

**ISTEP +  
Writing Rubrics  
Grades 6–12**

**Ideas and Content - ISTEP+ Writing Applications Rubrics Grades 6–12****SCORE POINT 6**

A Score Point 6 paper is rare. It fully accomplishes the task in a thorough and insightful manner and has a distinctive quality that sets it apart as an outstanding performance.

**IDEAS AND CONTENT - Does the writing sample fully accomplish the task (e.g., support an opinion, summarize, tell a story, or write an article)?**

**Does it:**

- Present a unifying theme or main idea without going off on tangents?
- Stay completely focused on topic and task?

**IDEAS AND CONTENT - Does the writing sample include thorough, relevant, and complete ideas? Does it:**

- Include in-depth information and exceptional supporting details that are fully developed?
- Fully explore many facets of the topic?

**SCORE POINT 5**

A Score Point 5 paper represents a solid performance. It fully accomplishes the task but lacks the overall level of sophistication and consistency of a Score Point 6 paper.

**IDEAS AND CONTENT - Does the writing sample fully accomplish the task (e.g., support an opinion, summarize, tell a story, or write an article)?**

**Does it:**

- Present a unifying theme or main idea without going off on tangents?
- Stay focused on topic and task?

**IDEAS AND CONTENT - Does the writing sample include many relevant ideas? Does it:**

- Provide in-depth information and more than adequate supporting details that are developed?
- Explore many facets of the topic?

**SCORE POINT 4**

A Score Point 4 paper represents a good performance. It accomplishes the task but generally needs to exhibit more development, better organization, or a more sophisticated writing style to receive a higher score.

**IDEAS AND CONTENT - Does the writing sample accomplish the task (e.g., support an opinion, summarize, tell a story, or write an article)? Does it:**

- Present a unifying theme or main idea? (writing may include minor tangents.)
- Stay mostly focused on topic and task?

**IDEAS AND CONTENT - Does the writing sample include relevant ideas? Does it:**

- Include sufficient information and supporting details? (details may not be fully developed; ideas may be listed.)
- Explore some facets of the topic?

**SCORE POINT 3**

A Score Point 3 paper represents a performance that minimally accomplishes the task. Some elements of development, organization, and writing style are weak.

**IDEAS AND CONTENT - Does the writing sample minimally accomplish the task (e.g., support an opinion, summarize, tell a story, or write an article)? Does it:**

- Attempt a unifying theme or main idea?
- Stay somewhat focused on topic and task?

**IDEAS AND CONTENT - Does the writing sample include some relevant ideas? Does it:**

- Include some information with only a few details or list ideas without supporting details?
- Explore some facets of the topic?

**SCORE POINT 2**

A Score Point 2 paper represents a performance that only partially accomplishes the task. Some responses may exhibit difficulty maintaining a focus. Others may be too brief to provide sufficient development of the topic or evidence of adequate organizational or writing style.

**IDEAS AND CONTENT - Does the writing sample only partially accomplish the task (e.g., support an opinion, summarize, tell a story, or write an article)? Does it:**

- Attempt a main idea?
- Sometimes lose focus or ineffectively display focus?

**IDEAS AND CONTENT - Does the writing sample include few relevant ideas? Does it**

- Include little information and few or no details?
- Explore only one or two facets of the topic?

**SCORE POINT 1**

A Score Point 1 paper represents a performance that fails to accomplish the task. It exhibits considerable difficulty in areas of development, organization, and writing style. The writing is generally either very brief or rambling and repetitive, sometimes resulting in a response that may be difficult to read or comprehend.

**IDEAS AND CONTENT - Does the writing sample fail to accomplish the task (e.g., support an opinion, summarize, tell a story, or write an article)? Is it:**

- Difficult for the reader to discern the main idea?
- Too brief or too repetitive to establish or maintain a focus?

**IDEAS AND CONTENT - Does the writing sample include very few relevant ideas?**

- Does it include little information with few or no details or unrelated details?
- Is it unsuccessful in attempts to explore any facets of the prompt?

