” For mechanics and correctness, consider persistent patterns of error and errors that interfere with comprehension to be most serious.
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