

Practice Prompt #1 for fifth grade: Think about a time when something special or unusual happened at school. It could be a time when something unexpected happened in your classroom. Or it could be any event at school that you remember well. Write about what happened and why it was special or unusual.

Student Sample A:

One day Justin painted his face green. It all started after looking at the possibility chart Justin got out a green marker and drew a line between his nose and his mouth. Then he tried to rub it off with his spit and it got worse! Then he drew a circle around his eye and thought it was funny. After that he tried to rub it off with his spit again but, it smeared it all over his face. Mrs. Jefferson then asked what was so funny and everyone yelled "Justin's face"!

After Justin got in trouble he drew a circle around his mouth and a line below his mouth. He got in more trouble he had to go to the boys bathroom and wash the green circles and green lines off his face. He had to move to the back of the room. Mrs. Jefferson was mad at him for the rest of the day. After school he had to stay and call his parents and tell them all the bad things he did that day. The next day we came to school him and three other people were not in a group. That is an unusual day!

How would you score this sample:

_____ Idea Development

_____ Organization

_____ Voice

_____ Conventions

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Scorer Annotations for Sample A:

Scores: I=3 O=3 V=3 C=3

Ideas

The paper is clearly focused on the day Justin painted his face green. There is good detail on how he painted his face green in the first paragraph. *“Justin got out a green marker and drew a line between his nose and his mouth. Then he tried to rub it off with his spit...”* The detail however becomes much more general and sketchy in the second paragraph where Justin gets in trouble. While the beginning of this paper is quite original, by the end it becomes very predictable as the paper moves the reader to the next day.

Organization

The reader can easily follow the progression of events as Justin paints his face and then suffers the consequences. The introduction is intriguing. The reader wants to know the rest of the story about Justin painting his face green, but the conclusion that takes the reader to the next day does not leave the reader with a satisfying conclusion. The transitions, particularly *“then”* and *“after”* work, but they are used too often to be effective. The paper jumps to the next day at the end with a statement about groups that doesn't make any sense in terms of the rest of the paper.

Voice

The first paragraph shows the writer is engaged in Justin's face painting; the word choice reveals the writer's fascination as Justin paints his face and smears it with his spit. However, the word choice in the second paragraph becomes much more general and the voice all but disappears by the time the writer takes the reader to the next day. The revealing aspects of the first paragraph retreat to a distance as Justin faces punishment for painting his face.

Conventions

The writer has reasonable control over basic conventions. The sentences are structured correctly, but they are simple sentences: *“One day Justin painted his face green.”* Some sentences vary in length, but remain basically simple. End punctuation is correct, but internal punctuation is often missing: *“He got in more troble he had to go to the boys bathroom. . .”* Most words are spelled correctly, but words like *“troble”* stand out.

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Student Sample B:

Once, our 5th grade had a field trip. We were going to the University of Nevada, Reno, to do reasearch. The teachers were also going to give our class a tour. I woke up early in the morning to get ready quick. My mom drove me to school and I went to class.

Our class was all ready and we went in the bus. When we got there, we lined up and went inside. It was huge! We did our reasearch once we got to the library, but they canceled our tour because our guide got sick. I was really angry! This was going to be a special field trip!

We got on the bus and went back to the school. The day went through, but, at the last hour of school, our teacher let us play for one whole hour! We played capture the flag and kickball, and then we had a water fight! Our teacher told us that we will take the tour next Monday, to! When school went out, I ran home and told my mom about my day!

How would you score this sample:

_____ Idea Development

_____ Organization

_____ Voice

_____ Conventions

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Scorer Annotations for Sample B:

Scores: I=3 O=3 V=3 C=3

Ideas

This paper is focused on the day the class took a field trip to UNR. However, when the students return to the school, the writing becomes more general and predictable. There is some detail, but in the library, it is general. The detail actually picks up as they return to school where they play *capture the flag*, *kickball* and have a water fight. But for all the detail after they leave the library, the paper leaves the reader asking questions like “what sort of research were they doing?”

Organization

The paper is written in chronological order and does not confuse the reader. While the writer has an introduction—the fieldtrip to UNR—and conclusion—*I ran home to tell my mom about my day*—neither are very strong. The paper stops at the end of the day rather than leaving the reader with a real conclusion. The only transition used is “when,” and it is used twice. The paper would benefit from some effective transitions to guide the reader through the piece.

Voice

The reader can believe this writer was disappointed when the tour did not occur and yet excited to get to play games back at school. The excessive use of exclamation marks does not enhance voice and in fact detracts from it. The word choice, except when describing the games, is very general. The writer says he’s angry, but the leap to returning to the bus becomes very vague in terms of the author’s attitude. The reader has a sense of this writer and his experience, but the overall effect is to keep the reader somewhat distanced.

