



Formative Single-Point Rubric

Argument Writing
8th Grade and English 1

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Introduction

To better support middle-level and high school teachers with assessing writing at the classroom level, the Office of Assessment and Standards, along with ELA content experts, teachers, and literacy leaders from across the state, has created grade-level writing rubrics for each mode of writing in the *2024 SC CCR ELA Standards*. These rubrics will provide teachers with common writing goals for their students and a common tool to evaluate student writing.

Overarching Expectation 6 (ELA.OE.6) in the 2024 ELA Standards notes that students should “create quality work by adhering to an accepted format.” Using rubrics to assess writing provides students with expectations and an accepted format for various types of writing assignments. While rubrics communicate learning goals to students, they also support teachers by providing a tool for quick, targeted feedback and promoting collaboration and conversations between teachers.

The formative rubrics created for South Carolina high school English teachers are single-point rubrics. These rubrics list the criteria for proficiency in the different modes of writing at each grade level and allow teachers to identify where students approach proficiency and exceed proficiency.

Single-point rubrics are formative and instructional because they allow teachers to provide students with feedback for improvement. This differs from the holistic Text-Dependent Writing (TDW) scoring rubrics, which are summative and do not allow explicit feedback for improvement. Another advantage of the single-point rubric for classroom use is that teachers can use only the parts of the rubric they want to focus on at that time. This allows for more targeted feedback and remediation. This also allows for more variety in the format of student writing.

We would like to thank all the ELA content experts, teachers, and literacy leaders who assisted us in the creation of the ELA formative rubrics.

How to Use a Single-Point Rubric

Single-point rubrics allow teachers to focus on one or two areas of weakness instead of focusing on all elements in a student’s written work. Using single-point rubrics also provides teachers with the ability to provide targeted feedback and instruction to each student based on his or her individual needs.

Example: Transitional Words and Phrases

Suggestions	Criteria	Strengths
	Transitional Words and Phrases: The writer effectively and consistently uses a variety of transitional strategies to smoothly connect all parts of the argument. The transitions support the organization of the response.	

In the table above, the criterion to be targeted through feedback and revision is “*transitional words and phrases*.” The criterion is outlined in the middle section of the table. The left-hand side of the table provides space for a teacher to provide suggestions for improvement on the targeted criterion—transitional words and phrases. The box on the right-hand side of the table provides space for a teacher to note any strengths in the student’s use of transitional words and phrases. Teachers may choose to leave feedback in both categories or in one category.

Student Sample: Figure 1

...**Likewise**, the approach required for e-sports is similar to the strategy used in conventional sports. , players generally play with a team and are aware of their responsibilities to . video gamers learn to assess their surroundings and responds to other players and actions strategically. , they have to perform these actions the situations during e-sports change rapidly...

Figure 1 contains an excerpt of student writing with the transitional words and phrases highlighted in yellow. Words such as “likewise,” “aforementioned,” “therefore,” and “additionally” link together the writer’s argument and improve the readability of the text. The writer also uses phrases such as “in e-sports” and “even quicker because” to link additional ideas and provide sentence variety.

Example: Providing Suggestions and Noting Strengths

Suggestions	Criteria	Strengths
The word “aforementioned” is a strong term, but is it needed to communicate this idea? Can this be more concise?	Transitional Words and Phrases: The writer effectively and consistently uses a variety of transitional strategies to smoothly connect all parts of the argument. The transitions support the organization of the response.	The ideas are clearly linked and support the claim.

Although the student’s sample shows an effective use of a variety of transitional strategies, there is some room for improvement, as noted in the “suggestions” column. The suggestions are for the student to consider and apply to his or her written work during the revision process.

Steps for Using a Single-Point Rubric

This is a suggested list of steps, not a prescribed list.

1. The argumentative writing criteria for “meeting expectations” are provided within the rubric. These criteria are aligned to the grade-level indicators for ELA.C.1.1, ELA.C.4.1, and ELA.C.5.1. The criteria presented in the single-point rubric are clear, specific, and measurable.
2. Familiarize yourself with the rubric and then introduce it to your students. Ensure that students understand the criteria and that you may choose to focus on one criterion or multiple when assessing their writing.
3. As you assess student writing, check the criteria outlined in the rubric. You may also wish to refer to the additional support provided for each criterion.
4. Provide suggestions for improvement and revision in the left-handed column of the rubric. Use the right-hand column to highlight any areas where the student exceeds expectations.
5. Once you have identified an area(s) of weakness for the student, determine appropriate instructional support to help the student improve his or her writing and meet the expectations of that criterion. The document provides suggestions for each criterion in the rubric.
6. After additional instructional support or remediation, allow the student to revise the written work. Some students may have to revise the work several times, focusing on different criteria with each revision.

Argumentative Elements for 8th Grade and English 1

The following definitions are based on the definitions provided in the *2024 SC CCR ELA Standards* Glossary of Terms. The Glossary applies to K-12 instruction. The language of the following definitions has been adapted to suit 8th-grade ELA and English 1 instruction.

Research

Before a student can write an argumentative response, he or she must investigate a topic or issue, take a stance on it, collect evidence to support their stance, and consider alternative or opposing perspectives on the topic or issue. Refer to the Research grade-level indicators for guidance.

Topic or Issue

A student in Grade 8 through English 1 should thoroughly investigate a topic or issue before taking a stance and writing an argument. In argumentative writing, the student writer should remain on topic or issue from the beginning of the written work to the end of the written work. It is the writer's responsibility to show a thorough understanding of the topic.

Claim

A claim is a statement of what the writer wants to persuade the reader to believe. It is a debatable statement that reasons and evidence can support. The writer's goal in argumentative writing is to prove that his or her claim is the most logical conclusion.

