

Practice Prompt #1 for Eighth Grade: Think about a game you enjoy. You have a friend who has never played the game but wants to learn. In a report to your friend, describe the game and explain how it is played. Be sure to explain the rules, the equipment, the number of players, and anything else your friend might need to know to play the game.

Student Sample A

Giselle, a tall young light skinned girl was my friend. And she happened to be over at my house for the day. We had been looking for something to do, when finally we both came up for the idea of a match of solitaire on the computer. Except there was a trouble. Giselle, didn't know the purpose of the game.

Hopefully, I explained the purpose was to gather all cards in order from Ace to King and if you could do it in the least moves possible that would leave you great points in the game. However, there are rules such as get the cards in order and in different colors together mixed diversion. No isles could be left blank if played other wise no new deal can be pulled out.

Equipment you would need in this case is your computer and – friends, If wished. Continuenly Secondly, how to log on to the game. You'd have to press start on the bottem left corner of your screen, as the tab comes up there will be new catagories the correct tab would be games. Later on as that's over with you have a whole new list, of entertainments such as pinball, minesweeper, hearts, solitaire etc.

In this case solitaire would be the correct tab. There will be a box popping up on your computer screen asking which level is wished to play. After you have selected as you wish you can munch snacks hang with your friends and start your game for entertainment and fun.

How would you score this sample?

_____ Idea Development

_____ Organization

_____ Voice

_____ Conventions

What holistic score should it receive?

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Scores and Analytic Annotations for Student Sample A

Holistic Score: 4 (*not passing*)

When we combine both our readers' holistic scores, paper A receives a 4 because it is very weak. It attempts to address the topic with vague explanations. There are serious flaws in organizational structure with confusing transitions. It attempts to involve the audience, but the word choice is often incorrect. There are also many errors in conventions which slow down the reader.

Analytic Scores (with trait-specific annotations): I=2.5 O=2 V=2.5 C=1.5

Ideas: Paper A gives the reader a very general overview of how to play the game of Solitaire with a friend. *"Hopefully, I explained the purpose was together all cards in order from Ace to King and if you could do it in the least moves possible that would leave you great points in the game."* The reader can tell that the supporting information is based upon some personal experience with the game, although inaccurate word choice sometimes interrupts the flow of ideas and confuses the reader. *"However there are rules such as get the cards in order and in different colors together mixed diversion."* The reader also wishes that more information was given on how to play the actual game, rather than how to find the game on the computer.

Organization: Paper A has some troubles with organizational structure. There is an introduction, but it almost seems more fitting for a narrative piece, rather than an expository paper. *"Giselle, a tall young light skinned girl was my friend."* The reader notices that the transition words used in this piece are very confusing and do not do much to move the writing along. *"Continuously secondly, how to log on to the game, you'd have to press start on the bottom left corner of your screen, as the tab comes up there will be new categories the correct tab would be games."* There is a conclusion present, but it does not do much to sum up the main points of the game of Solitaire, and tends to just run on and on. *"After you have selected as you wish you can munch snacks hang with your friends and start your game for entertainment and fun."* This writer could benefit from using an outline and prioritizing which facts about the game are most important to include in the essay.

Voice: This writer is aware of an audience throughout the piece and attempts to make the directions easy to understand. Unfortunately, the author's word choice is weak and often incorrect. *"Later on as that's over with you have a whole new list, of entertainments such as pinball, minesweeper, hearts, solitaire etc."* The author attempts to show enthusiasm for the game, but ends up getting bogged down with the nitty gritty directions, instead of talking about how much fun can be had while playing the game. *"In this case solitaire would be the correct tab. There will be a box popping up on your computer screen asking which level is wished to play."* At times, the paper reads more like an instruction manual, rather than an interesting expository paper.

Conventions: Paper A has many errors in conventions, which tend to overwhelm the reader. There multiple errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar and usage. There are also multiple errors in sentence structure. *"After you have selected as you wish you can munch snacks hang with your friends and start your game for entertainment and fun."* Overall, this paper would need extensive editing in order to be ready for publication.

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Student Sample B

Baseball is often known as “America’s Pass Time.” It is played and enjoyed all over the world. There are many different levels of play. Most start out in Tee-Ball and if you are talented enough, you can make it into the highest stage; the Major Leagues.

First, we’ll cover the basics of the game. Two teams battle each other, each consisting of nine players on a diamond-shaped field. On the defensive side, there is a pitcher, a catcher, a first, second and third baseman, a short stop, left fielder, center and right fielder. Every player has their own area of ground to cover. Depending on the league you’re playing in, the number of innings vary. The Major Leagues play nine. Three outs are in an inning, and each batter gets four balls and three strikes. When hitting, you can do various things depending on the situation you are in. You can bunt: a soft hit just in front of the plate. You can hit a single, double, triple, a home run or even draw a walk. Although those are the positive outcomes. Some negative results are striking out, flying out and grounding out.

Every player on the field wears a uniform, hat and cleats. A fielder uses a glove to make it easier to field the ball. A batter wears a protective helmet and hits with a bat. Major and minor leaguers use wooden bats while lower ages use aluminum. When you are batting, you are trying to rack up runs. You do that by crossing home plate. Everytime you cross home plate safely, it counts as one run. While fielding you try to prevent the hitters from scoring.

