

Informational / Explanatory Essay Rubric

Grades English I-IV

Key Informational Elements: Focused thesis · Logical organizational pattern · Evidence with explanation · Synthesis

Score Point	Organization / Structure	Development & Support	Critical Thinking	Language & Conventions
Score Point 4 – Accomplished	Essay opens with a clear, focused thesis that previews the organizational approach. Body paragraphs are logically sequenced, each advancing the thesis with a distinct point. Sustained coherence throughout, with purposeful transitions that clarify relationships among ideas. Conclusion synthesizes rather than merely restates, extending the reader's understanding.	Thesis is fully and specifically developed. Supporting details, examples, and explanations are well chosen, accurate, and clearly tied to the thesis. Writer explains the significance of evidence thoroughly and demonstrates depth of understanding. Organizational patterns (comparison, cause/effect, classification, etc.) are used deliberately and effectively.	Thorough, insightful thinking about the topic. Writer moves well beyond surface explanation, synthesizing ideas and drawing meaningful connections. Treatment of the topic reflects a sophisticated understanding of complexity and nuance.	Word choice is precise, purposeful, and appropriately formal. Technical or domain-specific language is used accurately. Sentences are varied and well controlled. Consistent command of conventions with only minor, non-distracting errors.
Score Point 3 – Proficient	Essay presents a clear thesis and organizes body paragraphs logically in support of it. Transitions are present and generally effective. Minor lapses in focus or coherence may appear but do not significantly disrupt understanding. Conclusion addresses the thesis.	Supporting evidence and explanation are relevant and mostly specific. Writer generally links evidence to the thesis, though the connection may occasionally need more development. Organizational patterns are present and serve the explanatory purpose.	Solid thinking that goes beyond obvious or surface-level treatment of the topic. Writer makes meaningful connections and offers substantive explanation, though depth may be uneven.	Word choice is generally clear and purposeful. Sentences show adequate variety and control. Adequate command of conventions with errors that are present but do not significantly affect fluency or meaning.
Score Point 2 – Developing	Thesis is present but may be underdeveloped or generic. Organizational structure is recognizable but inconsistent or formulaic. Some paragraphs may lack a clear controlling idea. Transitions are weak or mechanical. Conclusion may only repeat the introduction.	Thesis is supported with some evidence, but explanations are often too brief, vague, or loosely connected to the central idea. Writer may rely on listing rather than developing ideas in depth. Organizational patterns may be unclear or inconsistently applied.	Limited depth of thinking. Treatment of the topic tends to be general, obvious, or formulaic, with little analysis of significance or complexity.	Word choice is general and imprecise, contributing little to clarity or precision. Sentences show limited variety. Errors in conventions appear throughout and may occasionally disrupt fluency, though meaning is usually recoverable.
Score Point 1 – Beginning	Essay lacks a clear thesis or organizational logic. Ideas are presented randomly, repetitively, or incoherently. Introduction and/or conclusion may be absent. Reader has difficulty following the writer's intent.	Development is minimal or absent. Examples or details are scarce, irrelevant, or unexplained. Essay amounts to a list of loosely related statements that do not build a coherent explanation.	Thinking is superficial or absent. Writer makes no meaningful attempt to explain, connect, or analyze the topic.	Word choice is vague, limited, or inappropriate. Sentences are awkward or uncontrolled. Persistent errors in conventions disrupt fluency and may interfere with the reader's ability to follow the writing.

Vertical Differentiation Note: The criteria above remain constant across English I-IV. Grade-level calibration lives in the task and text complexity – not the rubric. A Score Point 4 in English I reflects grade-appropriate mastery; a Score Point 4 in English IV reflects the heightened analytical, evaluative, and rhetorical demands of TEKS E4. Score holistically: determine which score point best describes the overall performance, then confirm against individual dimensions.