**Organization - ISTEP+ Writing Applications Rubrics Grades 6–12****SCORE POINT 6**

**A Score Point 6 paper is rare. It fully accomplishes the task in a thorough and insightful manner and has a distinctive quality that sets it apart as an outstanding performance.**

**ORGANIZATION - Are the ideas in the writing sample organized logically? Does the writing:**

- Present a meaningful, cohesive whole with a beginning, a middle, and an end (i.e., include an inviting introduction and a strong conclusion)?
- Progress in an order that enhances meaning?
- Include smooth transitions between ideas, sentences, and paragraphs to enhance meaning of text (i.e., have a clear connection of ideas and use topic sentences)?

**SCORE POINT 5**

**A Score Point 5 paper represents a solid performance. It fully accomplishes the task but lacks the overall level of sophistication and consistency of a Score Point 6 paper.**

**ORGANIZATION - Are the ideas in the writing sample organized logically? Does the writing:**

- Present a meaningful, cohesive whole with a beginning, a middle, and an end (i.e., include a solid introduction and conclusion)?
- Progress in an order that enhances meaning of text?
- Include smooth transitions (e.g., use topic sentences) between sentences and paragraphs to enhance meaning of text? (writing may have an occasional lapse.)

**SCORE POINT 4**

**A Score Point 4 paper represents a good performance. It accomplishes the task but generally needs to exhibit more development, better organization, or a more sophisticated writing style to receive a higher score.**

**ORGANIZATION - Are the ideas in the writing sample organized logically? Does the writing:**

- Present a meaningful whole with a beginning, a middle, and an end despite an occasional lapse (e.g., a weak introduction or conclusion)?
- Generally progress in an order that enhances meaning of text?
- Include transitions between sentences and paragraphs to enhance meaning of text? (Transitions may be rough, although some topic sentences are included.)

**SCORE POINT 3**

**A Score Point 3 paper represents a performance that minimally accomplishes the task. Some elements of development, organization, and writing style are weak.**

**ORGANIZATION - Is there an attempt to logically organize ideas in the writing sample? Does the writing:**

- Have a beginning, a middle, or an end that may be weak or absent?
- Demonstrate an attempt to progress in an order that enhances meaning? (Progression of text may sometimes be unclear or out of order.)
- Demonstrate an attempt to include transitions? (Are some topic sentences used? Are transitions between sentences and paragraphs weak or absent?)

**SCORE POINT 2**

**A Score Point 2 paper represents a performance that only partially accomplishes the task. Some responses may exhibit difficulty maintaining a focus. Others may be too brief to provide sufficient development of the topic or evidence of adequate organizational or writing style.**

**ORGANIZATION - Is there a minimal attempt to logically organize ideas in the writing sample?**

- Does the writing have only one or two of the three elements: beginning, middle, and end?
- Is the writing sometimes difficult to follow? (Progression of text may be confusing or unclear.)
- Are transitions weak or absent (e.g., few or no topic sentences)?

**SCORE POINT 1**

**A Score Point 1 paper represents a performance that fails to accomplish the task. It exhibits considerable difficulty in areas of development, organization, and writing style. The writing is generally either very brief or rambling and repetitive, sometimes resulting in a response that may be difficult to read or comprehend.**

**ORGANIZATION - Are the ideas in the writing sample organized illogically?**

- Does it have only one or two of the three elements: beginning, middle, or end?
- Is it difficult to follow, with the order possibly difficult to discern?
- Are transitions weak or absent (e.g., without topic sentences)?

## Style - ISTEP+ Writing Applications Rubrics Grades 6–12

## SCORE POINT 6

**A Score Point 6 paper is rare. It fully accomplishes the task in a thorough and insightful manner and has a distinctive quality that sets it apart as an outstanding performance.**

**STYLE - Does the writing sample exhibit exceptional word usage? Does it:**

- Include vocabulary to make explanations detailed and precise, descriptions rich, and actions clear and vivid (e.g., varied word choices, action words, appropriate modifiers, sensory details)?
- Demonstrate control of a challenging vocabulary?