Now that I’ve told you a little bit about the tremendous game of baseball, go out and give it a try. If at first you don’t succeed, practice long and hard.

How would you score this sample?

_____ Idea Development

_____ Organization

_____ Voice

_____ Conventions

What holistic score should it receive?

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Scores and Analytic Annotations for Student Sample B

Holistic Score: 9 (passing)

When we combine both our readers' holistic scores, paper B receives a 9 on the Holistic rubric, which makes it a slightly above average example. It adequately focuses and develops ideas in an effective manner and organizes them logically. There is commitment to the topic and effective word choice is used. Few errors in conventions are present, and there are varied sentence structures which contribute to style.

Analytic Scores (with trait-specific annotations): I=4 O=3.5 V=3 C=4

Ideas: Paper B is clear and focused on how to play baseball. The writer provides the reader with plenty of relevant details about the game. *"Two teams battle each other, each consisting of nine players on a diamond-shaped field."* The writer also seems to be writing from personal experience and has a wealth of knowledge to share with the reader. *"When you are hitting, you can do various things depending on the situation you are in. You can bunt: a soft hit just in front of the plate."* The writer's details about the game give the reader important information that people new to the game of baseball could not personally bring to the text.

Organization: This paper is logically organized and easy to follow. The many details about the game of baseball seem to fit where they are placed. The introduction and conclusion are a bit trite, but could be easily personalized during the revision process. *"If at first you don't succeed, practice long and hard."* There are transitions present, but they tend to be a bit obvious. *"First, we'll cover the basics of the game."* Overall, the organizational structure is strong enough to move the reader from point to point without any confusion.

Voice: The voice of this paper is appropriate to the purpose of the paper, but the reader wishes the writer included a bit more enthusiasm about the topic. By adding some vivid verbs and descriptive adjectives, the score for voice would increase. The writer often chooses very basic words to describe the game of baseball, and this causes the paper to sound a bit flat at times. *"Every player on the field wears a uniform, hat and cleats."* The writer could also be instructed about using active voice, rather than passive voice in some areas. *"It is played and enjoyed all over the world."* With just a couple of voice mini lessons, this writer could easily improve this score.

Conventions: This writer has a good grasp of standard eighth grade writing conventions. Capitalization, spelling, internal and external punctuation are mostly correct throughout. The writer even makes attempts to manipulate conventions for stylistic effect. *"Most start out in Tee-Ball and if you are talented enough, you can make it into the highest stage; the Major Leagues."* Although this sentence isn't correctly punctuated, the reader can appreciate the risk the writer was willing to take by trying some advanced punctuation. This writer would just need to do some minor editing in order to get it ready for publication.

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Student Sample C

A game that I enjoy a lot is called soccer tennis. Well that's what I call it. I think it's one of the funnest games. It is good practice for ball control.

How you play this game is actually pretty simple. First you get in teams of at least 2 and maximum is 6. Your also going to need a volley ball net. And of course your going to need a soccer ball. Once you have two teams, one team goes on one side of the net and the other team on the other side. In this game you can use any body part except your hands and arms. To start the game, one person from one of the teams serves it and you serve with your feet only. You can only let the ball bounce once. If it bounces more than once you lose the ball and the other team serves and gets a point.

That is basically how you play soccer tennis. And remember play hard and have fun.

How would you score this sample?

_____ Idea Development

_____ Organization

_____ Voice

_____ Conventions

What holistic score should it receive?

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Scores and Analytic Annotations for Student Sample C

Holistic Score: 6 (*not passing*)

When we combine both our readers' holistic scores, paper C receives a 6 on the Holistic rubric because and is deemed an inadequate paper. The paper focuses on the topic but displays confusing explanations of the game. There is some organization, but it lacks coherence that we would see in a passing paper. Some commitment to the topic is evident; however, the word choice is quite simplistic. There are also consistent violations in sentence structure that slow down the reader.

Analytic Scores (with trait-specific annotations): I=2.5 O=2.5 V=2 C=3

Ideas: Paper C gives very basic details on how to play the game of soccer tennis. *"If it bounces more than once you lose the ball and the other team serves and gets a point."* Because this essay reads at times like a series of unorganized facts, the reader can become easily confused. Some of the terms given are also not explained very well and the reader is left to guess at the meaning. *"It is good practice for ball control."* This writer would need some instruction on how to add more supporting details, as well as how to add definitions for terms their reader may not know.

Organization: The organization of this paper is quite confusing. The author did not seem to have a plan for when and where important details should be placed and the transitions between ideas are virtually nonexistent. There is a very basic introduction, but it doesn't do much to create a strong sense of anticipation for the essay. The conclusion is quite short, and it tries to sum up the paper with one sentence. *"That is basically how you play soccer tennis."* This student could benefit from creating and following an outline of their ideas. Perhaps this could create a better roadmap for readers to follow.

