

PROCEDURES FOR SCORING WRITING SAMPLES
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA – RIPM GRANT (*OCT. 4, 2005 UPDATE)

1. Using your cardboard word guide, look at each word, moving vertically through the text without looking at the context of the story, and put a box around any words that are illegible (i.e., cannot be deciphered as an English word). Count the total number of illegible words (**ILW**).
2. Read the entire sample before proceeding with scoring.
3. Mark in red where the student has made a slash to indicate time; passage copying will not have any slash marks (grades 2-5 should have ONE slash mark per writing sample; grade 7 should have two).
4. Count the total number of words written (**WW**).
5. **For writing prompts:** Place a vertical line at the place where each sentence should end; you may have to judge where the sentence should end. **For passage copying,** place a vertical line where there *should* be punctuation according to the original (including commas).
6. Underline incorrect words in red (words that are spelled incorrectly or that are grammatically incorrect or used incorrectly). For passage copying, underline words that don't match the assigned passage. A skipped word in passage copying is considered an incorrect word; place a red line where the word *should* be.

**10/4/05 update: for passage copying, underline as incorrect any words that should have been capitalized but were not. For example, if the first word in a sentence was not capitalized, it would be considered an incorrect word for passage copying and should be underlined.*
7. Count the total number of incorrect words (**IW**).
8. *Determine the number of incorrect letter sequences. For each incorrectly spelled word, use the carat method to score letter sequences. Place a carat (in pencil) above two letters if correct for the spelling of the word that was intended in the sentence. Place a carat below the two letters if incorrect. Include the spaces before and after the word as sequences (for example, the word "expeshially" has 12 letter sequences and should be scored: $\hat{e} \vee x \vee p \hat{e} \vee s \vee h \vee i \hat{a} \wedge l \wedge l \wedge y \wedge$; it has 5 incorrect letter sequences).*
9. *Count the total number of letter sequences (LS) (including spaces before and after words and around periods) and the number of incorrect letter sequences (ILS).*
10. Score the passage for correct and incorrect word sequences using the following definition developed by Videen, Deno, & Marston, 1982:
 - a. A correct word sequence is one that contains any two adjacent, correctly spelled words that are acceptable within the context of the sample to a native speaker of the English language.
 - b. The term "acceptable" means that a native speaker would judge the word sequences as syntactically and semantically correct.
11. Use the carat method for scoring. Place a carat above two words if it represents a correct word sequence, and below the words if it represents an incorrect sequence. Score incorrect sequences first using a red pencil below the line. Count incorrect sequences (**IWS**). Then score correct sequences (**CWS**) with a blue pencil above the line. Count correct sequences.
12. Score a correct word sequence at the beginning of the sentence if the first word is capitalized and the word is spelled correctly. Score a correct sequence at the end of the sentence if the last word is spelled correctly, and the student uses correct end punctuation.

RULES FOR SCORING CORRECT WORD SEQUENCES

1. CAPITALIZATION AND PUNCTUATION

- a. Pay attention only to capitalization at the beginning of the sentence and capitalization of proper names, places, etc. If a word is not capitalized at the beginning of the sentence, there is one wrong sequence. If the word is not capitalized and not spelled correctly, it is two wrong sequences.

Examples:

√she[^] went[^] to[^] the[^] store[^]. AND √shee_√ went[^] to[^] the[^] store[^].

^I[^] hate √minnesota_√ when[^] it[^] is[^] cold[^].

**10/4/05 update: for passage copying, a word not capitalized at the beginning of the sentence would have been underlined (in step 6) and, for step 12, would count as two incorrect sequences.*

Passage copying example:

√she_√ went[^] to[^] the[^] store[^].

**10/4/05 update: for passage copying, a missing punctuation mark would have a vertical line drawn in (from step 5) and, for steps 11 and 12, would count as two incorrect sequences.*

Passage copying example:

The wolf saw the house that the pig built √ he rang the doorbell.

- b. Assign a correct sequence for a sensible beginning of a sentence. That is, a blank followed by a sensible sentence beginning. This first word of the sentence must be capitalized.
- c. Do not accept *and*, *but*, or *then* as correct words at the beginning of a sentence.

Example:

√And_√ I[^] didn't[^] clean[^] my[^] room[^] either[^].

The only exception to this rule is the first sentence in the story, since the students have been given a story starter. They may just be finishing the sentence.

Example: The story starter was: **It was a dark and stormy night...** and the student writes as the first sentence to the story: **and I had just gone to bed.**

- d. Ignore capitalization of words within a sentence. If a student writes in all capitals or if a student writes some letters as capitals, ignore it.

Example: She wenT To the stoRe.

- e. The word *I* must be capitalized.
- f. **For writing prompts:** Assign a correct sequence for a sensible ending to the sentence and correct punctuation. Count only end punctuation. Ignore all other punctuation in the middle of the sentence (comas, quotes, etc.). The only exception to this rule is an apostrophe, because a missing apostrophe would make the word an incorrectly spelled word (*dont*). **For passage copying:** assign correct/incorrect sequences for *all* punctuation according to the original passage.

2. MISSPELLED WORDS

- a. The sequence before and after the misspelled word is incorrect.

Example: ^I^liked_scool_today^.

- b. Compound words that are written as two words are counted as 3 incorrect sequences.

Example: ^I^didn't^do^my_home_work_yesterday^.

- c. Children often make up names in their stories, or use unfamiliar names. In general, do not count a proper name as misspelled unless it's obvious that it is incorrect (like spelling *Sue* incorrectly: *Seu* or misspelling a name that was spelled differently earlier in the passage).