Reasons

Using reasons allows the student writer to explain why he or she believes his or her claim to be valid. Reasoning also allows the writer an opportunity to explain why the evidence he or she provides is relevant to the claim.

Relevant Evidence

A writer uses evidence to support his or her reasons and claim(s). Evidence is fact-based and can be proven or disproven. Specific types of evidence named in the ELA Standards are facts, data, statistics, details, and other information. A student writer may go beyond these types of evidence. In English 1, the indicators begin to examine the quality of the evidence, meaning the student writer should pay careful attention to *how relevant* the evidence is to the topic and the claim.

Acknowledging and Refuting a Counterclaim

A student writer in Grade 8- English 1 is expected to acknowledge at least one counterclaim and refute it. Acknowledging and refuting a counterclaim demonstrates that the student writer has considered all sides of the issue. A counterclaim presents a viewpoint that contrasts with that of the student writer. The refutation of a counterclaim is when the writer finds fault with the opposing viewpoint and provides evidence that invalidates it. For example, the student writer may point out that a counterclaim is based on opinion instead of fact.

Organization

When organizing an argument, the writer should present the topic or issue, followed by the claim. In the body of the written response, the writer should include reasons supported by evidence. The evidence should be supported by reasoning that progresses the argument. The writer should present and refute the counterclaim. The structure of the argument and how the writer presents and refutes a counterclaim are dependent upon the writer's style and may be impacted by the writer's purpose and the intended audience. The concluding section or statement should include a reiteration of the writer's claim.

Transitional Word and Phrases

The purpose of transitional strategies in argumentative writing is to link the topic or issue, claim, reasons, evidence, reasoning, and counterclaim. The transitional strategies selected by the writer support the organization of the argument and the progression of the argument.

Language and Voice

In argumentative writing, the words a writer chooses (diction) and how the writer arranges those words (syntax) impact the argument's effectiveness, emphasize points, and hold the reader's interest. The writer should consider the audience when making decisions about word choice. The writer should also consider the length of the sentences, the use of phrases within sentences, the use of punctuation, and the word order. Diction and syntax impact the writer's style and voice.

Purpose

The writer should convey a sense of purpose. The purpose of an argument is to persuade the reader to believe or feel a certain way. Some arguments may include a call to action.

Grammar and Conventions

For specific information about the grade-level expectations, teachers should refer to ELA.C.4.1.

Citation of Sources

Any time a student writer uses information from source material, he or she should cite the sources. This includes information directly quoted from the source material, facts, data, and ideas. If a writer paraphrases an idea(s) conveyed in the source material, it should be cited.

Argumentative Single-Point Rubric 8th Grade and English 1

Each targeted criterion of 8th grade and English 1 argumentative writing can be addressed singularly or in groups, depending on the instructional focus and the individual student’s strengths and weaknesses.

Suggestions	Criteria	Strengths
	<p>Topic or Issue: The writer displays a thorough understanding of the topic or issue as he or she presents the topic or issue and carries it throughout the written response.</p>	
	<p>Claim: The writer takes a clear position on the topic or issue and makes a defensible claim.</p>	
	<p>Reasoning and Evidence: The writer integrates skillful reasoning and a variety of evidence to enhance the claim and progress the argument.</p>	
	<p>Counterclaim: The writer acknowledges a counterclaim, identifies its fault, and explains why it is insufficient or inferior to the writer’s claim.</p>	
	<p>Transitional Strategies: The writer effectively and consistently uses a variety of transitional strategies to smoothly connect all parts of the argument. The transitions support the organization of the response.</p>	
	<p>Language and Voice: The writer’s use of language enhances the argument, and the word choice is skillful and precise. The writer incorporates a variety of sentence types and phrases to enhance the argument and engage the reader.</p>	
	<p>Grammar and Conventions: The writer uses correct grammar and conventions.</p>	
	<p>Citation of Sources: The writer thoroughly cites source material using an academic style guide as pre-determined by the teacher.</p>	

All excerpts of student writing used in this document are from the EOCEP for English 2 TDW Sampler for Argumentative Writing.

Element: Topic or Issue

Criterion: The writer displays a thorough understanding of the topic or issue as he or she presents the topic or issue and carries it throughout the written response.

Below are some examples of what you may see in student writing as you evaluate for topic or issue.

A student who is on target will

- thoroughly and succinctly introduce a topic or issue.
- provide the reader with a clear overview of the topic or issue.
- remain on topic throughout the written response.
- show an in-depth understanding of the topic, issue, and source material.

A student who needs support may

- mention a topic or issue in vague terms.
- leave the reader with questions about the topic or issue.
- introduce extraneous information that distracts the reader.
- show evidence that he or she does not fully understand the topic, issue, or source.

Student Sample 1

Refer to the English 2 TDW Sampler for the task.

Should video gaming be a sport in High School. People base their careers on video games and competing in e-sports tournaments and can make a ton of money. However, should they be offered as a sport option in High School. In my opinion, yes they should. In the modern day, many people can make tons of money off of just picking up a controller and being good at a game that they already like to play for fun. Games like Fortnite, Rainbow Six Siege, Call of Duty, and Rocket League already have a large fan bases and they also offer tournaments for those that are good enough.

First off, practically anybody can play video games and be good at the game they are playing. Some games like Rainbow Six Siege require critical thinking, teamwork, communication, concentration and knowledge of the map and utilities you have so you can fight effectively. Teaching high schoolers these skills can benefit them in the real world too. Making this a sport would give people that are passionate about their game to put their skills to the test and prepare them for e-sports if they chose to chase that career path. If people can be passionate about football, soccer, baseball and other high school sports why can someone that enjoys playing video games not represent their school by doing something they love. Many athletes start their serious training in high school so that they can play for college and then professionally. I think we should give that option to possible future e-sports players...

think that videogaming for an esports team should be considered a sport. i say this because the only requirement for an activity to be called a sports is for there to be a competition. think about it, every sport has that one fact in common, they all include some kind of competition between 2 or more people. one counterclaim that i have heard in the past is that all sports must involve some kind of physical work. and to that i say, "what about golf?" i say this

Student Sample 1

Refer to the English 2 TDW Sampler for the task.

because in the passage i read, the writer mentions that, even though golf is low labor and not physically difficult, it is still recognized as a sport.