Voice: Paper C contains very little voice. The writer does not show much enthusiasm about the topic throughout the paper. In fact, the only glimmers of voice occur in the first paragraph. *"A game I enjoy a lot is called soccer tennis."* The word choice is also very simple and not very specific. There are no vivid verbs or descriptive adjectives used. This writer could benefit from mini lessons on voice and word choice to help get this score up. The writer would also learn this trait by being exposed to mentor texts by famous authors or even other students who excel at this trait.

Conventions: Paper C is filled with very simple sentences and takes no risks grammatically. Capitalization, spelling and end punctuation are mostly correct. The sentence structure is mostly very simple, but there are also run-on sentences as well. *"If it bounces more than once you lose the ball and the other team serves and gets a point."* These problems are not serious enough to impede meaning, and the reader is able to move through the text fairly easily. Moderate editing would be required to get this piece of writing ready for publication.

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Student Sample D:

Terrific Taboo!

Taboo is a very amusing game. It is great for Birthday parties, family get-togethers, barbecue's, and much more occasions. If you love to laugh and to have an awesome time, you should play this one-of-a-kind game.

First of all, you need at least four people. However if you want more players, it needs to be an even number in order to have pairs. Once you get the players settled it is time to set the game up. Each pair has to be at the opposite end of the table. (so the pairs face each other.) The game includes a buzzer, a sandtimer, and cards.

Secondly, you can start playing. The object of the game is to see which team, or pair, can get the most words, or points. To get points you have to a word that is on the card you pick, without saying it. Although, it is not that easy because while describing the main word, you can't say any other words on the cards. If you do say one of the describing words, you will have to start over on a new card. Plus your non-teammate will buzz you. While doing this you are being timed.

Lastly, I will show you an example. Let's say the word was shoe. Then the describing words were socks, feet, walking, and sandal. This may sound like a weird word game but it is a ton of fun. Just ask anyone who's played!

Taboo is a fun as swimming on a hot sunny day. Will you make memories with your friends and family?

How would you score this sample?

_____ Idea Development

_____ Organization

_____ Voice

_____ Conventions

What holistic score should it receive?

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Scores and Analytic Annotations for Student Sample D

Holistic Score: 8 (passing)

When we combine both our readers' holistic scores, paper D receives an 8, making this a satisfactory piece of writing. It focuses and develops ideas with relevant information and organizes them adequately. There is some commitment to the topic and appropriate word choice is used. There are some errors in conventions, but they do not impeded meaning.

Analytic Scores (with trait-specific annotations): I=3.5 O= 3 V=3.5 C=3.5

Ideas: Paper D is clear and focused on the subject of how to play the game Taboo. The paper includes specific details about game play that shows the writer is writing from experience. *"Although, it is not that easy because while describing the main word, you can't say any other words on the cards."* The writer also includes an example scenario, in paragraph four, which further clarifies how to play the game of Taboo. By including this example, the author anticipates the fact that they reader may have further questions about the game and answers them. This technique would be useful to point out to students who are struggling with this prompt or prompts that are similar.

Organization: Paper D has an organizational structure that works well for the purpose of game play explanation. The introduction tries to grab the reader's interest by describing how fun the game of Taboo is. *"Taboo is a very amusing game."* Transitions are present between paragraphs, but are a bit obvious. (*"First, secondly and lastly"*) The conclusion is present, but a bit trite. *"Taboo is as fun as swimming on a hot sunny day."* The sequencing of ideas is logical and satisfactory enough to move the reader from point to point without any confusion.

Voice: This writer shows both confidence and enthusiasm about the topic. *"If you love to laugh, and to have an awesome time, you should play this one-of-a-kind game."* The writer attempts to choose just the right words to make the writing interesting and informative, but could benefit from a mini lesson on vivid verbs or active voice versus passive voice. *"The game includes a buzzer, a sandtimer, and cards."* The reader notices that most of the words work well, but others can be a bit ordinary. Overall, the voice is appropriate to both the purpose of this piece and the audience.

Conventions: The writer has a good grasp of standard eighth grade writing conventions. The errors that are present are minor ones which could be easily edited by the writer. *"It is great for birthday parties, family get-togethers, barbecue's and much more occasions."* Capitalization, spelling, internal and external punctuation are mostly correct. The small errors that are present do not interfere with meaning, nor do they slow the reader down in any way.

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Student Sample E

Clue

The objective of the game is to find clues and decypher them in order to find the other clues. This will not be an easy. You'll go through pearlous journeys, explore and search everywhere. When I mean everywhere I mean everywhere.

Rules

Rule 1#: You'll be allowed little hints if you're really stuck on a clue (you have to find them on your way to the next clue) hint: little pieces of paper.)

Rule 2#: This game has to be played at night or it will just ruin the fun.

Rule 3#: *NO QUITTING THE GAME*! no body likes a QUITER!

Final Rule: Don't get cought by your parents (while their sleeping and cause a rui).

How would you score this sample?

_____ Idea Development

_____ Organization

_____ Voice

_____ Conventions

What holistic score should it receive?