3. SENTENCE STRUCTURE

a. Run-On Sentences

- i) If the sentence is a run-on sentence, the scorer must decide where the sensible ending to the sentence is. Place a vertical line at this point.
- ii) If a run-on sentence is connected by conjunctions, the scorer must determine where to break the sentence apart. As a general rule, allow only one or two conjunctions per sentence. Cross out extra conjunctions and mark the end of the sentence. This rule does not refer to a list of things connected by the word and. **I want a book and a pencil and a piece of paper** is correct.
- iii) In a run-on sentence, do not give credit for end punctuation or for capitalizing the beginning of the next sentence.

Example:

^She^went^to^the^store^and^asked^for^bread^and^looked^at^books^and^went^home^.

- b. **Word Order Reversed** -- If a student reverses the order of two words, there are three incorrect sequences. They often do this when embedding a question in a sentence.

Example:

^I^was^thinking^about^what_would_my_friend_say^.

Or think of it as needing to omit the word would and then put it after the word friend:

^I^was^thinking^about^what_would_my_friend_say^.

- c. **Omitted Words** -- One wrong sequence for an omitted word or words.

Example:

^I^checked^every^room_if^lights^were^on^. (to see was omitted).

- d. **Added Words** -- Sometimes students use words incorrectly and it is difficult to tell how to best score the sentence. In many cases, one word can be deleted to make a coherent sentence. This word should be marked wrong, just as a misspelled word is.

Example:

^I^thought_since_I^wanted^to^be^home^as^soon^as^possible^because^it^was^storming^. (If since is removed, the sentence is okay.)

e. *Sentence Fragments*

- i) There are two types of sentence fragments. In one, students place end punctuation in the middle of two phrases that should be connected together. In such cases, the end of the first sentence and beginning of the next sentence is marked wrong.

Example:

^When^I^came^home^, ^The^door^was^open^.

- ii) In the second type, there is just one fragment by itself. In such a case, either the beginning of the sentence or the end punctuation is marked wrong.

Example (think of it like the words "They wear" have been omitted from the beginning of the sentence):

^The^kids^at^school^wear^all^types^of^clothes^. | ^Baggy,^cotton^clothes^like^Levis^.

f. *Repeated Phrase*

- i) The repeated part is marked wrong.

Example:

^When^I^saw^the^old^buildings^and^the^old^buildings^and^the^ghost, ^I^ran^home^.

4. *GRAMMAR*a. *Wrong tense*

^First^we^went^home^and^then^we^go^to^the^store^.

b. *Number*

^We^had^three^car^.

c. *Case*

^Me^and^Joe^went^to^the^store^.

d. *Possessive*

^My^mothers^house^is^on^that^street^.

e. *Word Choice*

^I^am^the^only^one^that^is^here^.

5. *MISCELLANEOUS*

- Slang words, such as *gonna*, *yeah*, *kinda*, are okay in dialogue only.
- Count numbers, dates, and amounts as correct word.
- Count "&" as one correct word.
- Count hyphenated words as 1 word.
- All of a sudden*, *all of the sudden*, and *all the sudden* are all ok.
- A lot* is 2 words, not 1.
- Lunchroom* is 1 word, not 2.
- Gray* and *grey* are both okay; *t-shirts*, *teeshirts*, and *t shirts* are okay and counted as 1 word.
- Like* in the middle of the sentence is wrong. ^He^wore^like^a^t-shirt^.
- Abbreviations are ok (min., hr., lb., etc.)

SAMPLE PASSAGE FOR SCORING

It was on Monday afternoon. Mrs. Culp 4th hour class is getting started. Sheila was one of talkative girl. She was telling the fight with Binjiman and Peter from her last class Mrs. Culp waited for while to let her finish her story. But Sheila doesn't seem she is going to stop. Mrs. Culp tried to teach the other students. Scince Sheila is talking loud in left corner no body paid any attention to Mrs. Culp. Mrs. Culp said, "Class, let settle down and get ready to begin working."

See next page for scored sample.

SCORED PASSAGE

^It ^was^ on^ Monday^ afternoon^. | ^Mrs. √Culp¹ √4th hour ^class √is² √ getting ^started^. | ^Sheila^ was^ one^ of √³talkative √girl⁴ √. | ^She^ was^ telling √⁵ the ^fight ^with √Binjiman⁶ √ and ^Peter^ from ^her ^last ^class √⁷ | ^Mrs. ^Culp ^waited ^for √while⁸ √ to ^let^ her^ finish^ her ^story^. | √But⁹ √Sheila √doesn't¹⁰ √ seem ¹¹ √she √is¹² √ going^ to ^stop^. | ^Mrs. ^Culp ^tried ^to ^teach^ the^ other^ students^. | √Science¹³ √ Sheila √is¹⁴ √ talking √loud¹⁵ √ in √¹⁶ left corner √no √body¹⁷ √ paid ^any ^attention ^to ^Mrs. ^Culp^. | ^Mrs. ^Culp^ said, ^ “Class, √let¹⁸ √ settle^down^and^get^ready^ to^ begin^ working^.” |

Notes:

1. Should be *Culp's* – missing the possessive.
2. This is written in the past tense, so the *is* should be *was*.
3. Omitted words – *the most*
4. *Girl* needs to be plural.
5. Omitted word – *about*
6. *Binjiman* is obviously spelled incorrectly.
7. No end punctuation.
8. Should be *awhile*, not just *while*.
9. Can't begin sentence with *But*.
10. Should be past tense: *didn't*.
11. Omitted word – *like*.
12. Should be past tense: *was*.
13. Incorrect spelling.
14. Should be past tense: *was*.
15. Loud modifies a verb, should use an adverb: *loudly*.
16. Omitted word – *the*.
17. *No body* is incorrect, should be *nobody*.
18. Should be conjunction -- *let's*.