**STYLE - Does the writing sample demonstrate exceptional writing technique?**

- Is the writing exceptionally fluent?
- Does it include varied sentence patterns, including complex sentences?
- Does it demonstrate use of writer's techniques (e.g., literary conventions such as imagery and dialogue and/or literary genres such as humor and suspense)?

## SCORE POINT 5

**A Score Point 5 paper represents a solid performance. It fully accomplishes the task but lacks the overall level of sophistication and consistency of a Score Point 6 paper.**

**STYLE - Does the writing sample exhibit very good word usage? Does it:**

- Include vocabulary to make explanations detailed and precise, descriptions rich, and actions clear and vivid?
- Demonstrate control of vocabulary?

**STYLE - Does the writing sample demonstrate very good writing technique?**

- Is the writing very fluent?
- Does it include varied sentence patterns, including complex sentences?
- Does it demonstrate use of writer's techniques (e.g., literary conventions such as imagery and dialogue and/or literary genres such as humor and suspense)?

## SCORE POINT 4

**A Score Point 4 paper represents a good performance. It accomplishes the task but generally needs to exhibit more development, better organization, or a more sophisticated writing style to receive a higher score.**

**STYLE - Does the writing sample exhibit good word usage? Does it:**

- Include vocabulary that is appropriately chosen with words that clearly convey the writer's meaning?
- Demonstrate control of basic vocabulary?

**STYLE - Does the writing sample demonstrate good writing technique?**

- Is the writing fluent?
- Does it exhibit some varied sentence patterns, including some complex sentences?
- Does it demonstrate an attempt to use writer's techniques (e.g., literary conventions such as imagery and dialogue and/or literary genres such as humor and suspense)?

## SCORE POINT 3

**A Score Point 3 paper represents a performance that minimally accomplishes the task. Some elements of development, organization, and writing style are weak.**

**STYLE - Does the writing sample exhibit ordinary word usage? Does it:**

- Contain basic vocabulary with words that are predictable and common?
- Demonstrate some control of vocabulary?

**STYLE - Does the writing sample demonstrate average writing technique?**

- Is the writing generally fluent?
- Does it contain mostly simple sentences (although there may be an attempt at more varied sentence patterns)?
- Is it generally ordinary and predictable?

## SCORE POINT 2

**A Score Point 2 paper represents a performance that only partially accomplishes the task. Some responses may exhibit difficulty maintaining a focus. Others may be too brief to provide sufficient development of the topic or evidence of adequate organizational or writing style.**

**STYLE - Does the writing sample exhibit minimal word usage? Does it:**

- Contain limited vocabulary? (some words may be used incorrectly.)
- Demonstrate minimal control of vocabulary?

**STYLE - Does the writing sample demonstrate minimal writing technique?**

- Does the writing exhibit some fluency?
- Does it rely mostly on simple sentences?
- Is it often repetitive, predictable, or dull?

## SCORE POINT 1

**A Score Point 1 paper represents a performance that fails to accomplish the task. It exhibits considerable difficulty in areas of development, organization, and writing style. The writing is generally either very brief or rambling and repetitive, sometimes resulting in a response that may be difficult to read or comprehend.**

**STYLE - Does the writing sample exhibit less than minimal word usage? Does it:**

- Contain limited vocabulary, with many words used incorrectly?
- Demonstrate minimal or less than minimal control of vocabulary?

**STYLE - Does the writing sample demonstrate less than minimal writing technique? Does it:**

- Lack fluency?
- Demonstrate problems with sentence patterns?
- Consist of writing that is flat and lifeless?