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Scores and Analytic Annotations for Student Sample E

Holistic Score: 5 (*not passing*)

When we combine both our readers' holistic scores, paper E receives a 5, which means it's not adequate to pass the test. While the writer focuses on the topic, the details given about the game are both inadequate and confusing. The organization is not appropriate for an expository piece, so it lacks logic and coherence. There is inconsistent commitment to the topic and the word choice is simplistic. This paper is also filled with consistent violations in conventions which slow down the reader.

Analytic Scores (with trait-specific annotations): I=1.5 O=1.5 V=2 C=2

Ideas: Paper E is lacking details about the game of Clue. In fact, even after multiple readings, the reader is just not sure what the game actually is. *"The objective of the game is to find clues and decypher them in order to find other clues."* The reader is forced to draw their own conclusions about what the game is and what it entails because the information given is limited and unclear. There are rules given for the game, but they really do nothing to help the reader understand. Perhaps this writer would benefit from seeing strong student models on this same prompt to help guide them on how to improve their own ideas score.

Organization: This paper is the victim of poor organization. There is no introduction or conclusion to guide the reader. In fact, this reads more like an instruction manual rather than a piece of expository writing. *"Rule 1#: you'll be allowed little hints if you're really stuck on a clue."* There are also no transitions to link ideas together. The numbered rules do guide the reader along, but they are far from effective. Some instruction on what good introductions and conclusions look like would perhaps encourage this writer to try some of their own.

Voice: Paper E has glimmers of voice, but they are flattened by the repetitive word choice. *"you'll go through pearloous journeys, explore and search everywhere. when I mean everywhere I mean everywhere."* The reader applauds the choice of the word perilous (*"pearloous"*), but the word *"everywhere"* is repeated three times. Truly, a better word (or words) could have been chosen to make the writer's point. The writer fails to establish a connection with the reader by writing about the game vaguely. *"you'll be allowed little hints if you're really stuck on a clue (you have to find them on your way to the next clue)"* This writer should be encouraged to learn more about the topic. This knowledge would give them more confidence in their writing.

Conventions: This paper is filled with errors in conventions. In fact, the reader will notice that a few words are even missing from the sentences, which adds confusion. *"This will not be an easy."* There are multiple errors in spelling, and punctuation. *"NO QUITTING THE GAME! no body likes Quiter!"* The reader also notices numerous sentence fragments as well. *"hint: little pieces of paper.)"* This paper would need extensive editing to make it ready for publication. This writer could benefit from working closely with a peer editor at first so that he/she does not feel overwhelmed by errors.

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Student Sample F

The game I would introduce to you is called Streetball. It's a simple multiplayer game for 2-10 players. The objective of the game is for each team member to score the same number of points before the enemy team.

The game environment is outdoors and can only be played with a small ball, like a tennis ball, and a hoop; like a basketball hoop, no higher than the average 5'4" slight sholder.

When you score a point, you pass the ball off to the enemy team. While keeping track of your own points, you also need to add up the whole total number of points your team has all together. The team who's won with a lesser total than the losing team, must average out the difference. According to that difference, determands who serves in the next game, the winning team or the opposing team.

When shooting for the basket, you must be at least 5 feet away from the boundry line under the basket. If your feet are not on the ground when you shoot though, the rule doesn't apply.

The ball can be intersepted; that is the only time you can steal. While the ball is within the hands of a player, that player can only take six steps with it before passing. If you go over the number of steps, or a player is wounded, it counts as a fowl and the ball is then withdrawn for a free shot of the wounded team.

There are no outs, no other rules apply. That is streetball. Good luck.

How would you score this sample?

_____ Idea Development

_____ Organization

_____ Voice

_____ Conventions

What holistic score should it receive?

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Scores and Analytic Annotations for Student Sample F

Holistic Score: 6 (*not passing*)

When we combine both our readers' holistic scores, paper F receives a total of 6, which is two points from passing. This paper may be called "one draft away" from passing. It is focused with good conventions, and it has some organization and voice. However, too many questions are left, and the writer's personality often hides. A little extra planning before writing, careful revision with an eye for the audience's concerns, and a bit more editing would have pushed it out of the "inadequate" range.

Analytic Scores (with trait-specific annotations): I = 2 O = 2.5 V = 3 C = 3

Ideas: The author addresses the requirements of the prompt, sharing the rules, equipment, number of players, and several other key details about the game of Streetball. Unfortunately, although a reader might gain insight into many aspects of the game from reading this piece, there are several questions still left in his/her mind. One of the most confusing sections is on keeping score, specifically, "*The team who's won with a lesser total than the losing team, must average out the difference. According to that difference, determines who serves in the next game.*" One is left wondering exactly how this is done. If the author had spent a little more time in planning out his/her ideas or in revising for clarity, he/she might have explained more succinctly or perhaps put in an example to illustrate this point. The description of the hoop height and the explanation of a "*boundry*" line for shooting are similarly unclear. With this type of essay, the audience should walk away with a reasonable guide for playing a new game. There are just too many questions left for this to happen after reading this essay.