Student Sample 2

Refer to the English 2 TDW Sampler for the task.

I think that vidoegaming for an esports team should be cosidered a sport. i say this because the only requirement for an activity to be called a sports is for there to be a competition. think about it, eveyr sport has that one fact in common, they all include some kind of competition between 2 or more people. one counterclaim that i have heard in the past is that all sports must involve some kind of physical work. and to that i say, "what about golf?" i say this because in the passage i read, the writer mentions that, even though golf is low labor and not physically difficult, it is still recognized as a sport.

Commentary**Element: Topic or Issue****Student 1**

Student 1 introduces the topic, stays on topic throughout the written work, and demonstrates a clear understanding of the topic or issue.

Student 2

Based on what is presented by the second student, he or she believes video gaming should be considered a sport. It is not, however, clear to the reader why video gaming should be considered a sport. In the rest of the response, the student defines what a sport is but never again mentions video gaming.

Considerations for Student 2

Below is a sampling of instructional suggestions for teachers to consider as they support students in argumentative writing. Argumentative writing is a process and should be approached as a sequence of skills. Sequencing writing assignments helps students build a frame of reference as they move from shorter pieces (quick writes, journals, paragraphs) to longer pieces. Students should receive timely feedback as they progress through a sequence of writing assignments. This will better prepare them for a longer written piece. The following considerations are specific to Student 2 and the element of *topic or issue*.

Consideration 1: Does the student fully comprehend the text?

Suggestion: Talk through the text with the student. Ask the student to summarize the text. If the student has missed important points in the text, consider providing the student with guiding questions for him or her to answer while reading the text. These questions should allow the student the opportunity to capture bits of the texts to write his or her argument. In other words, tailor the guiding questions to the task.

Consideration 2: Does the student fully understand the task?

Suggestion: This sample comes from an assigned task. Not all argumentative responses will be tied to a task that identifies the topic or issue and prompts the student with what to write. Either way, if the student cannot verbalize exactly what he or she is being asked to write, the teacher may need to clarify the task for the student. In this instance, it could be highlighting keywords in the task. In other instances, it may be a group or class discussion about the task, and asking students to rewrite the task in their own words.

Consideration 3: Is the student able to apply feedback?

Suggestion: Once the student understands the task and text, provide the student with several examples that show a vague understanding of the topic or task. Ask the student what is missing. Ask the student to rewrite the examples to include the missing information. This can be done in a small group setting or one-on-one.

Consideration 4: How can I support this student with mentor texts?

Suggestion: Provide the student with a short exemplar text. Walk the student through the exemplar, highlighting or marking how the topic or issue is carried throughout the written work. Ask the student to write a response that models the mentor text. Then, ask the student to highlight or mark how the topic or issue is carried throughout the response. This can also be done in small groups or as a whole class.

Element: Claim

Criterion: The writer takes a clear position on the topic or issue and makes a defensible claim.

Below are some examples of what you may see in student writing as you evaluate for *claim*. Students in upper grades are encouraged to make multiple claims in an argument. This is dependent on the purpose of the argument and the length of the written response.

A student who is on target will

- take a clear position on the topic or issue.
- state a defensible claim.
- carry the claim throughout the full written piece.

A student who needs support may

- discuss only the pros and cons of a topic or issue.
- state a claim that is unclear or confusing to the reader.
- states a fact instead of a defensible claim.
- provides only a summary of the topic or issue.
- states an opinion instead of a defensible claim.

Student Sample 1

Refer to the English 2 TDW Sampler for the task.

Video gaming should not be considered a high school sport. The definition of what is considered a sport or not is not really clear. This lack of clarity is why some people question the authenticity of sports like cheer, gymnastics, ice skating, and e-sports. Sports are not just a test of physical exertion, but also challenge somebody’s mental awareness and involve a variety of techniques relating to each sport. Cheer, gymnastics, and ice skating all require these traits and video gaming does not seem to check all these boxes.

One main reason why video gaming **should not be considered a sport** at the high school level is because **it is not like other sports** in any way. Conventional sports are not just for the players but for the spectators as well...

Student Sample 2

Refer to the English 2 TDW Sampler for the task.

In the passage, “Should Video Gaming Be a High School Sport?”, school districts are considering if gaming should be a sport. Schools should add emphasis on sports with physical skills and activities, instead of online games.

Particularly, in sports there is some type of **physical skill**. Making the players **exert or sweat** involves strength and stamina. For instance, “Basketball players, soccer players, and volleyball players.” Many athletes go through extensive training to prepare for these games, including weight lifting, hours of practice, days of hydration, and more. To expand on this point, when people engage in a sport, they must be **mentally** and physically **prepared**. For example, “Golfers walk for hours on the golf course while displaying extreme **concentration**.” This takes a lot of effort, this is why sports are very **time consuming**, Golfers have to have intensive concentration in getting the golf ball in the hole...

Commentary

Criterion: Claim

Student 1

In the excerpt from student 1’s response, the claim (highlighted in yellow), “Video gaming should not be considered a high school sport,” is clearly stated, defensible, and carried throughout the response.

Student 2

In the excerpt from student 2’s response, the claim (highlighted in yellow), “Schools should add emphasis on sports with physical skills and activities, instead of online games,” is unclear to the reader and is not consistently carried throughout the response. While the student’s claim relates to “physical skills and activities,” the student adds additional information in the second paragraph when he or she mentions mental preparation, time consumption, and concentration.