Conventions

This writer has a grasp of basic conventions. Words, though not difficult, are spelled correctly with the exception of “to” for “too.” The paper is paragraphed accurately and actually helps the organization. End punctuation is correct, but there are numerous places where internal punctuation is missing. For example: *My mom drove me to school and I went to class*. Again, the excessive use of exclamation points does not contribute to voice or conventions. The paper shifts verb tenses, using “will” rather than “would” which detracts from organization as well as conventions. The writer does use some sentence variety, but sentences are largely predictable.

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Student Sample C:

The fun razor

It was a Saturday morning. Washington ES was having a fundraiser. Of course we went.

There were bounce houses, raffle tickets, knock down as many pumpkins as you can, bounce slides and I think bingo. Oh yeah did I forget about the food! There was hotdogs/hamburgers. Yummy! But we would go home when we would all run out of raffle tickets. when we did we would go meet up by the car. But I had a lot of money in my pocket so I could simply get more raffle tickets when I run out.

But first of all I would go and eat a hamburger. Then I would go to the bounce houses.

Finally I would go to the haunted house. It had a coffin where my friend was hiding and popped out whenever someone came. But then I would go check in. So I wouldn't get in trouble. So I went to go grab a soda. Then I went to go to the bounce slides. And I raced my friends to the slides but then I was out of raffle tickets. So I went to wait at the car.

When we were about to leave. We discussed how our day was. We all had a great day. I wish we could stay longer. We left with fun on our sides.

How would you score this sample:

_____ Idea Development

_____ Organization

_____ Voice

_____ Conventions

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Scorer Annotations for Sample C:

Scores: I=2.5 O=2 V=3 C=2.5

Ideas

This paper is confined to a Saturday at school when there is a fundraiser. The paper discusses what the author did. To this extent, the paper is focused. However, the paper has very little focus after that. There is a lot of concrete detail—eating the hamburger, the haunted house complete with coffin, the bounce slides—but the detail isn't focused and therefore cannot contribute to a central theme or idea.

Organization

The weakest aspect of this paper is organization. While the frame of the story, the beginning of the day at Washington and leaving at the end, makes sense, all of the events detailed during the day are random and confusing. The paper goes from raffle tickets to hamburgers to bounce house to haunted house back to bounce houses and raffle tickets. There are transitions (then, so, when), but they don't help clarify the sequence of events. The introduction establishes the setting, Saturday at Washington, but the conclusion is confusing: *We left with fun on our sides*. What does that mean exactly?

Voice

The voice is one of the stronger aspects of this paper. The reader senses that the writer really enjoyed his day at the fund raiser. The level of detail as in the haunted house where his friend pops out of a coffin is effective, but the writer leaves the image too abruptly; the reader can't sense his reaction to the experience. The randomness of the details hides the writer's overall reaction to the day. The writer does have some effective word choice: *I could simply get more raffle tickets when I run out*.

Conventions

From the spelling of the title, *The funrazor*, for Fund Raiser to *We left with fun on our sides*, this paper has problems with conventions. The writer has some sense of sentence, and most words are spelled correctly so the reader does not have to decode. However, the errors are numerous and detract from the message of the paper. The sentences that are correct are very simplistic: *It was a Saturday morning. Washington was having a fundraiser. Of course we went.* There are also sentence fragments: *So I wouldn't get in trouble. When we were about to leave.* The writer also uses the verb form "would go" many times when he wants the simple past tense—*But first I would go and eat a hamburger*—rather than I ate a hamburger. This verb tense issue also detracts from organization.

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Student Sample D:

In 2nd grade i found a die bird. I was most inproved reader i saw a Fox. I noo wasgna a boy techer in 3th grade. We went to a lake were there was ducks and Fish. I got to eat in the class I found a dog in the school. I saw a family of bees in 2nd grade i got bike wen school wa over. We got a party We won the ice crame party. I got 20 Dollis I gfound a bird and gave it back its family. I got a dog but it run away from home. I saw a cat in the school a dog got in the Luch room. I got an A+ on my Homework i was a top 5. We went swmning i got 50 Dollris from my Ancia. I won in my frist Game. I was most improved Stubint of the moth we had a truter for a pet I got to go to the Zoo. We won the pizza party. I got a nice mom. I saw a Hen. I saw a dog come after as wen we went for resis. I got my frist frog wen school was over. I saw a Leser in the school. I got 50 dollis I saw a move in the class. I got the best techer in 2nd She was the best techer in the howle Wid School.