Organization: The piece opens with a very straightforward introduction: "*The game I would introduce to you is called Streetball.*" It is generally organized by topic; for example, the second body paragraph is about the game location and equipment, the third covers score-keeping, and the fourth discusses how to score. The supporting details in each paragraph fit there. However, *Streetball* might be clearer if the author had moved the fourth paragraph before the third, to teach someone how to score before discussing how to keep track of points. This sort of organizational decision indicates that the writer did not have a firm plan before writing; indeed, at times it seems that he/she simply began topics and added details as they came to him/her. The author does not use transition words, relying instead on paragraphing to indicate that new topics are beginning. The closing is present, but unsatisfying. It states, "*That is Streetball. Good luck.*" Did the author run out of room? Time? Energy?

Voice: In this essay, the word choice stands out. By choosing phrases like "*enemy team*" over "opponent" or "*wounded team*" when discussing who was fouled, the writer adds an air of importance: this is no ordinary game; it would appear that Streetball has a larger importance. The primary voice weakness may stem from the fact that the author knows so much about Streetball, and thus had a tendency to overload the paper with details, rather than choosing the most important ones to describe. In these sections, the author's personality is lost. Writers must always remember their audience and consider their needs. Doing so would have not only improved the energy of this piece, but would have improved the idea and organization trait scores as well.

Conventions: The conventions in Paper F are satisfactory. Spelling stands out as an area of improvement, especially on a few significant words (*sholder, determands, boundry, intersepted, fowl*). Punctuation is strong and (apart from a comma splice in the last paragraph) there are no run-ons or fragments. Comma use is almost always correct. There are two semicolons; the first (in the second paragraph) is not perfect, but the second, in the fifth paragraph, is excellent: There is not a great deal of variety in the sentences, but that is because the author is mostly using complex sentences and lists. There are very few simple sentences. Because he/she has mastered the basics, this writer might benefit from some instruction in balancing sentence fluency between complex and simple sentences.

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Student Sample G

GLADIATOR

Everyone at one point in their life has played or invented a fun game to play with their friends. Well me, I have a really tiring but extremely fun game to play! I came up with this game with the help of my 2 best friends Brooke and Meghan. We decided to call it; Gladiator!!

To play Gladiator you dont need much equipment. Pretty much all you really need is a long couch and alot of pillows and blankets to pad the ground around the front and back of the couch. But you should probably have a couple bottles of water just in case you may get thirsty! In this game there can be 3 to 5 players. There is really about only 2 main and basic rules to Gladiator. Rule #1: You cant walk around to the back of the couch, you must go over. Rule #2: No punching slapping kicking, or biting aloud!!

So the object of the game is to get over the back of the couch 10 times. But the trick is there will be Guards, your friends, standing on the couch trying to stop you, the Gladiator, from getting over. Deciding whose who you just pick one person to be the Gladiator and the remaining people are the Guards. So the Gladiator stands about 3 ft from the front of the couch and the guards stand on the couch. When the Gladiator says "Go" that person must get over the couch while be attacked by the Guards, pulling, pushing, and dragging you off the couch! Once you get over 10 times you switch up the Gladiator!!

I guess you can say that Gladiator in a way is similar to wrestling. Trying new things is always good. So try playing the challenging game, Gladiator!!

How would you score this sample?

_____ Idea Development

_____ Organization

_____ Voice

_____ Conventions

What holistic score should it receive?

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Scores and Analytic Annotations for Student Sample G

Holistic Score: 9 (passing)

When we combine both our readers' holistic scores, paper G receives a 9 as would be a passing paper. The ideas in this essay are compelling with just the right amount of detail, delivered in the right spots. Voice is also excellent; the writer is committed and engaging (perhaps even a little overly engaging, with all of those exclamation points). It is logically organized but the structure is short of unique. There are some errors in Standard English but the skillful sentence structure almost overshadows them.

Analytic Scores (with trait-specific annotations): I=4.5 O=4 V=4 C=4

Ideas: This author has done a very nice job developing his/her ideas. It is clear that this person is an expert and has thought about all of the details a reader needs to know. A reader could probably read through this and successfully play the game. One of the high points is the third paragraph, in which the writer breaks down exactly what to do and even includes the helpful details about who does what and how to determine roles.

Organization: Paper G is organized with a well-constructed introduction that draws in the reader, states the main point of the essay, and provides some background. The conclusion is not as strong, but it is still inspiring. The author may be ready for some instruction in tying an essay's closing sentences back to its opening. The biggest organizational weakness is this piece's transitions: this writer has transitions, but relies several times on the words *but* and *so* to indicate a topic shift. For example, the second paragraph discusses the game's materials. After describing the couch and floor padding, the author states, "*But you should probably have a couple bottles of water.*" This is an abrupt shift that could have been smoother with a better transition choice. This occurs in the third paragraph as well, where 3 of the sentences begin with *but* or *so*. Of course, these few missteps do not hinder understanding, and the third paragraph does also contain some strong chronological transitions (*when* and *once*) to narrate the progression of the game. These aid understanding of the game overall and improve the reader's ability to follow the writer's thinking.