Considerations for Student 2

Below is a sampling of instructional suggestions for teachers to consider as they support students in argumentative writing. Argumentative writing is a process and should be approached as a sequence of skills. Sequencing writing assignments helps students build a frame of reference as they move from shorter pieces (quick writes, journals, paragraphs) to longer pieces. Students should receive timely feedback as they progress through a sequence of writing assignments. This will better prepare them for a longer written piece. The following considerations are specific to Student 2 and the element of *claim*.

Consideration 1: Does the student understand how to write a clear, defensible claim?

Suggestion: Before a student can write an effective argument, he or she must be able to write a clear claim. Using a mentor text with this student may help him or her recognize and evaluate the difference between a clear, defensible claim and a vague, unclear claim. Ask the student to annotate a short argument showing the claim and how the claim is supported throughout the written work. Then ask the student to do the same with his or her written work. Have the student explain the differences between the two works. Ask the student what he or she could change in his or her work to make a stronger claim.

Consideration 2: What if the student needs additional support with writing a claim?

Suggestion: Use explicit instruction to demonstrate writing a strong claim. As you model writing the claim, explain to the student what you are doing and why. Have the student write what you write and annotate what you are saying about your process. Allow the student time to ask clarifying questions. Once the student understands what a claim is and the process of writing one, provide him or her with several different claims, some that are strong and some that are weak. Ask the student to evaluate each claim and explain why it is strong or weak. For the weak claims, ask the student to rewrite it to make it better.

Consideration 3: How can we use mentor texts?

Suggestion: Once the student can write a clear defensible claim, he or she will move on to carrying the claim throughout the written work. Provide the student with a multi-paragraph argument. Ask the student to first highlight or mark the claim and then highlight or mark how the writer carries the claim throughout the text.

Consideration 4: How do we put this together?

Suggestion: Once a student can write a clear, defensible claim and can outline and explain how another writer supports a claim in a multi-paragraph argument, the student is ready to write a full argument. Ask the student to revise and rewrite his or her original argument for the teacher to re-evaluate.

Element: Reasoning and Evidence

Criterion: The writer integrates skillful reasoning and a variety of evidence to enhance the claim and progress the argument.

Below are examples of what you may see in student writing as you evaluate for reasoning and evidence.

A student who is on target will

- provide reasons to support the claim.
- make clear connections between the claim and the reasons.
- use only evidence that is relevant to the claim.
- smoothly integrate the evidence into the written response by providing a combination of direct quotes, paraphrasing, summarizing, and elaborating as appropriate.
- illustrate how the reasons and evidence support the claim.

A student who needs support may

- incorporate seemingly random evidence that is not relevant to the claim.
- not make clear connections between the claim and the reasons.
- not make clear connections between the reasons and the evidence.
- provide mostly a summary without explaining how the reasons and evidence support the claim.
- repeat the same reasons multiple times.
- use the same pieces of evidence multiple times.

Student Sample 1

Refer to the English 2 TDW Sampler for the task.

Should video gaming be a sport in High School. People base their careers on video games and competing in e-sports tournaments and can make a ton of money. However, should they be offered as a sport option in High School. **In my opinion, yes they should. In the modern day, many people can make tons of money off of just picking up a controller and being good at a game that they already like to play for fun. Games like Fortnite, Rainbow Six Siege, Call of Duty, and Rocket League already have a large fan bases and they also offer tournaments for those that are good enough.**

First off, practically anybody can play video games and be good at the game they are playing. **Some games like Rainbow Six Siege require critical thinking, teamwork, communication, concentration and knowledge of the map and utilities you have so you can fight effectively. Teaching high schoolers these skills can benefit them in the real world too. Making this a sport would give people that are passionate about their game to put their skills to the test and prepare them for e-sports if they chose to chase that career path.**

Student Sample 2

Refer to the English 2 TDW Sampler for the task.

Video gaming should be a high school sport. People who play video games require the same skills as people who play basketball or football, except for physical skills. One way it should be a high school sport is it requires a player to make quick decisions. **In the text it states, “Just like athletes playing conventional sports, video gamers know that every good decision they make will help their team and every bad decision has the possibility of harming their team’s chance of winning.”** This shows that whatever decision an e-sport athlete makes, just like a sports athlete, can determine how their team does in the future.

Another way video gaming should be a high school sport is they have to be dedicated to practice just like someone who plays basketball or football. **In the text, “they do, like all successful athletes, have to be dedicated to practicing and making themselves the best they can be.”** This shows that in order for an e-sport athlete to get good at what they are doing they have to actually like what they are doing and get better at it. However, e-sport athletes do not require physical skills like strength and stamina. It could also be very mentally exhausting. **In the text it states, “E-sports do not demand the same level of physical exertion that other sports require.”** Also, **the text states, “Admittedly, engaging in e-sports can be mentally exhausting.”** These show that they might have some of the same similarities, but they are still different from physical sports. Whether video gaming is a high school sport or not it teaches mental and concentration skills.

Commentary

Element: Reasoning and Evidence

Student 1

The writer meets expectations by integrating a mix of paraphrased text, summarized text, and elaborated student thinking (in bold). There is no formulaic approach to the integration of the reasons and evidence. The writer uses reasons and evidence to support the claim and advance his or her argument.

Student 2

Student 2 uses only direct quotes from the text as evidence. The evidence is not integrated into the argument and seems “thrown in” as a requirement. The quotes are presented in a formulaic manner consisting of “in the text...” and “this shows that...”. The student follows a writing formula that does not support argumentative writing.

Considerations for Student 2

Provided below is a sampling of instructional suggestions for teachers to consider as they support students in argumentative writing. Argumentative writing is a process and should be approached as a sequence of skills. Sequencing writing assignments helps students build a frame of reference as they move from shorter pieces (quick writes, journals, paragraphs) to longer pieces. Students should receive timely feedback as they progress through a

sequence of writing assignments. This will better prepare them for a longer written piece. The following considerations are specific to Student 2 and the element of *reasoning and evidence*.