How would you score this sample:

_____ Idea Development

_____ Organization

_____ Voice

_____ Conventions

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Scorer Annotations for Sample D:

Scores: I=2 O=1 V=1.5 C=1

Ideas

This paper has many ideas (more than 20), most of which seem to revolve around school and the second grade. Unfortunately, none of the ideas are developed in a meaningful way. The result is no sense of direction. For example there are numerous references to “birds” and “dogs,” but there is no indication that these incidents are related. The fact that there are details keeps this paper above a 1, but the lack of focus and randomness of the ideas keep it well below a 3.

Organization

The ideas are strung together randomly and haphazardly. The writer goes from finding a dead bird to being the most improved reader to going to a lake, and that is just the first three lines. The rest of the paper is the same. There are no transitions in this paper that might help the reader see how these ideas relate to the writer. There is no lead—*In the 2nd grade i found a die bird*—that previews, nor a conclusion that summarizes—*She was the best teacher in the howle wid school*.

Voice

Because there is no coherent meaning and no topic, it is impossible to understand the writer’s commitment to that topic. The reader does get a sense that the 2nd grade and the 2nd grade teacher were important to the writer because those references are repeated, but that is not enough to establish voice. Because the paper is a list of random events, there are no highs or lows in this paper.

Conventions

The lack of conventions in this paper makes it difficult to read. There are some sentences—*We won the pizza party. I got a nice mom.*—but the majority of thoughts are strung together with no end punctuation. It is hard to know if the writer has a concept of sentence. Capitalization is generally correct, but spelling errors are frequent enough to cause confusion: “die” for “dead” “Ancle” for “Uncle” “wen” for “when” and “dollis” for “dollars” to name only a few. Grammar errors impede meaning: *I got an A+ on my homework was a top 5.*

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Student Sample E:

In my old school we went to a fiultrip. It was about in the old pass it was fun because you can see a move about the pass it about houe they find gold. We went to the Stor and we but stuf like candy and toys. It toks about in Chinis to and houe thay calit stufe. In the indige we want home I side I don't want to go home.

How would you score this sample:

_____ Idea Development

_____ Organization

_____ Voice

_____ Conventions

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Scorer Annotations for Sample E

Scores: I=2 O=1 V=1.5 C=1

Ideas

This paper focuses on a field trip where they learn about gold, buy candy in and store, and learn about how Chinese collect stuff. (This is if the word “chinis” is in fact Chinese.) At the end, the writer doesn’t want to return home. There is a germ of an idea in this paper, but the paper is not developed beyond four simple statements. The details are so limited it is difficult to see any one incident as important.

Organization

The four events mentioned above may be sequenced in chronological order, but because there are no transitions, it’s hard to tell. The lack of transitions in this paper also makes the sentences read more like random thoughts. The paper begins and ends, but the beginning is not an introduction and while the end is evident, it is not really a conclusion.

Voice

There is very little voice in this paper because of the lack of detail that might reflect the writer’s attitude. The word choice is very simplistic and does not contribute to the writer’s involvement in the subject. The reader can infer that the writer enjoyed the experience because she does not want to go home, but that is only conjecture not supported by the text.

Conventions

The conventions in this paper make it difficult to read. The misspelling, even on high frequency words, is frequent and largely phonetic. “Failtrip” for “field trip” and “indige” for “end” are a couple examples. The writer is only beginning to develop a sense of sentence. The first sentence is correct—*In my old school we went on a field trip.* However, the next three sentences are run together as one, starting with *It was about the old pass* and ending with *they find gold.* Finally as mentioned above, one of the few ideas involves “chinis.” While it maybe Chinese, the lack of capitalization and spelling make it unclear.

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Student Sample F:

My Science teacher Mr. Jefferson told me to come to room A11. After school I entered room A11 that was freezing cold by the way. Mr. Jefferson was wearing glasses that turned black with the sun. The room had groups of desks, and each desk had a name tag at the top right corner.

Mr. Jefferson grabbed a light blue jar that seemed to have two vicious eyes that stared into your eyes. He walked steadily and silently across the room. He started speaking but I could't hear him because my heart was pounding like crazy. He stopped and I gasped. I started sweating so hard that it seemed someone dropped a bucket of water on my face.