Voice: Perhaps because the author created the game, he/she is clearly very confident about *Gladiator* and appears to care that the audience learns about it. This confidence and enthusiasm give the piece energy; the reader will inevitably read more quickly, zipping through the details with a clear picture in mind. When the piece concludes with "*So try playing the challenging game, Gladiator!!*" the audience cannot help but feel compelled to do so. The word choice is could be stronger in some parts, as in the introduction, which describes the game as "*extremely fun*," and the second paragraph, which uses the expression "*Pretty much*." The primary focus for improving voice, however, must be the writer's use of exclamation points. Every paragraph ends with two exclamation points, and many of the sentences within the paragraphs end with one. Too many exclamation points tend to take the enthusiasm over the top and might make the writer appear insincere. This is an easily-fixed problem that does not detract too much from the writer's overall voice score.

Conventions: Sentence structure is a strength of this writer. There are multiple sentence constructions, and even some sophisticated parallel constructions: "*a really tiring but extremely fun game*" and "*there will be Guards, your friends, standing on the couch trying to stop you, the Gladiator, from getting over.*" In terms of sentences, the author may just wish to work on compound sentences. While starting with the word "*But*" intentionally can add personality to a piece, this author does it so many times that one wonders if he/she knows about compound sentences. The rest of the conventions (especially spelling and end punctuation) are strong as well, with just a few minor errors that do not hinder understanding. The contractions (*don't* and *can't*) are missing their apostrophes. The writer might need to review homophones; the words *aloud* and *whose* are misused.

Practice Prompt #1 for Eighth Grade: Think about a game you enjoy. You have a friend who has never played the game but wants to learn. In a report to your friend, describe the game and explain how it is played. Be sure to explain the rules, the equipment, the number of players, and anything else your friend might need to know to play the game.

Student Sample H

The game that I absolutely love is volleyball. Volleyball is a fast moving, upbeat sport that consists of 6 players on both sides of the net. You need a volleyball, a net, and plenty of space to move around.

You have 3 very tall people against the net. One of them is the setter and the other 2 are spikers or hitters. In the back row, you have 3 more players. They are bumpers or passers.

The passers pass the ball to the setter so the setter can set it to the hitter to hit it over to the other side of the net. The server has to be in the back row to the left in their rotation. For back row, you need to be squared up and on your toes with your legs bent and your butt down and always be ready for the ball to come back over.

The setter is on the front right side of the net, their job is to get a nice and high set using only their finger tips to get the ball high enough and close enough to the net as they can.

The hitters have to get to the 10 foot line so they can do their approach, left foot, right foot baby jump towards the setter then jump very high, twist your whole body towards the net and slam the ball over to the other side. Hopefully they don't return it so we get the point and get a kill.

You only have 3 tries to get the ball over the net, if it's more than that or you just can't get the ball over the net then it's the other team's ball. Every time your team gets a point, you move 1 rotation spot to the right.

Give volleyball a try. It's a blast!

How would you score this sample?

_____ Idea Development

_____ Organization

_____ Voice

_____ Conventions

What holistic score should it receive?

Practice Prompt #1 for Eighth Grade: Think about a game you enjoy. You have a friend who has never played the game but wants to learn. In a report to your friend, describe the game and explain how it is played. Be sure to explain the rules, the equipment, the number of players, and anything else your friend might need to know to play the game.

Scores and Analytic Annotations for Student Sample H

Holistic Score: 10 (passing)

This is an above-average paper. When we combine both our readers' holistic scores, paper H receives a 10. The author shows a control that a "just passing" paper would lack. The unique and thoughtful structure of the piece provides a frame for very effective and relevant idea development. Energetic and sport-specific word choices demonstrate commitment to audience involvement. This author has solid conventions and is beginning to show his/her individual style.

Analytic Scores (with trait-specific annotations): I = 4 O = 4 V = 4 C = 4

Ideas: The author of Paper H decided to focus on the positions of volleyball: passers, setters, and hitters. In choosing details to describe each position, the writer uses details like "*You have 3 very tall people against the net*" and "*you need to be squared up and on your toes with your legs bent and your butt down*" to help to paint a picture. By the end, the author uses a very sport-specific sentence, one that would not be encountered in, say, a paper on football: "*Every time your team gets a point, you move 1 rotation spot to the right.*" Because the rest of the essay is so well-supported, the reader is prepared to understand some of the jargon of the game of volleyball and may even feel ready to go out and play it.

Organization: This is a very controlled piece, from the opening, when the writer begins with a passionate declaration of love for the game of volleyball, to the closing, when he/she attempts to inspire the reader to "*Give volleyball a try.*" Clearly, the author spent time planning it out. Basically, it is organized by positions. The first body paragraph paints a picture of the positions, and the writer then divides the rest of the body into paragraphs according to these positions. At the end of the body, the author describes how the game works. Choosing to place this paragraph here makes a lot of sense because the reader, having been familiarized with all of the positions and what they do, can easily grasp the new information. The structure facilitates smooth reading and clear understanding of the game.

Voice: In expository writing, students must be aware of audience and find a balance in their use of jargon. Too much will overwhelm the reader, but too little will mean that the reader might not learn anything (or that the writer loses authority). This student seems to have found this balance. As mentioned in the ideas explanation, this essay contains several technical terms from the sport, including *slam*, *set*, and *kill*. These are not overwhelming, however, and the reader feels that the writer is not only an expert on volleyball, but also that he/she cares that the reader become confident and knowledgeable about the sport. Another strength of the piece is the energy. In the fifth paragraph, the author describes the hitters. Although the first sentence of the paragraph is a run-on, it is action-packed and carries the reader into the movement and strategy of the game. If it were edited a bit, it would serve as an excellent model for the type of energy that a reader craves when reading about a sport.