This response shows what can happen if our writing instruction is focused on a formula for the final product instead of instruction *of the process*. In this case, the student needs support in integrating evidence (other than direct quotes) to support a claim and advance an argument. This student also needs support in writing a clear, defensible claim.

Consideration 1: Does the student understand the basic elements of argumentative writing and how they work together?

Suggestion: Create a “claims, reasons, evidence” chart for the student to use. *Claim* could be described as “what do I think?” *Reasons* could be described as “why do I think this?” *Evidence* could be described as “How do I know this?” *Counterclaim* could be described as, “what does the other side think?” Provide the student with slips of paper, each containing one of these elements. Ask the student to sort and place the slips of paper with the correct element. The student may need to engage in this activity multiple times with increasingly complex arguments.

Consideration 2: How can I help students determine which evidence is relevant and which evidence is not?

Suggestion: Provide the student with a claim and slips of paper that include different pieces of evidence. Ask the student to sort the evidence into categories such as “strong,” “weak,” and “not relevant.” Once sorted, the student should be able to explain their categories. If the student is struggling with supporting claims with evidence and reasons, the teacher could provide students with a claim and slips of paper with evidence and reasons, and ask the students to connect which evidence supports which reasons and to explain how.

Consideration 3: How can I use mentor texts to support this skill?

Suggestion: This student could benefit from studying another writer’s craft of directly citing text, paraphrasing text, using phrases from text, and summarizing text effectively. The student should have the opportunity to discuss the craft, why the writer’s use of text evidence is effective, and how this impacts the text. The student should also have the opportunity to compare and contrast a text showing effective integration with a text that does not have effective integration.

Consideration 4: How can I help this student understand what it means to “integrate” evidence?

Suggestion: First, the teacher may want to model how to integrate different types of evidence into a written work. This could begin at the paragraph level. The teacher should explain his or her choices and decisions while deciding which type of evidence to use and demonstrate how to incorporate text without using direct quotes. The student should work along with the teacher and annotate the written work with the teacher’s verbalized thoughts. The student should then have the opportunity to practice this skill with small pieces of text. Repeat this process as necessary.

Element: Counterclaim

Criterion: The writer acknowledges a counterclaim, identifies its fault, and explains why it is insufficient or inferior to the writer’s claim.

Below are some examples of what you may see in student writing as you evaluate for counterclaim.

A student who is on target will

- identify and clearly state a counterclaim that is in opposition to his or her claim.
- address the counterclaim throughout the response.
- refute the counterclaim, explain why it is insufficient or inferior to his or her claim.

A student who needs support may

- neglect to include a counterclaim.
- imply a counterclaim, leaving the reader to infer what it might be
- state a counterclaim with no elaboration.
- present the claim and counterclaim in a compare-and-contrast structure instead of an argumentative structure.

Student Sample 1

Refer to the English 2 TDW Sampler for the task.

Should video gaming be a sport in High School. People base their careers on video games and competing in e-sports tournaments and can make a ton of money. However, should they be offered as a sport option in High School. **In my opinion, yes they should. In the modern day, many people can make tons of money off of just picking up a controller and being good at a game that they already like to play for fun.** Games like Fortnite, Rainbow Six Siege, Call of Duty, and Rocket League already have a large fan bases and they also offer tournaments for those that are good enough...

Many people will disagree with my claim, stating that a sport has to involve physical strain or exertion. Golf is considered a high school sport yet all you must do is walk on the green and swing a club. Some don't even walk when they play, they get into a golfcart and drive on the green. **Some might say that gaming doesn't require skill or a high IQ.** Some gamers have some of the highest IQ's. For example, the game Rainbow Six Siege has an average IQ of I believe 170. As for skill, gamers need critical thinking, teamwork, and need to be quick in the head and be able to function and think properly in tough situations...

Student Sample 2

Refer to the English 2 TDW Sampler for the task.

In the passage, “Should Video Gaming Be a High School Sport?”, school districts are considering if gaming should be a sport. **Schools should add emphasis on sports with physical skills and activities, instead of online games...**

Some people may consider gaming as an official sport because it includes concentration and long hours of practice. However, sports require physical and mental preparation.

Additionally, if gaming was consider a sport than why would we need P.E in schools anymore?

In P.E students have to play basketball and other sports **that do not just require concentration...**

Commentary

Element: Acknowledging and Refuting a Counterclaim

Student 1

Student one makes a clear, defensible claim (paragraph 1, bold). Later in the excerpt, the student acknowledges a counterclaim (paragraph 2, bold) and refutes the counterclaim with evidence (underline).

Student 2

Student two makes a claim (paragraph 1, bold) and a counterclaim (paragraph 2, bold). The student attempts to refute the counterclaim (underline) but then includes elaboration that does not fully connect to the counterclaim (yellow).

Considerations for Student 2

Below is a sampling of instructional suggestions for teachers to consider as they support students in argumentative writing. Argumentative writing is a process and should be approached as a sequence of skills. Sequencing writing assignments helps students build a frame of reference as they move from shorter pieces (quick writes, journals, paragraphs) to longer pieces. Students should receive timely feedback as they progress through a sequence of writing assignments. This will better prepare them for a longer written piece. The following considerations are specific to Student 2 and the element of *counterclaim*.

While the focus of this criterion is to acknowledge and refute a counterclaim, Student 2 does not make a clear, defensible claim. Because the student’s claim is vague, revision may need to begin with writing a clear, defensible claim before moving to the element of counterclaim.

Consideration 1: How can I support this student in writing a claim?

