

Narrative Rubrics

The following rubrics provide a scale of 1-4 (with 4 being the highest) for scoring each of the seven specific skills for Narrative writing. These rubrics can be used successfully to assess any piece of narrative writing. Use each skill rubric individually or combine each skill rubric for a total score - maximum score of 28; minimum score of 7.

Organization:

1	The response shows no story sequence, with events unfolding in a random fashion, making it hard to follow. There are no transitional strategies evident.
2	The response shows a basic beginning, middle, and end but it is confusing in parts and often hard to follow. There are few if any transitional strategies evident. (<i>first, next, last</i>)
3	The response has a beginning, middle, and end with evidence of the diamond structure, however the story sequence is loosely connected, with some transitional strategies evident. (<i>And then, pretty soon, just then, right away</i>)
4	The response shows a tightly organized story that follows the diamond structure with a clear beginning, middle, and end. The sequence of events unfolds naturally and it is easy to follow with a consistent use of a variety of transitional strategies. This story reads like a “real” book. (<i>As the sun sets, Later that day, At last, By this time, In no time at all</i>)

Entertaining Beginnings:

1	The response lacks an entertaining beginning. The author does not establish the characters or setting. The reader is not compelled to read on.
2	The response includes a beginning that sets up the story including character(s), setting, and/or purpose, however it is boring and didactic. The reader is not compelled to read on. (<i>One sunny day I took a hike in the desert. Or: This is my story about...</i>)
3	The response begins with an entertaining beginning that uses a simple strategy (action, exclamation, thought or question, sound) to establish the character(s), setting and the story purpose, however it is brief and may not compel the reader to read on. (<i>I stepped out into the hot, sandy desert and began my hike.</i>)
4	The response begins with an entertaining beginning that uses a variety of strategies (action, exclamation, thought or question, sound) to establish the character(s), setting, and the story purpose. The beginning draws the reader immediately into the story and compels the reader to read on. (<i>I stepped out into the hot, sandy desert and gasped. Squinting into the waves of heat I noticed something unusual. Should I continue on this quest I wondered?</i>)

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Elaborative Detail:

1	The response lacks descriptive or sensory details, shows no character emotion, and does not bring the story to life for the reader.
2	The response includes few relevant descriptive or sensory details, and “tells” character emotion instead of “showing” the emotion. There is little variety in the sentence structure. Elaboration does not focus on story critical characters, settings, objects to make it interesting to the reader. (<i>There was a green cactus. There was some brown dirt. I felt hot and sweaty.</i>)
3	The response includes some specific descriptive and sensory details. The author “shows” character emotion and there is evidence of sentence variety. The reader is entertained. (<i>I wiped the sweat from my brow. It was hot. I noticed a green cactus sticking up from the dry, brown dirt.</i>)
4	The response skillfully provides creative descriptive and sensory details with character emotions that are shown. It is clear that the student used a variety of detail generating questions applied effectively to story critical characters, settings, and objects. The story comes alive for the reader with plenty of interesting words and sentence variety. (<i>I wiped the sweat from my brow and sighed. Looking up ahead I noticed a green cactus with long spikes standing like a sentry in the dusty earth.</i>)

Suspense:

1	The response lacks a sense of anticipation/story tension, does not entice the reader to read on or develop the narrative effectively.
2	The response might include a red flag word or phrase to signal something is about to happen, but the rest of the story is communicated without any sense of tension or anticipation. (<i>Suddenly, Just then</i>) The reader is not left wondering or worrying about what is about to happen. (<i>Just then a rattlesnake showed up and suddenly I ran away from that spot.</i>)
3	The response includes some sense of anticipation or tension through the use of red flag words and phrases and/or story questions. The reader has some sense of worry or wonder about what is going to happen. (<i>Just then I heard a tinkling noise. It got louder and louder as I walked. I looked up just in time to see a rattlesnake in my path. I froze at first, but then turned and ran in the other direction.</i>)
4	The response skillfully provides a sense of anticipation/tension that encourages the reader to wonder or worry about what is going to happen. The story develops slowly and the reader is drawn into the event. (<i>Just then I heard a tinkling noise. I stopped in my tracks but could see nothing so I walked on. Before I knew it, a slight movement caught my eye and my heart began to beat a little faster. What could that be I wondered? I slowly walked on but scanned the surface of the dirt before putting my foot down. To my surprise, a striped creature with a diamond shaped head appeared at my feet. I gasped! I was about to step on a rattlesnake.</i>)