Conventions: Sentence structure is solid in this paper, and there is some variety. For example, the first paragraph has a strong, brief opening sentence, a longer sentence that defines the sport, and a list of materials. Varying the lengths of sentences in this way adds a musicality to the piece. There are a few glaring errors in the piece, such as the misspellings *trys* and *twards* and one long run-on in the fifth paragraph. They do not, however, hinder understanding. The only aspect of the piece that might slow down a reader is that the writer often alternates between first- second- and third-person points of view. These frequent shifts are probably unintentional and can slow down a reader, forcing him/her to read sentences over again in order to understand them. This student might benefit from a lesson on keeping point of view consistent; a little editing would have easily alleviated the problem.

Practice Prompt #1 for Eighth Grade: Think about a game you enjoy. You have a friend who has never played the game but wants to learn. In a report to your friend, describe the game and explain how it is played. Be sure to explain the rules, the equipment, the number of players, and anything else your friend might need to know to play the game.

Student Sample J

You absolutely have to play soccer! There is not one second of the game you'll not enjoy.

Let's start with the basic rules of the game. First of all and most importantly, DO NOT use your hands at anytime with the exception of the goaley. If you touch the ball intentionally there will be a consequence. A second rule is that you can't be positioned in front of the defense players. If this happens the ball is given to the opposing team. A last rule is that you can't knock down players or it will be called and the ball will no longer be yours. If a player is knocked down in the goaley box they will get a penalte.

Next, I'd like to inform you about yellow and red cards. Yellow cards are given for things like knocking down players or hurting one. These cards are given as a warning. If you receive 2 yellow cards you immediately get a red card. Red cards are given for really bad foul play and by receiving one you're banned from the game and you're not replaced.

Lastly, are some extras you need to know. First is that the game is 90 min. long and is split into 2 time periods, 45 min. long and inbetween is a brief half time. The game is monitored by a referee and his assistants.

I hope these rules and explanation has helped you understand this great game. I promise you'll not be disappointed.

How would you score this sample?

_____ Idea Development

_____ Organization

_____ Voice

_____ Conventions

What holistic score should it receive?

Practice Prompt #1 for Eighth Grade: Think about a game you enjoy. You have a friend who has never played the game but wants to learn. In a report to your friend, describe the game and explain how it is played. Be sure to explain the rules, the equipment, the number of players, and anything else your friend might need to know to play the game.

Scores and Analytic Annotations for Student Sample J

Holistic Score: 8 (passing)

When we combine both our readers' holistic scores, this paper receives an 8, making it a passing paper, but it is a low passing paper. The solid conventions, solid structure, relevant idea development, and occasional glimpses of dedication to the topic are strengths. Overall, though, because everything is mostly basic and lacks any degree of risk-taking, it cannot be called anything but "adequate."

Analytic Scores (with trait-specific annotations): I = 3 O = 3 V = 3 C = 3

Ideas: This essay is focused on teaching many details about the game of soccer. Every detail has explanation, and nothing is left unsupported. For example, the second paragraph discusses the basic rules, not using hands, not being in front of the defense, and not knocking down players. Each of these rules is elaborated upon with at least one sentence beginning with the word *If* and explaining the consequence of breaking the rule. The main question that a reader might have after finishing this essay would be, "But how do you play this game?" The positions and objectives (including how to score and win the game) go unmentioned. Despite this big concern, overall the paper is informative about the game.

Organization: Paper J provides a classic example of the five-paragraph essay. It has an introduction, three body paragraphs with transition words, and a conclusion. This student clearly "gets" the basics and should receive instruction in manipulating the structure and improving upon it to produce a more memorable piece. The introduction is actually a strength in terms of organization, with the author passionately commanding the audience to try soccer. The transitions do move the reader through the essay, but they (*Let's start, first of all, second, last, next, lastly*) are unsophisticated. This writer may be ready to attempt more advanced methods of transitioning between ideas. Topic sentences such as in the second paragraph ("*Next, I'd like to inform you about yellow and red cards.*") may seem lazy and can be better done by connecting with the previous paragraph on rules. The conclusion is solid as well, but it does lack some of the fire of the opening. This writer may benefit from a lesson on tying introductions and conclusions together to give a reader a sense of coming full circle.

Voice: The author of this piece definitely seems to be writing from experience with the sport of soccer. This is evident in his/her detailed explanations of the consequences of breaking the rules and comparison between yellow and red cards. Some word choices also contribute to personality, such as *absolutely, exception, and monitored*. In terms of improving this personality, the author should work on carrying the passion of the first paragraph through the entire piece. Although he/she is authoritative, the love of the game is lost throughout the body of the essay.