Suggestion: As previously suggested, student 2 does not make a clear claim, which may be why he or she struggles with acknowledging and refuting a counterclaim. The student may need instructional support with writing a claim before revisiting the counterclaim. Providing this student with a mentor text and asking him or her to map the argument through underlining or highlighting may help the student better understand the function of a claim and counterclaim and the relationship between the two. The teacher may also wish to ask guiding questions, such as, “What is the relationship between the claim and counterclaim?”

Consideration 2: How can the student refine writing claims and counterclaims without writing an entire argument?

Suggestion: Once the student has a better understanding of the roles and relationships between claims and counterclaims, an additional mentor text could aid a student in seeing how an author refutes an alternative perspective on a topic or issue and the process of disproving that alternative perspective. The student should have guidance and practice tracing another writer’s refutation in a text. The teacher may wish to ask guiding questions such as, “How does the writer show that his or her claim is better than the alternative perspective?”

Element: Organization

Criterion: The writer skillfully organizes an argument that is unified by the claim. The writer presents a logical progression of ideas that increases the effectiveness of the argument.

Below are some examples of what you may see in student writing as you evaluate for organization.

A student who is on target will

- introduce the topic or issue so that it is clear to the reader.
- present the argument in a way that makes it easy for the reader to determine the claim, reasons, supporting evidence, and counterclaim.
- link together all sections of the response in a way that makes the paper smooth to read
- include a concluding statement or section that reiterates the writer's claim on the topic or issue.

A student who needs support may

- neglect to provide an introduction or introductory statement that is clear to the reader.
- struggle to illustrate the relationships between the argumentative elements in a way that enhances readability.
- not link together sections of the response, which impacts the readability of the response. neglect to include a concluding statement or section.
- include a concluding statement or section that does not reiterate the writer's claim.

Organization is not based on a required number of paragraphs or sentences within a paragraph. Transitional words and phrases play an important part in the structure and organization of a written work. Because of this, one student's response will be used to illustrate organization and transitional strategies.

Element: Transitional Strategies

Criterion: The writer effectively and consistently uses a variety of transitional strategies to smoothly connect all parts of the argument. The transitions support the organization of the response.

Below are some examples of what you may see in student writing as you evaluate for *transitional strategies*.

A student who is on target will

- select and use transitional words and phrases that enhance his or her purpose for writing.
- use transitional strategies to connect elements of the argument and show relationships between elements.
- select and use transitional strategies to support an organizational structure.
- select and use transitional strategies to progress the argument.

A student who needs support will

- use basic transitional words and phrases that seem to be randomly selected without consideration of how they function within the text.
- use transitional words and phrases that do not enhance his or her purpose for writing.
- use transitional words and phrases that do not enhance the structure or organization of the response.
- repeat one or two transitional words or phrases throughout the response.
- use transitions only to order his or her thoughts (first, next, last...)

To support teachers with organization and transitional words and phrases, this sample includes an annotated response to explain how the elements work. In the sample below, the elements are highlighted and color-coded within the student response. The color-coding is for print purposes.

Student Sample 1

Refer to the English 2 TDW Sampler for the task.

What makes a competitor into a sport? The teamwork, strategy, strenuous exercise, or the relentless work ethic? Most people consider video gaming to be a hobby or a club, not a varsity high school sport. However, multiple components of conventional sports and e-sports are similar including the **strategy**, **mental stamina**, and **complexity** of the game. Therefore, video gaming should be considered and played as a high school sport.

Firstly, e-sports can be considered a sport based on the amount of **mental concentration and stamina** required. *Video games are known for their storyline, gameplays, and combinations.* To *memorize and understand* these components, **specific gaming skills are needed to succeed**. In 'Video Gaming Is Not a Sport' the author states that "engaging in e-sports can be **mentally exhausting**". **Due to the high levels of concentration** and stress, **the mental preparedness** and state need to be at their peak to succeed. Additionally, in e-sports tournaments gamers have usually logged many hours with the game and were sufficiently prepared. However, the exhaustion that is felt at the end of an e-sports game was still intense enough to reflect their body language. **So, this mental exhaustion and stamina** is alike to the physical and mental exhaustion assumed by conventional sports. Moreover, multiple components, not only **mental stamina**, are similar to conventional sports.

Likewise, the **strategic analysis** required for e-sports, is similar to the **strategy** used in conventional sports. In e-sports, players generally play with a team and are aware of their responsibility to their aforementioned team. Therefore, video gamers learn to assess their surroundings, and respond to other players and actions **strategically** based on strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, they have to perform these actions even quicker because the situations during e-sports change rapidly (Video Gaming Should Definitely Become a High School Sport). **As there are multiple gameplays, choices, and controls that a video gamer must anticipate and control, the strategies** must be memorized and practiced at a high level. In conventional sports, the **analysis** is similarly done, simply on a field or court rather than with a screen and controller. In summary, during both situations, the tensions are high and the players must be **intelligent or clever enough to recognize opportunities and devise strategy**.

However, many state that video gaming is not worthy of being a high school sport due to **the lack of complexity**. Many compare it to a staring competitor in which an opponent must only not blink before their own opponent. **This is an incorrect assumption, and the complexity of video gaming cannot be discounted** simply because it is played through a different medium. Video games have competition, **but also have complex gameplay and storylines** that require the gamers' full attention and understanding. The controls are also foreign, objects such as keyboards, VR headsets, and many other types of controls. To understand and use these controls efficiently, the gamer must have many hours of practice with the game and controls themselves. Of course, the **mental stamina** and **strategy** are required in addition to the **understanding of the game and controls** themselves. This is similar to the **complexity** of conventional sports which require all of the above. Staring competitors use only the body and concentration, **although they may be difficult, but video gaming is much more complex and requires much more practice than staring competitors**. Video games cannot be

Student Sample 1

Refer to the English 2 TDW Sampler for the task.

unavailable to school students for lack of *complexity*. Which is also the reason that video games and their specific skills should be available to be learned by students.