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Main Event:

1	The response lacks a fully developed main event - instead uses a summary statement. (<i>I ran away from a rattlesnake in the desert.</i>)
2	The response reads like a series of actions or steps, without the benefit of description, dialogue, the main character's thoughts and feelings. The story lacks focus, there are few specific strategies evident, with weak word choice, and little sentence variety. (<i>I stepped away from the snake. Then I started to run. I ran and ran until I made it home. The next day I went out again.</i>)
3	The response includes a single event elaborated with a mix of some specific strategies (description, dialogue, the main character's thoughts and feelings). The story focuses on a single event with some specific description (word choice) and sentence variety. (<i>I began to step away from the snake. My heart beat fast as I worried about a snakebite. "Help!" I whispered. I tried to remain calm. Just then I slowly turned around, took a small step back, and then began to run away from the rattlesnake.</i>)
4	The response skillfully provides a well-developed single significant main event that includes a balanced mix of strategies. (action, description, dialogue and/or thoughts and feelings) The story maintains focus throughout, includes interesting word choice, and sentence variety. (<i>I cautiously inched away from the snake. My heart beat fast as I worried about a venomous snakebite. "Help!" I mouthed silently, afraid to make any loud noise. I tried to slow my breathing and steady myself. One step back. Two steps. Slowly I retreated away from the rattling menace.</i>)

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Extended Endings:

1	The response has no sense of closure. (<i>I ran away. The End</i>)
2	The response ends abruptly, with little sense of satisfaction, or rambles with no definitive closure. (<i>I ran away and ran right into my house. I went home and went to bed. The next day I woke up.</i>)
3	The response includes an extended ending that is somewhat satisfying to the reader. There is a sense of closure with the main character reflecting on the event. (<i>I'll never forget this hike out in the desert. I won't be doing that again. I'll stick closer to home.</i>)
4	The response is crafted with a skillful extended ending that reveals how the main character was impacted or influenced by the main event. (Use of a memory, feeling, hope or wish, decision). The reader is fully satisfied and the story has a strong sense of closure. (<i>My heart beats faster every time I think about what could have happened out there on that dusty trail. The diamond shaped head is etched in my memory and I won't forget that rattling sound any time soon. When I come back to the desert I will definitely think twice before hiking along unfamiliar paths.</i>)

Vocabulary, Fluency, English Language Mechanics:

1	Use of vocabulary is vague and inappropriate. The response demonstrates a lack of facility with grade appropriate English language mechanics, showing frequent errors in spelling, capitalization or usage. Sentences are simplistic. The errors affect the readability of the response making it difficult to read and understand.
2	Use of vocabulary is simplistic and general. The response demonstrates an incomplete understanding of grade appropriate English language mechanics with frequent errors in spelling, punctuation or usage. Student primarily uses simple sentences and redundant structure and word choice. The errors affect the readability of the response.
3	Use of vocabulary is adequate. The response demonstrates average grade appropriate understanding of English language mechanics, showing adequate spelling, punctuation, capitalization or usage skills. Student uses at least one complex and compound sentence per paragraph. The errors do not interfere with the readability of the response.
4	Use of vocabulary is precise and appropriate. The response demonstrates a thorough understanding of grade appropriate English language mechanics with few, if any, errors in spelling, usage, punctuation or capitalization. Student uses a variety of simple, complex and compound sentences. The response is fluent.