

# Six Traits Writing Workshop

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# Conventions

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**Almost anything a copy editor would deal with comes under the heading of conventions. This includes punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage, capitalization, and paragraphing. When a paper is strong in conventions, it looks polished and edited. In a strong paper, the conventions are handled so skillfully, the reader doesn't really need to think of them. (You might find some errors if you look carefully, but they're rare.) Correct conventions make reading easier, and so enhance meaning.**

# The Trait of Conventions

- **Overall correctness, attention to detail, and an editorial touch**
- **Presentation—neatness and an effective use of white space (layout and formatting). This is the “+1” in the 6+1 Traits.**

# What We're Striving For

**From the ELA scoring guides, Score Point 3:**

- ✓ **The writing demonstrates control of the conventions of written English. There are few errors, and those occur primarily when the student is attempting more sophisticated vocabulary and sentence structures. None of the errors interfere with readability or comprehension.**

# Teaching the Trait of Conventions

- **Looks clean, edited, polished**
- **Most things done correctly**
- **Easy to decipher and follow**
- **Free of distracting errors**
- **Design and presentation make reading easy and pleasant**

# Teaching the Trait of Conventions, 2

- **Reader's eye is drawn first to key points**
- **No distracting overload of multiple fonts or hard-to-read graphics**
- **Attention given to spelling, punctuation, grammar and usage, capitalization, indentation**

# Conventions Rubric



- 4 That's it! Edited, polished, correct. Beautiful!**
- a. There are so few errors in this paper, you'll have to hunt for them!**
  - b. It would be a snap to get this ready to publish.**
  - c. I have used capitals correctly.**
  - d. My spelling is accurate; I have checked words I did not know.**
  - e. Paragraph indentations clearly show where discussion of a new topic begins.**
  - f. Grammar and usage are correct and consistent.**
  - g. My conventions are as formal as they need to be.**

# Conventions Rubric



## 3 Almost there

- a. I took a look. I made corrections. But some bothersome little mistakes still need cleaning up before I'm ready to publish.
- b. You won't find **BIG GLARING** errors—the kind that make it hard to understand what I mean.
- c. Little hard-to-spot errors though? Yes, you'll find sum—uh, make that *some*.
- d. Spelling is correct on most simple words. I may have small errors on bigger words. Is it *broccoli* or *brocoli*?
- e. Sentences and most proper nouns begin with capitals.
- f. I used paragraphs. Do they **ALL** begin in the right spots? I need to check.
- g. Punctuation is used correctly and makes it easy to read and interpret each sentence.

# Conventions Rubric



## 2 On my way–Ready for serious editing

- a. I haven't got the hang of paragraphs yet. When do you indent again? Minor problems with grammar or usage could make a reader pause now and then. Subjects and verbs usually agree, but I'm not always sure about *who* and *whom* or *me* and *myself*.
- b. My paper is readable, but it's a draft shy of "ready" when it comes to editing. I've put most of my effort into getting the message across.

# Conventions Rubric



## 1 Just Beginning

- a. My editing is not under control yet. You might need to read once to decode, then again to focus on meaning.
- b. Spelling error our commun, evin on siple werdz.
- c. I sometimes, used, “punctuation,” where it, wasnt needed and in other place’s I forgot to put it in.
- d. Or I used the wrong punctuation??
- e. I’ve got capiTAL LETTERS scaTtered around, or else i forgot to use them at all.
- f. The truth is, I haven’t spent much time on editing this paper.

# Teaching Writing Conventions

*What to look for:*

1. Are the other traits under control?
2. Look for patterns of error, not individual occurrences
3. Work on one pattern at a time
4. Be clear on whether you're asking for *revision* or *editing*

## *What to look for:*

### **Common patterns of error in student writing:**

- **Sound-based misspellings**
- **Sight-based misspellings**
- **Homonym problems (e.g., there, their, they're)**
- **Paragraph boundaries**
- **Sentence boundaries**
- **Fragments and run-ons**
- **Comma, apostrophe, quotation marks**
- **Pronoun reference**
- **Agreement—subject/verb; pronoun/antecedent**
- **Verb tense shifts**
- **Capital letters**
- **Usage problems**
- **Contractions**
- **And then . . .**

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**Conventions includes punctuation, spelling, grammar, usage, capitalization, and paragraph indentation.**

## **Abilities:**

- **Identify problems with conventions**
- **Fix problems with conventions**

# Conventions

## Key Strategies:

- Look for patterns
- Work on one pattern at a time
- Invent a strategy for each persistent problem:
  - Sound-based misspellings
  - Sight-based misspellings
  - Homonym problems (e.g., there, their, they're)
  - Paragraph boundaries
  - Sentence boundaries
  - Fragments and run-ons
  - Comma, apostrophe, quotation marks
  - Pronoun reference
  - Agreement—subject/verb; pronoun/antecedent
  - Verb tense shifts
  - Capital letters
  - Usage problems
  - Contractions
  - Overuse of “and then”