Video gaming and e-sports should be considered valid sports by high schools, if not for the concentration or strategy, then for the *complexity*. The satisfaction and fatigue at the end of a game is felt by both conventional and video gamers. The skills and equipments are learned and practiced to be an extension of body which cannot be denied to students. Conventional sports and esports both require an immense amount of skill, and are similar in multiple components such as the mental stamina and **strategy** required. Physical exertion should not be the only limiting factor that prevents this school from creating an inclusive sports environment for all athletes, conventional, or e-sports.

Commentary

Elements: Organization and Transitional Strategies

- The student organizes his or her argument by focusing on the topic and supporting the claim throughout the full response (in yellow).
- The student uses a variety of transitional strategies to link the sections of the argument and to connect ideas within the response. The student's use of these strategies makes it easier for the reader to follow the argument (pink).
- The student provides three reasons: strategy (bold), mental stamina (underline), and complexity (italics). These ideas are carried throughout the paper and illustrated with evidence, summary, paraphrasing, and elaboration of ideas. The evidence is seamlessly integrated into the student's response.
- The student presents and refutes a counterclaim (green).
- The concluding section of the response reiterates the student's claim.

Considerations

Consideration 1: Is there a specific number of paragraphs in an argumentative work?

Suggestion: The instruction on how to organize an argumentative work should focus on organizing the elements of the argument (claim, reasons, evidence) before adding transitional words and phrases, elaboration of ideas, and additional stylistic elements. Some students may benefit from writing an outline of their argument to first ensure they have all the elements and that the elements work together.

Consideration 2: How do I teach students to use the “right” transitional words and phrases?

Suggestion: Some students may need explicit instruction to understand what transitions are and how they work. The teacher may want to provide 1-3 sentences on the same topic and ask the student to determine which transitions could be used to link together the sentences. The student may then be asked to explain how his or her choice of transitions functions within that small piece of text.

The student should receive explicit instruction on how each type of transition functions within argumentative writing. For example, transitions such as “this statement supports” and “if...then” are two possible phrases to use when supporting a claim. To support a counterclaim, the student may use “while it may be true that” or “even though”. The focus should be on helping the student understand how the transitions function and should not be on memorizing lists of transitions.

Consideration 3: Can a list of transitions support the student?

Suggestion: Not all transitions are “one size fits all.” How they are used within a written work and the purpose and structure of that written work must be taken into account. Otherwise, the student may just randomly insert transitions that do not enhance or progress the argument. The student must understand how to use transitions to “show a contrast” or “continue a line of thinking” and how that is different from just using basic transitions such as “first,” “second,” and “next”.

Consideration 4: How can mentor texts be used as a support?

Suggestion: Once a student can write a few sentences using appropriate transitional strategies (consideration 2), the student should then have the opportunity to study how other writers successfully use transitions in their writing. This can be done by asking students to read and annotate a mentor text. As the student identifies transitions, he or she should also be able to explain how each transition works.

Consideration 5: How can I better support students in organizing their arguments?

Suggestion: Model writing an argument with your students. Write an argument with them and explain your decisions as you write. Students can write along with you and annotate their work with your explanation. This can serve as a resource when needed.

Transitional words and phrases impact the organization of a response and the writer's style and voice.

Element: Language and Voice

Criterion: The writer’s use of language enhances the argument, and the word choice is skillful and precise. The writer incorporates a variety of sentence types and phrases to enhance the argument and engage the reader.

Below are some examples of what you may see in student writing as you evaluate for language and voice.

A student on target will

- enhance the argument through word choice and use of language.
- strengthen the argument through word choice and use of language.
- enhance the style and voice of the response through word choice and use of language.
- use a variety of sentence types and structures to enhance readability.
- effectively order words and phrases to create a variety and engage the reader.

A student who needs support may

- use the same words and phrases repeatedly.
- write most sentences in one structure or type.
- choose words that are vague or unrelated to the topic or issue.
- use overly complicated language about the topic or issue that distracts the reader.

Student Sample 1

Refer to the English 2 TDW Sampler for the task.

Video gaming should not be considered a high school sport. The definition of what is considered a sport or not is not really clear. This **lack of clarity** is why **some people question the authenticity** of sports like cheer, gymnastics, ice skating, and e-sports. **Sports are not just a test of physical exertion**, but also **challenge somebody’s mental awareness** and involve a variety of techniques relating to each sport. Cheer, gymnastics, and ice skating all require these traits and video gaming does not seem to check all these boxes...

E-sports do not have the same learning effect on the players as conventional sports do. Sports are not just meant to challenge players on their **physicality**, but they offer a wide variety of learning opportunities. They teach players **critical thinking**, teamwork, leadership, discipline, and respect. One of the best parts of sports is after a game **when the two teams exchange high fives** no matter who won or when **both teams take a knee to show respect** for an injured player...

Student Sample 2

Refer to the English 2 TDW Sampler for the task.

When thinking of video gaming, does it appear as a sport, or a fun way to pass time? Sports are used to keep people in shape, to teach responsibility, to show that it takes physical and mental work to perform. Considering video games to be a sport is a **pathway down to a world** that considers anything such as writing an essay or reading a book a sport as well.

To begin, it should be noted that **most things on this world** require concentration to complete a task. Reading requires concentration, driving a car requires concentration, cooking requires concentration, **as well as taking care of a child, or completing a test**. Are highschools around the world turning student babysitters and drivers **into sports** just because its a hard job and it requires concentration? The passage states, “When two people have a staring contest, each competitor needs mental concentration to keep from blinking before the opponent.” As well as **going off to say that in fact**, staring contests are taking place across highschools all around the country, but yet, are still not considered sports and are simply competitive activites that students take part in. Video gaming should just be another high school club.

