



# 2026 CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST

## Nonfiction Rubric - Grades 1-5

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Strong (3)	Demonstrates (2)	Developing (1)
<b>Clarity &amp; Focus</b>	Clear and focused throughout; the main idea is easy to follow	Mostly clear with some minor lapses in focus	Main idea is present but sometimes unclear or unfocused	Lacks a clear focus; hard to determine main idea
<b>Organization</b>	Well-organized with clear introduction, body, and conclusion Uses effective transitions	Organized but may have minor issues with flow or transitions	Some organization, but sections may be unclear or jumbled	Lacks organization; ideas are scattered or confusing
<b>Supporting Details</b>	Detailed and relevant information supports the main idea If research is used it is integrated effectively	Good use of supporting details, may lack depth If research is used it is mostly integrated effectively	Some supporting details but they may not always connect to the main idea If research is used it may not be integrated clearly	Few or no supporting details; unclear connections to main idea If research is used it may represent portions of plagiarized work
<b>Sentence Structure</b>	Varied and effective sentence structure that enhances readability	Sentences are generally clear, but structure may be repetitive	Basic sentence structure, but awkward or unclear at times	Sentence structure is repetitive or hard to follow
<b>Pacing &amp; Flow</b>	Excellent pacing; ideas are presented smoothly and logically	Generally good pacing, with only a few slow or rushed sections	Uneven pacing; some sections may be slow or rushed (with ideas under or overdeveloped)	Poor pacing; hard to follow due to abrupt shifts of disjointed ideas
<b>Engagement with Topic</b>	Author fully engages with the topic, showing clear understanding	Good understanding of topic, but may miss a few key points	Some understanding of topic, but many areas lack depth	Limited or unclear understanding of topic
<b>Spelling &amp; Grammar</b>	Almost no errors in grammar or spelling	Few errors that do not interfere with meaning	Noticeable errors that slightly impact readability	Many errors that disrupt understanding

## Nonfiction Rubric - Grades 6-8

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Excellent (4)</b>	<b>Strong (3)</b>	<b>Demonstrates (2)</b>	<b>Developing (1)</b>
<b>Clarity &amp; Focus</b>	Main idea is clear and focused throughout, with strong coherence	Mostly clear with minor lapses in clarity or focus	The main idea is clear but sometimes difficult to follow	Lacks clear focus or organization; writing is confusing or unfocused
<b>Organization</b>	Well-organized; logical structure with strong transitions	Organized, but some transitions or structure may not be fully developed	Basic organization but some areas may be unclear or repetitive Transitional language may be simplistic	Disorganized; ideas are scattered and no transitional language is used
<b>Thesis &amp; Support</b>	Well-developed thesis with strong, relevant supporting details	Good thesis with adequate support, may lack full development	Thesis present but lacks strong support or depth	Weak or missing thesis with minimal or irrelevant support
<b>Evidence / Examples</b>	Excellent use of evidence and examples that support thesis If research is used, it is integrated appropriately with some understanding of citation	Good use of evidence and examples, but they may lack depth or variety If research is used, it is integrated mostly appropriately	Limited or basic use of evidence and examples If research is used it may not be integrated appropriately	Little to no evidence or examples If research is used it may border on plagiarism
<b>Sentence Structure</b>	Varied and effective sentence structure that enhances readability	Sentences are generally clear, but structure may be repetitive	Basic sentence structure, but awkward or unclear at times	Sentence structure is repetitive or hard to follow
<b>Pacing &amp; Flow</b>	Well-paced; information is presented in a logical, engaging manner	Good pacing with the occasional slow or rushed sections	Uneven pacing; some sections may be slow or rushed (with ideas under or overdeveloped)	Poor pacing; hard to follow due to abrupt shifts or disjointed ideas
<b>Engagement with Topic</b>	Deep understanding and insightful engagement with the topic	Good understanding but may lack a fully insightful approach	Basic understanding of topic, but many areas lack depth	Limited, incorrect, or unclear understanding of topic
<b>Grammar / Mechanics</b>	Virtually no errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling	Few minor errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling	Noticeable errors that slightly impact readability	Frequent errors that disrupt understanding

## Nonfiction Rubric - Grades 9-12

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Strong (3)	Demonstrates (2)	Developing (1)
<b>Clarity &amp; Focus</b>	Exceptional clarity and focus throughout; ideas are sophisticated and clear	Clear and focused; may have minor lapses in complexity or nuance	Mostly clear, but lacks depth or nuance in some areas	Lacks clarity; ideas are vague, unfocused, or convoluted
<b>Organization</b>	Excellent structure; ideas are presented in a clear, logical, and cohesive manner	Organized structure, with minor weaknesses in transitions or clarity	Basic organization but some areas may be disjointed or confusing Transitional language may be simplistic	Disorganized; ideas are scattered and no transitional language is used
<b>Thesis &amp; Support</b>	Well-developed thesis with clear, insightful analysis	Good thesis with adequate support, may lack full development or complexity in analysis	Thesis present but lacks strong support or depth	Weak or missing thesis with minimal or irrelevant support
<b>Evidence / Examples</b>	Excellent, varied use of evidence and examples that powerfully support thesis If research is used, it is integrated appropriately with an understanding of citation	Good use of evidence and examples, but they may lack depth or variety If research is used, it is integrated mostly appropriately and cited	Limited or basic use of evidence and examples If research is used it may not be integrated appropriately	Little to no evidence or examples If research is used it may border on plagiarism
<b>Sentence Structure</b>	Highly effective, varied sentence structure that enhances readability and impact	Clear sentence structure, though occasionally awkward or repetitive	Clear sentence structure, but awkward or unclear at times	Sentence structure is repetitive or hard to follow, affecting readability and meaning
<b>Pacing &amp; Flow</b>	Excellent pacing; ideas are developed and presented in a compelling, logical sequence	Generally good pacing with the occasional slow or rushed sections	Pacing is inconsistent; some sections may be slow or rushed (with ideas under or overdeveloped)	Pacing is disjointed, making it hard to follow the overall ideas
<b>Engagement with Topic</b>	Deep understanding and insightful engagement with the topic	Good understanding but may lack a fully insightful approach	Basic understanding of topic, but many areas lack depth	Limited, incorrect, or unclear understanding of topic
<b>Grammar / Mechanics</b>	Virtually no errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling; writing is polished	Few minor errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling	Noticeable errors that slightly impact readability	Frequent errors that disrupt understanding

## \*Collaborative Writing - Additional Criteria

\*Please use the rubric assessment appropriate to the genre/age group of the chosen piece, then assess these categories in addition to that rubric

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Excellent (4)</b>	<b>Strong (3)</b>	<b>Demonstrates (2)</b>	<b>Developing (1)</b>
<b>Integration of voices</b>	Voices are fully integrated, creating a unified, cohesive style throughout the piece	Voices blend well, though there may be minor shifts in tone or style	Voices are somewhat integrated, but noticeable differences disrupt the flow	Voices do not blend, creating a fragmented or inconsistent style
<b>Cohesion and Consistency</b>	The writing is highly cohesive, with a consistent tone, style, and perspective throughout. No noticeable shifts between authors.	Writing is mostly cohesive, with only slight shifts in tone or style	Some noticeable shifts in tone, style, or perspective make the piece feel disjointed	Writing lacks cohesion; tone, style, or perspective shifts are frequent and jarring