

FIVE ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE WRITING

1. CENTRAL IDEA

This element of good writing involves focusing on a clear, manageable idea, argument, or thesis around which to organize your material. It includes selecting subordinate ideas that support and reinforce your central idea.

Checkpoints:

- Purpose or central idea is sufficiently limited for meaningful discussion.
- Central idea is clearly stated, normally in the opening.
- All subordinate ideas relate clearly to the central idea.

2. ORGANIZATION

This element of writing has to do with coherent arrangement of material. It involves keeping the reader oriented to the central and subordinate ideas. Good organization is logical and sequential. It guides the reader between divisions of the material.

Checkpoints:

- Introduction orients the reader to the central idea and the line of reasoning.
- Material is arranged in a logical and coherent sequence; subordinate ideas are effectively identified.
- Transitions are clear and helpful.
- Conclusion or closing summarizes the argument, emphasizes the central idea, and leaves the reader with a sense of completion.

3. SUPPORTING MATERIAL

Explanations, examples, statistics, and quotations make the ideas and information presented meaningful and memorable for the reader. In exposition, the role of supporting material is to clarify; in argument, to persuade.

Checkpoints:

- Examples are relevant, specific, detailed, sufficient, and persuasive.
- Quotations support the argument.

4. EXPRESSION, WORD CHOICE, AND POINT OF VIEW

Language is clear, specific, accurate, and appropriate to the audience, purpose, and material. Variety in sentence structure and length creates emphasis.

Checkpoints:

- Word choice is clear, specific, accurate, unassuming, and free of clichés and misused jargon.
- Sentences are free of wordiness and ambiguity.

5. SPELLING, GRAMMAR, AND PUNCTUATION

This element of good writing counts only when it's wrong. Fair or not, your reader will notice your spelling, grammar, or punctuation only when you make a mistake.

Checkpoints:

- Spelling, including technical terms and proper names, is correct.
- Correct words are used to convey the intended meaning.
- Generally accepted rules of grammar and syntax are followed, including pronoun/noun agreement, subject/verb agreement, appropriate verb tense, pronoun case, possessive forms, parallel construction, etc.
- Punctuation, particularly comma placement, reflects standard usage.
- Copy is free of mechanical errors and mistakes in proofreading.