

Traits of Great Writing for Teens

Ideas and Content – Your paper is focused, clear, and specific.

- Choose a topic you know well and care about.
- Limit the topic to one main idea you can develop fully within the assigned length.
- Include interesting details that keep your readers' attention and develop the main idea.
- Show what happens through description and action.

Organization – Your paper has a cohesive and engaging direction.

- Put your ideas in an order that keeps readers wanting to find out more.
- Begin your paper with a “hook” that grabs readers' attention and gives them clues about what they can expect to learn.
- Develop your main idea or story with supporting details that are convincing.
- Use signal words and phrases to transition smoothly between paragraphs and sentences.
- Close your paper with a satisfying ending that wraps up your main points clearly.

Voice – Your paper has personality and is appropriate for your readers and occasion.

- Show readers that only you could have written this paper.
- Write as if you were talking directly to your readers one on one.
- Sound knowledgeable, trustworthy, and sincere.
- Make your readers feel what you are feeling.
- Use suspense, humor, surprise, or warmth to engage your readers.

Word Choice – Your words are vivid, accurate, and precise.

- Spend time finding just the right words to express your ideas and feelings.
- Choose nouns that are concrete and specific. Use verbs that are active and vigorous.
- Use a few modifiers to create vivid images for the reader.
- Make every word count. Each one should add to a reader's understanding.
- Cut out all words and phrases that are not absolutely necessary.

Sentence Fluency – Your sentences are varied and natural.

- Organize your sentences so they are pleasing to read aloud.
- Vary the length of your sentences. This helps to create variety and interest.
- Put important points in short sentences for emphasis.
- Vary the beginnings of your sentences.
- Make sure long sentences still have only one main idea and all the details you include are related to it.

Conventions – You have paid careful attention to the standards of written English.

- Use capitals, periods, commas, exclamation marks, and quotation marks correctly.
- Double-check your spelling.
- Indent your paragraphs to show where new ideas begin.
- Use grammar and word usage consistent with standard written English.
- Keep the reading level appropriate for your audience.