He walked up to a gray garbage can and dark dust came out. Part of me wanted start running but the other wanted to read what the label said "ASHES of Bad Students". Now every single part of me wanted start running. After what you've read I dare you to go to classroom A11

How would you score this sample:

_____ Idea Development

_____ Organization

_____ Voice

_____ Conventions

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Scorer Annotations for Sample F:

Scores: I=4 O=4 V=4 C=4

Ideas

The strength of this paper is the level of detail the author brings to this event. The reader feels the suspense in these details as the teacher *walked steadily and silently across and room and walked up to a gray garbage can and dark dust came out*. There is some detail, however, that does not contribute to the main ideas like the *glasses that turn black with the sun*. The paper not only focuses on the teacher, but describes well the writer's fear: *heart pounding, sweat dripping*. The event itself is very limited, but in the hands of the writer, it becomes a full-blown story. The *ASHES of Bad Students* becomes an effective climax.

Organization

This writer knows how to build suspense by the pacing of the events and details in the paper. The paper flows chronologically and is fairly clear even without many transitions. While the introduction is not unique, the conclusion, where the writer dares the reader to go to room A11, is a fitting conclusion for the piece. The progression towards the ashes of bad students is very well controlled.

Voice

The level of detail gives this paper the ring of conviction. The writer effectively shares the fright he feels going into room A11. The word choice is strong in this paper especially with such strong verbs as "*grabbed*" and "*grasped*" and images such as "*vicious eyes*." The writer might be trying too hard for effect which keeps this paper in the 4 rather than the 5 range.

Conventions

The grammar and usage in this paper are largely correct. The spelling is correct even though there are few challenging words in the piece. Sentences are correct, but many tend to be very simplistic—*He stopped and gasped*. There is some sentence variety, however. The end punctuation is correct, and there are some sentences with correct internal punctuation, though a couple of sentences are missing internal punctuation.

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Student Sample G:

The Talent Show

When I woke up that morning I didn't have a clue that the day was going to have a surprise. That day we did the usual, learn, Yeesh! Then at the end of the day it came a note that said "Talent Show, if you have a talent come and give it a try," and I forgot the rest.

So that day after school my two friends Bob and Cathy and I Gerard got together to decide on what to do. Bob suggested to play a song, "No" I said "besides I'm the only one who has an instrument!" "Yeah," they both said. So why don't we do comedy?" I suggested, "Yeah!" we all said.

So we rehearsed our jokes, and at the tryouts we didn't do well, we had lame jokes, bad punch lines, and AAArggh! So my friends and I came up with new jokes and got better, in case we made it which we didn't think we would, but 3 days later we got a note saying we made it in, at that time I was speechless from excitement.

So I made an outfit, read joke books, and practiced and practiced. Then it was time for the talent show. I did a funny dance told jokes and made faces at my dad. Sometimes I would run around the stage like a Maniac, fall down and pretend like I didn't know what was happening. So let me tell ya I cracked up a bunch of people. So I took a bow said "Well that's all folks I'll be here Wait yeah oh no I won't be here," "Bye." Then walked off the stage with a big ol' smile on my face thinking, Well I did it.

The End!

How would you score this sample:

_____ Idea Development

_____ Organization

_____ Voice

_____ Conventions

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Scorer Annotations for Sample G:

Scores: I=4.5 O=3.5 V=5 C=4

Ideas

The ideas in this paper are fresh and reflect the writer's experience leading up to and during the talent show. The writer offers excellent details—*We had some lame jokes and bad punch lines and Sometimes I would run around the stage like a maniac, fall down and pretend like I didn't know what was happening.* The reader can visualize this performance. The writer develops the topic with a good balance of dialogue, detail and summation. There is no doubt in the reader's mind that the writer was in this talent show and enjoyed every minute of it.

Organization

The paper has an effective chronological sequence. It does have transitions, though there is too much reliance on words like "so" (used 6 times) and "then." The introduction serves to engage the reader who wonders what the surprise might be. The conclusion is present but somewhat predictable. The paper's progression of ideas works well with the exception of the jump between making the talent show and the actual time of the talent show.

Voice

Voice is the strongest trait in this paper. The writer establishes the voice almost immediately with the line: *That day we did the usual, learn, Yeesh!* The dialogue also contributes to voice, and his monologue during the talent show gives the reader a good picture of this writer: *Well that's all folks. I'll be here yeah oh no I won't be here, BYE.*

The level of detail and the word choice leave no doubt in the reader's mind that the writer thoroughly enjoyed this experience—*Then I walked off the stage with a big ol' smile on my face.*—captures the experience beautifully.

Conventions

The writer has an adequate grasp of conventions. Most of the punctuation is correct, and even though the dialogue is not paragraphed, the constraint of space on the answer sheet makes this a forgivable error, especially since the reader can follow the dialogue as is. There are a variety of sentences, but some, while correct, are long and awkward: *So my friends and I came up with new jokes and got better, in case we made it which we didn't think we would, but 3 days later we got a note saying we made it.* Spelling is generally correct, and the author manipulates capitalization for effect.