



## Six Traits Writing Tips for Parents

The traits are not new. A trait can be defined as a quality or characteristic critical to successful performance. Just as there are traits for good ice skating, like balance, grace, technical skill and so on, there are traits for good writing. The traits for good writing include ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Traits give the writer a clear picture of what to do to revise their writing - making it the best it can be.

The purpose of using Six Traits is to give teachers and students the same language and expectations of writing. We want students to transfer the writing skills they have developed in their language arts classes to writing whenever it's used, not just within their language arts experience.

### Ideas

The ideas are the heart of the message, the content of the piece, the main theme, together with the details that enrich and develop that theme.

A paper with good ideas is clear, focused, and holds the reader's attention. Ideas are the heart of the message. They are the reason we are writing.

Parents can suggest that their children ask the following:

Is my message clear?

Do I know enough about my topic?

Is it interesting?

Is my topic “small” and focused?

Did I show what was happening?

## Organization

Organization is the internal structure of the piece of writing, the thread of central meaning, the logical and sometimes intriguing pattern of the ideas.

Organization gives direction to all writing by drawing the reader in. It enhances and showcases the central theme or storyline. Everything fits together like a puzzle, leaving the reader with something to think about.

Parents can suggest that their children ask the following:

Does my paper have a good opening that captures the reader’s attention?

Are my ideas in the best order?

Does my paper have a strong ending?

## Voice

The voice is the heart and soul, the magic, the wit, along with the feeling and conviction of the individual writer coming out through the words.

Voice gives writing personality, flavor and style. In a paper with strong voice, the writer speaks directly to

the reader and is sensitive to the reader's needs. Parents can suggest that their children ask the following:

Does this writing sound like me?

Did I say what I think and feel?

Does my writing have energy and passion?

Is it appropriate for my audience and purpose?

## Word Choice

Word choice is the use of rich, colorful, precise language that moves and enlightens the reader.

Word Choice enriches our writing and makes it almost come alive. Precise words add energy and clarity.

Words convey the intended message in a clear, interesting and natural way. Parents can suggest that their children ask the following:

Will my reader understand my words?

Were my words accurate, original, and just right?

Did I use energetic verbs?

Did I use language that painted a picture?

## Sentence Fluency

Sentence fluency is the rhythm and flow of the language, the sound of word patterns, the way in which writing plays to the ear—not just to the eye.

Sentence Fluency gives our writing rhythm with an easy flow when read aloud. Sentences are well built with strong and varied structures. Sentences are clear and powerful. As our writing skills grow, we learn new ways to “sculpt” our writing.

**Parent Suggestions:**  
**How does my writing sound when read aloud?**  
**Do my sentences begin in different ways?**  
**Are some sentences long and some short?**

## **Conventions**

**Conventions are the mechanical correctness of the piece—spelling, grammar and usage, paragraphing, use of capitals and punctuation.**

**Once our writing is revised, we are ready to edit and proofread. It's like wrapping a package - we want to prepare our writing so others can read and enjoy it. Conventions deal with fixing our work (e.g. grammar, capitalization, punctuation, usage, spelling, paragraphing) so that our work is as error-free as possible.**

**Parents can ask their children:**

**Did I paragraph correctly?**

**Is my spelling correct?**

**Did I correctly use periods, question marks, commas, quotation marks, and other punctuation marks?**

**Did I use capital letters correctly?**

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## **What Can Parents Do To Help?**

- Provide writing materials. Provide plenty of writing materials—paper of all kinds, pens, pencils, post-its—whatever will invite your child to explore writing in original, colorful ways.
- Provide a print-rich environment. Fill your child's world with books, magazines, newspapers, and writing you have created. Young writers are ingenious

borrowers and hungrily consume every writing tidbit the world around them offers. Older writers need a range of materials from which to draw ideas from as well.

- Write notes. Write a personal note and tuck it into your child's book bag or lunch box. This can be a wonderful surprise and perhaps you will get a note back. Writing always doesn't have to be BIG and formal.
- Choose some resources together. If you don't have a thesaurus or dictionary handy, shop for one with your child. Practice using the tools as well. A scavenger hunt is a fun activity to try.
- Write together. Let your child choose the topic. Free write together for five minutes, then share the results. See what different directions your writing took.
- Prepare invitations. If you have a special occasion coming up, let your child prepare the invitations or announcements.
- Assess as a team. Put the traits to work by assessing together. It is fun because you get to be the critics. Begin with something short and assess it together using the scoring guides. This works with newspaper articles, magazine articles, or any piece of writing.
- Share how you write on the job. Do you write as part of your job? Almost every occupation writes something. Share how important writing is at your workplace.
- Be a writer yourself and get help from your child. Let your child see how you enjoy writing. Talk about the kinds of writing you enjoy the most. Have your child help you begin the writing process. Ask: How should we begin? What should we say? Is this too long or wordy? Should we use this word here? Should we rewrite the ending?
- Share your child's writing (with his/her permission). This could mean helping your child publish a piece or simply sharing with a relative or friend. This broadens your child's audience but also sends the message that you are proud!
- Create a photo album or scrapbook. Create a scrapbook called "a year in the life of..." and have your child write captions describing the photos. Work with your child to create a short introduction to the book.

Source

*A handbook for parents of six traits writing students* (1998). Portland, Oregon: Northwest Regional Educational Library