Commentary

Element: Language and Voice

Student 1

In the excerpt from student 1, we see a variety of sentence types and structures that enhance the readability of the response. The student chooses words (in bold) such as “physicality” that enhance the response and are directly related to the topic. Additionally, the student uses phrases (bold) such as “both teams take a knee” that demonstrate the student’s understanding of the topic and support the claim.

Student 2

While this student meets expectations, there is still room for improvement with some of his or her phrasing and word choice (bold). For example, the use of the phrase “pathway down to a world” is distracting to the reader because it doesn’t clearly communicate the writer’s intended idea.

Considerations for Student 2

Below is a sampling of instructional suggestions for teachers to consider as they support students in argumentative writing. Argumentative writing is a process and should be approached as a sequence of skills. Sequencing writing assignments helps students build a frame of reference as they move from shorter pieces (quick writes, journals, paragraphs) to longer pieces. Students should receive timely feedback as they progress through a sequence of writing assignments. This will better prepare them for a longer written piece.

The following considerations are specific to Student 2 and the element of *language and voice*.

Because this student only needs to make minor adjustments to enhance clarity and style, the teacher may wish to target spelling, grammar, and word choice together.

Consideration 1: How effective might conferencing be for this student?

Suggestion: As you read the excerpt of student writing, you notice the word choice is sometimes not quite right. For example, the phrase “most things on this world” could be tweaked to better communicate the writer’s thoughts. Having a conversation with the student and asking questions such as, “What did you mean to say here?” or “What does it say compared to what you wanted to say?” may be enough to support this writer in making revisions to enhance word choice and style.

Consideration 2: How can I help this student better understand parallel structure?

Suggestion: In the second sentence of paragraph 2, the student writes a list using a parallel list to emphasize all the daily activities that require concentration. The student, however, drops the parallel structure at the end of the sentence, which impedes the flow of the response and causes the reader to pause and reread the sentence. This student may need a short mini-lesson on parallel structure.

Element: Grammar and Conventions

Criterion: The writer uses correct grammar and conventions.

What to Consider While Evaluating Student Writing for Grammar and Mechanics:

Grammar, usage, and mechanics are essential elements of writing. What teachers should consider when choosing one area of focus for a student writer is “what skill is most deficient”? For example, if a student writer displays problems with punctuation and comprehension of a text or task, which is more important to address first? Is it more beneficial for the student writer to have all punctuation in its proper place in a written response that is so vague it’s unclear if the student writer understands the topic? Which of these two scenarios is easier to correct, and which one is more important to correct?

Let’s look at two examples of student writing.

Excerpt of Student Writing	Considerations
<p>yes because a lot of people would love to join the sport and actually try and compete with eachother. a lot of people would be interested in playing it a lot since video games are very popular in this society all over the world.</p>	<p>The first thing we notice is the lack of capitalization of the word, “yes”. Would changing the lowercase “y” to an uppercase “Y” have any impact on this student’s response?</p> <p>The task asks the student to read the passage and use evidence and reasons from the passage to support the response. Is there evidence in this response that the student read the passage? No, there is not. What may have a more positive impact on the student’s response, capitalizing “yes” or reading the passage?</p> <p>Does the student include a claim? How important is including a claim when writing an argument?</p> <p>Do we know if the student understands the task?</p>
<p>Likewise, the strategic analysis required for e-sports, is similar to the strategy used in conventional sports. In e-sports, players generally play with a team and are aware of their responsibility to thir afformentioned team. Therefore, video gamers learn to assess their surroundings, and resond to</p>	<p>In this excerpt, we notice several misspelled words. This student writer also incorporates strong transitional words and phrases, supports his or her claim (not shown in this excerpt), provides reasons and evidence, elaborates with original thought, and uses diction and syntax that</p>

Excerpt of Student Writing	Considerations
<p>other players and actions strategically based on strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, they have to perform these actions even quicker because the situations during e-sports change rapidly (Video Gaming Should Definitely Become a High School Sport). As there are multiple gameplays, choices, and controls that a video gamer must anticipate and control, the strategies must be memorized and practiced at a high level. In conventional sports, the analysis is similarly done, simply on a field or court rather than with a screen and controller. In summary, during both situations, the tensions are high and the players must be intelligent or clever enough to recognize opportunities and devise strategy.</p>	<p>enhance his or her style and voice. In other words, there are very few errors in this excerpt.</p> <p>We can tell by reading this that the student read and understood the text and the task.</p> <p>In this case, it is acceptable to begin with the spelling errors.</p>

Element: Citation of Sources

Criterion: The writer thoroughly cites source material using an academic style guide as pre-determined by the teacher.

Before assigning writing, the teacher should select an appropriate academic style guide for instruction on how to cite sources and avoid plagiarism. Depending on the style guide, students may be required to include an author's last name, page number, the title of the work, and/ or the URL associated with the source. This is a classroom-level decision.

A student who is on target will

- include the source of a direct quotation.
- include the source of any information directly taken from another person or the entity's work.

A student who needs support may

- not include the source of a direct quotation.
- not include the source of any information directly taken from another person or the entity's work.

Element: Citing Sources

- Determine which type of citation style guide to use in the classroom. Use only that format during the school year.
- Provide students with a document that outlines the requirements of the selected style guide and provides examples.
- Model creating in-text citations and a resource page with students. Have students work alongside you so they can implement the format with you. This can also be used as a resource.
- Frequently revisit the style guide and model pieces of it. The less frequently you use the style guide in your classroom, the less students will remember.
- If most students in the class are making the same errors with their citations, reteach it to the entire class.
- Allow them to use their resources as they add citations to their work. The more they see and use the resources, the better they will be at citing sources.
- Teachers of upper grades may choose to expose students to multiple style guides.