Conventions: Some commonly-misspelled words, including *exception, immediately, and consequence*, are spelled correctly in this paper. Some soccer jargon (*penalte and goaly*) are misspelled. External punctuation is correct except for one run-on (the sentence about red cards). The biggest area of improvement for this writer is the comma. The writer has mastered commas after transition words / phrases, but besides these instances, there is only one comma in the entire piece. In fact, this author has used a variety of sentences, including compound and complex sentences, that would be more obvious (and actually add some musicality to the paper) if they had proper internal punctuation.

Practice Prompt #1 for Eighth Grade: Think about a game you enjoy. You have a friend who has never played the game but wants to learn. In a report to your friend, describe the game and explain how it is played. Be sure to explain the rules, the equipment, the number of players, and anything else your friend might need to know to play the game.

Student Sample K

“Here” I said, handing my friend a deck of cards. “Wait what’s this game called again?” She asked with a questioning face. “Rapture.” I was going to teach my friend one of my favorite games. So we went and sat down in my living room on the floor “look” I said, taking the cards out of the package, and looking for the two ‘2’'s. When I found all the cards I needed I set them down and told her “listen, in order to play this game you have to get all the cards. And you do that by slaping double’s [like: 2+2] or by slaping sandwiches [like: 2+5+2] but if you put a face card down [king, queen, jack, Ace] the person has to put cards down and try to get another face card but they have limits. King = 3 chances queen = 2, jack = 1, and Ace = 4” She staired at me then nodded “and that’s how you play rapture” I said and smiled. Then we began to play.

How would you score this sample?

_____ Idea Development

_____ Organization

_____ Voice

_____ Conventions

What holistic score should it receive?

Practice Prompt #1 for Eighth Grade: Think about a game you enjoy. You have a friend who has never played the game but wants to learn. In a report to your friend, describe the game and explain how it is played. Be sure to explain the rules, the equipment, the number of players, and anything else your friend might need to know to play the game.

Scores and Analytic Annotations for Student Sample K

Holistic Score: 5 (*not passing*)

This is a low paper, and when we combine both our readers' holistic scores, paper K receives a 5, which puts it three points away from being a passing paper. It has more focus than indicated in the rubric's 2 column and also contains some of the interesting story details that a very weak paper would lack. It further displays commitment to the topic, commitment that would definitely be classified as "inconsistent." The organizational flaws, numerous convention errors, and important unanswered questions keep this paper well out of the passing range.

Analytic Scores (with trait-specific annotations): I = 2.5 O = 2 V = 3 C = 2

Ideas: This paper is focused on the game of Rapture. The author chose to tell a story about teaching the game rather than teaching it in the form of a report, so there are lots of details that "show" what was happening rather than just "telling." For example, when the two players speak, the author shows us how things were said: "*She asked with a questioning face.*" These types of details do help paint a picture in the audience's mind and may even mirror the confusion and eventual clarity that the author hoped readers would feel. Also, instead of simply telling us the name of the game and its materials, the author shows this in telling the story of handing over the cards and informing the friend what they would be doing. Despite this strength, the main point of the paper (the game of Rapture) gets somewhat lost. Choosing to explain the game with dialogue has limitations. The whole gist of the game gets explained in one long run-on sentence (Beginning with "*And you do that by*") that is hard to follow. The writer would have been better off explaining the game in expository-paragraph form or, if he/she really wanted to write a story, perhaps having the friend ask clarifying questions that might occur to the reader, such as "How do you put the cards down? One at a time? At the same time? Do you take turns or go at the same time?" There are several of these questions that go unanswered.

Organization: The choice of a narrative frame makes this interesting to read, but it is ineffective for teaching about the game of Rapture. The author does not spend enough time on what is really important: the playing of the game. The author might work on revising to improve this (Good writers often ask the questions "Where can I jump ahead?" and "Where should I give more information?"). The opening is strong and engaging, beginning in the middle of the action of the lesson on Rapture ("What's this game called again?"). The ending is satisfying insofar as the friend is now confident and they begin to play. Unfortunately, it is not inspiring, since the reader probably lacks this confidence. Because it has a chronological structure, transitions such as *when* and *then* help move the story along. Again, however, there are a few places in the explanation of the game itself that might have benefited from transitions.

Voice: A reader can certainly hear the writer's voice in much of the paper. This is mostly because of the dialogue. This personality gets lost, though, when the writer actually begins teaching the friend how to play the game. There are just so many details and too little space in which to describe the game. If the writer worked on improving the ideas and organization to make sure the game was clear, then the excitement evident in other parts of the paper would hopefully come through in this part as well.

Conventions: Although this essay is understandable, it does not appear to have been edited. There are several periods, commas, and capital letters missing with some parts of the dialogue but present in others. One might conclude that the writer knows the rules but, in rushing to complete the assignment, did not spend time carefully applying his/her knowledge. The writer really needs lessons on dividing paragraphs, both for dialogue and when shifting topics. Other mistakes include apostrophes (one missing and one used incorrectly), spelling (*sandwiches*, *slaping*, *staired*) and inconsistent capitalization (sometimes Rapture is capitalized, other times it isn't). These are all messy mistakes that might have been caught with careful proofreading. Of course the biggest convention mistake--one that, had it been corrected, might have improved the other three traits' scores--is that run-on about playing the game.