**Voice - ISTEP+ Writing Applications Rubrics Grades 6–12****SCORE POINT 6**

**A Score Point 6 paper is rare. It fully accomplishes the task in a thorough and insightful manner and has a distinctive quality that sets it apart as an outstanding performance.**

**VOICE - Does the writing sample demonstrate effective adjustment of language and tone to task and reader?**

**Does it:**

- Exhibit appropriate register (e.g., formal, personal, or dialect) to suit task?
- Demonstrate a strong sense of audience?
- Exhibit an original perspective (e.g., authoritative, lively, and/or exciting)?

**SCORE POINT 5**

**A Score Point 5 paper represents a solid performance. It fully accomplishes the task but lacks the overall level of sophistication and consistency of a Score Point 6 paper.**

**VOICE - Does the writing sample demonstrate effective adjustment of language and tone to task and reader?**

**Does it:**

- Exhibit appropriate register (e.g., formal, personal, or dialect) to suit task?
- Demonstrate a sense of audience?
- Exhibit an original perspective (e.g., authoritative, lively, and/or exciting)?

**SCORE POINT 4**

**A Score Point 4 paper represents a good performance. It accomplishes the task but generally needs to exhibit more development, better organization, or a more sophisticated writing style to receive a higher score.**

**VOICE - Does the writing sample demonstrate an attempt to adjust language and tone to task and reader? Does it:**

- Generally exhibit an appropriate register (e.g., formal, personal, or dialect) to suit task? (The writing may occasionally slip out of register.)
- Demonstrate some sense of audience?
- Attempt an original perspective?

**SCORE POINT 3**

**A Score Point 3 paper represents a performance that minimally accomplishes the task. Some elements of development, organization, and writing style are weak.**

**VOICE - Does the writing sample demonstrate an attempt to adjust language and tone to task and reader? Does it:**

- Demonstrate a difficulty in establishing a register (e.g., formal, personal, or dialect)?
- Demonstrate little sense of audience?
- Generally lack an original perspective?

**SCORE POINT 2**

**A Score Point 2 paper represents a performance that only partially accomplishes the task. Some responses may exhibit difficulty maintaining a focus. Others may be too brief to provide sufficient development of the topic or evidence of adequate organizational or writing style.**

**VOICE - Does the writing sample demonstrate language and tone that may be inappropriate to task and reader?**

**Does it:**

- Demonstrate use of a register inappropriate to the task (e.g., slang or dialect in a formal setting)?
- Demonstrate little or no sense of audience?
- Lack an original perspective?

**SCORE POINT 1**

**A Score Point 1 paper represents a performance that fails to accomplish the task. It exhibits considerable difficulty in areas of development, organization, and writing style. The writing is generally either very brief or rambling and**

**repetitive, sometimes resulting in a response that may be difficult to read or comprehend.**

**VOICE - Does the writing sample demonstrate language and tone that may be inappropriate to task and reader?**

**Does it:**

- Demonstrate difficulty in choosing an appropriate register?
- Demonstrate a lack of a sense of audience?
- Lack an original perspective?

