

Rubric for Argument Writing—Sixth Grade

	Grade 4 (1 POINT)	1.5 PTS	Grade 5 (2 POINTS)	2.5 PTS	Grade 6 (3 POINTS)	3.5 PTS	Grade 7 (4 POINTS)	SCORE
STRUCTURE								
Overall	The writer made a claim about a topic or a text and tried to support his reasons.	Mid-level	The writer made a claim or thesis on a topic or text, supported it with reasons, and provided a variety of evidence for each reason.	Mid-level	The writer explained the topic/text and staked out a position that can be supported by a variety of trustworthy sources. Each part of the text built her argument, and led to a conclusion.	Mid-level	The writer laid out a well-supported argument and made it clear that this argument is part of a bigger conversation about a topic/text. He acknowledged positions on the topic or text that might disagree with his own position but still showed why his position makes sense.	
Lead	The writer wrote a few sentences to hook her readers, perhaps by asking a question, explaining why the topic mattered, telling a surprising fact, or giving background information. The writer stated her claim.	Mid-level	The writer wrote an introduction that led to a claim or thesis and got his readers to care about his opinion. The writer got his readers to care by not only including a cool fact or jazzy question, but also by telling readers what was significant in or around the topic. The writer worked to find the precise words to state his claim; he let readers know the reasons he would develop later.	Mid-level	The writer wrote an introduction to interest readers and help them understand and care about a topic or text. She thought backward between the piece and the introduction to make sure that the introduction would fit with the whole. Not only did the writer clearly state her claim, she also told her readers how her text would unfold.	Mid-level	The writer interested readers in his argument and helped them to understand the backstory behind it. He gave the backstory in a way that got readers ready to see his point. The writer made it clear to readers what his piece would argue and forecasted the parts of his argument.	
Transitions	The writer used words and phrases to glue parts of his piece together. He used phrases such as <i>for example</i> , <i>another example</i> , <i>one time</i> , and <i>for instance</i> to show when he was shifting from saying reasons to giving evidence and <i>in addition to</i> , <i>also</i> , and <i>another</i> to show when he wanted to make a new point.	Mid-level	The writer used transition words and phrases to connect evidence back to her reasons using phrases such as <i>this shows that . . .</i> The writer helped readers follow her thinking with phrases such as <i>another reason</i> and <i>the most important reason</i> . She used phrases such as <i>consequently</i> and <i>because of</i> to show what happened. The writer used words such as <i>specifically</i> and <i>in particular</i> to be more precise.	Mid-level	The writer used transitions to help readers understand how the different parts of his piece fit together to explain and support his argument. The writer used transitions to help connect claim(s), reasons, and evidence and to imply relationships, such as when material exemplifies, adds to, is similar to, explains, is a result of, or contrasts. The writer used transitions such as <i>for instance</i> , <i>in addition</i> , <i>one reason</i> , <i>furthermore</i> , <i>according to</i> , <i>this evidence suggests</i> , and <i>thus we can say that</i> .	Mid-level	The writer used transitions to link the parts of her argument. The transitions help readers follow from part to part and make it clear when she is stating a claim or counterclaim, giving a reason, or offering or analyzing evidence. These transitions include terms such as <i>the text states</i> , <i>as</i> , <i>this means</i> , <i>another reason</i> , <i>some people may say</i> , <i>but</i> , <i>nevertheless</i> , and <i>on the other hand</i> .	

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STRUCTURE (cont.)								
Ending	The writer wrote an ending for her piece in which she restated and reflected on her claim, perhaps suggesting an action or response based on what she had written.	Mid-level	The writer worked on a conclusion in which he connected back to and highlighted what the text was mainly about, not just the preceding paragraph.	Mid-level	In the conclusion, the writer restated the important points and offered a final insight or implication for readers to consider. The ending strengthened the overall argument.	Mid-level	In his conclusion, the writer reinforced and built on the main point(s) in a way that made the entire text a cohesive whole. The conclusion reiterated how the support for his claim outweighed the counterclaim(s), restated the main points, responded to them, or highlighted their significance.	
Organization	The writer separated sections of information using paragraphs.	Mid-level	The writer grouped information and related ideas into paragraphs. She put the parts of her writing in the order that most suited her purpose and helped her prove her reasons and claim.	Mid-level	The writer organized his argument into sections: he arranged reasons and evidence purposefully, leading readers from one claim or reason to another. The order of the sections and the internal structure of each section made sense.	Mid-level	The writer purposely arranged parts of her piece to suit her purpose and to lead readers from one claim, counterclaim, reason, or piece of evidence to another. The writer used topic sentences, transitions, and formatting (where appropriate) to clarify the structure of the piece and to highlight her main points.	
								TOTAL:

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DEVELOPMENT								
Elaboration*	<p>The writer gave reasons to support her opinion. She chose the reasons to convince her readers.</p> <p>The writer included examples and information to support her reasons, perhaps from a text, her knowledge, or her life.</p>	Mid-level	<p>The writer gave reasons to support his opinion that were parallel and did not overlap. He put them in an order that he thought would be most convincing.</p> <p>The writer included evidence such as facts, examples, quotations, micro-stories, and information to support his claim.</p> <p>The writer discussed and unpacked the way that the evidence went with the claim.</p>	Mid-level	<p>The writer included and arranged a variety of evidence such as facts, quotations, examples, and definitions.</p> <p>The writer used trusted sources and information from experts and gave the sources credit.</p> <p>The writer worked to explain how the reasons and evidence she gave supported her claim(s) and strengthened her argument. To do this the writer referred to earlier parts of her text, summarized background information, raised questions, or highlighted possible implications.</p>	Mid-level	<p>The writer included varied kinds of evidence such as facts, quotations, examples, and definitions. He analyzed or explained the reasons and evidence, showing how they fit with his claim(s) and built his argument.</p> <p>The writer consistently incorporated and cited trustworthy sources.</p> <p>The writer wrote about another possible position or positions—a different claim or claims about this subject—and explained why the evidence for his position outweighed the counterclaim(s).</p> <p>The writer worked to make his argument compelling as well as understandable. He brought out why it mattered and why the audience should care about it.</p>	
Craft*	<p>The writer made deliberate word choices to convince his readers, perhaps by emphasizing or repeating words that would make his readers feel emotions.</p> <p>If it felt right to do so, the writer chose precise details and facts to help make his points and used figurative language to draw the readers into his line of thought.</p> <p>The writer made choices about which evidence was best to include or not include to support his points.</p> <p>The writer used a convincing tone.</p>	Mid-level	<p>The writer made deliberate word choices to have an effect on her readers.</p> <p>The writer reached for the precise phrase, metaphor, or image that would convey her ideas.</p> <p>The writer made choices about how to angle her evidence to support her points.</p> <p>When it seemed right to do so, the writer tried to use a scholarly voice and varied her sentences to create the pace and tone of the different sections of her piece.</p>	Mid-level	<p>The writer chose his words carefully to support his argument and to have an effect on his reader.</p> <p>The writer worked to include concrete details, comparisons, and/or images to convey his ideas, build his argument, and keep his reader engaged.</p> <p>When necessary, the writer explained terms to readers, providing definitions, context clues or parenthetical explanations.</p> <p>The writer made his piece sound serious.</p>	Mid-level	<p>The writer used words purposefully to affect meaning and tone.</p> <p>The writer chose precise words and used metaphors, images, or comparisons to explain what she meant.</p> <p>The writer included domain-specific, technical vocabulary relevant to her argument and audience and defined these when appropriate.</p> <p>The writer used a formal tone, but varied it appropriately to engage the reader.</p>	
								TOTAL:

*Elaboration and Craft are double-weighted categories: Whatever score a student would get in these categories is worth double the amount of points. For example, if a student exceeds expectations in Elaboration, then that student would receive 8 points instead of 4 points. If a student meets standards in Elaboration, then that student would receive 6 points instead of 3 points.

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CONVENTIONS								
Spelling	The writer used what she knew about word families and spelling rules to help her spell and edit. She used the word wall and dictionaries to help her when needed.	Mid-level	The writer used what he knew about word patterns to spell correctly and he used references to help him spell words when needed. The writer made sure to correctly spell words that were important to his topic.	Mid-level	The writer used resources to be sure the words in her writing were spelled correctly, including returning to sources to check spelling.	Mid-level	The writer matched the spelling of technical vocabulary to that found in resources and text evidence. He spelled material in citations correctly.	
Punctuation and Sentence Structure	When writing long, complex sentences, the writer used commas to make them clear and correct. The writer used periods to fix his run-on sentences.	Mid-level	The writer used commas to set off introductory parts of sentences (<i>At this time in history, . . .</i>). The writer used a variety of punctuation to fix any run-on sentences. The writer used punctuation to cite her sources.	Mid-level	The writer used punctuation such as dashes, colons, parentheses, and semicolons to help him include or connect information in some of his sentences. The writer punctuated quotes and citations accurately.	Mid-level	The writer varied her sentence structure, sometimes using simple and sometimes using complex sentence structure. The writer used internal punctuation appropriately within sentences and when citing sources, including commas, dashes, parentheses, colons, and semicolons.	
								TOTAL:

Teachers, we created these rubrics so you will have your own place to pull together scores of student work. You can use these assessments immediately after giving the on-demands and also for self-assessment and setting goals.

Scoring Guide

In each row, circle the descriptor in the column that matches the student work. Scores in the categories of Elaboration and Craft are worth double the point value (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8 instead of 1. 1.5, 2, 2.5, 3, 3.5, or 4).

Total the number of points and then track students' progress by seeing when the total points increase.

Total score: _____

If you want to translate this score into a grade, you can use the provided table to score each student on a scale of 0–4.

Number of Points	Scaled Score
1–11	1
11.5–16.5	1.5
17–22	2
22.5–27.5	2.5
28–33	3
33.5–38.5	3.5
39–44	4