## ***ISTEP+* Language Conventions Rubric**

### **Grades 6–12**

<b>Score</b>	<b>Does the writing sample exhibit a good command of language skills?</b>
<b>4</b>	<p>In a Score Point 4 paper, there are no errors that impair the flow of communication. Errors are infrequent and will generally be of the first-draft variety; they have a minor impact on the overall communication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do words have very few or no capitalization errors?</li> <li>• Do sentences have very few or no punctuation errors?</li> <li>• Do words have very few or no spelling errors?</li> <li>• Do sentences have very few or no grammar or word usage errors?</li> <li>• Writing has very few or no paragraphing errors.</li> <li>• Writing has very few or no run-on sentences or sentence fragments.</li> </ul>
<b>Score</b>	<b>Does the writing sample exhibit an adequate command of language skills?</b>
<b>3</b>	<p>In a Score Point 3 paper, errors are occasional but do not impede the flow of communication; the writer's meaning is not seriously obscured by errors in language conventions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do words have occasional capitalization errors?</li> <li>• Do sentences have occasional punctuation errors?</li> <li>• Do words have occasional spelling errors?</li> <li>• Do sentences have occasional grammar or word usage errors?</li> <li>• Writing may have occasional paragraphing errors.</li> <li>• Writing may have run-on sentences or sentence fragments.</li> </ul>
<b>Score</b>	<b>Does the writing sample exhibit a minimal command of language skills?</b>
<b>2</b>	<p>In a Score Point 2 paper, errors are typically frequent and may cause the reader to stop and reread part of the writing. While some aspects of the writing may be more consistently correct than others, the existing errors do impair communication. With a little extra effort on the reader's part, it is still possible to discern most, if not all, of what the writer is trying to communicate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do words have frequent capitalization errors?</li> <li>• Do sentences have frequent punctuation errors?</li> <li>• Do words have frequent spelling errors?</li> <li>• Do sentences have frequent grammar or word usage errors?</li> <li>• Writing may have errors in paragraphing, or paragraphing may be missing.</li> <li>• Writing is likely to have run-on sentences or sentence fragments.</li> </ul>
<b>Score</b>	<b>Does the writing sample exhibit a less than minimal command of language skills?</b>
<b>1</b>	<p>In a Score Point 1 paper, errors are serious and numerous; they often cause the reader to struggle to discern the writer's meaning. Errors are frequently of a wide variety. There may be sections where it is impossible to ascertain what the writer is attempting to communicate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do words have many capitalization errors?</li> <li>• Do sentences have many punctuation errors?</li> <li>• Do words have many spelling errors?</li> <li>• Do sentences have many grammar and word usage errors?</li> <li>• Writing may have errors in paragraphing, or paragraphing may be missing.</li> <li>• Writing is likely to have run-on sentences or sentence fragments.</li> </ul>

NOTE: These rubrics are applied holistically with no element of the rubric intended to supersede any other element. The variety and proportion of errors in relation to the length of the writing sample are considered. A very brief paper, consisting of two or three sentences, may receive no more than 2 score points.

## ***ISTEP+* Writing Applications Overview**

### **Grades 6–12**

<b>Score Level</b>	<b>Ideas and Content</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Style</b>	<b>Voice</b>
	<b>Does the writing sample:</b>	<b>Does the writing sample:</b>	<b>Does the writing sample:</b>	<b>Does the writing sample:</b>
<b>6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fully accomplish the task?</li> <li>Include thorough, relevant, and complete ideas?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize ideas logically?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exhibit exceptional word usage?</li> <li>Demonstrate exceptional writing technique?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate effective adjustment of language and tone to task and reader?</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fully accomplish the task?</li> <li>Include many relevant ideas?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize ideas logically?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exhibit very good word usage?</li> <li>Demonstrate very good writing technique?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate effective adjustment of language and tone to task and reader?</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accomplish the task?</li> <li>Include relevant ideas?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize ideas logically?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exhibit good word usage?</li> <li>Demonstrate good writing technique?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate an attempt to adjust language and tone to task and reader?</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimally accomplish the task?</li> <li>Include some relevant ideas?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exhibit an attempt to organize ideas logically?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exhibit ordinary word usage?</li> <li>Demonstrate average writing technique?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate an attempt to adjust language and tone to task and reader?</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only partially accomplish the task?</li> <li>Include few relevant ideas?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exhibit a minimal attempt to organize ideas logically?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exhibit minimal word usage?</li> <li>Demonstrate minimal writing technique?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate language and tone that may be inappropriate to task and reader?</li> </ul>
<b>1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fail to accomplish the task?</li> <li>Include very few relevant ideas?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize ideas illogically?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exhibit less than minimal word usage?</li> <li>Demonstrate less than minimal writing technique?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate language and tone that may be inappropriate to task and reader?</li> </ul>

NOTE: This chart is only a brief summary of the score points. It is not appropriate to use this summary as the sole tool in scoring student papers. The more in-depth Writing Development Rubric is used for the actual scoring of *ISTEP+* student papers.