

Traits of Great Writing for Teens

Ideas and Content – Your paper is focused, clear, and specific.

- Choose a topic you know well and care about.
 - Limit the topic to one main idea you can develop fully within the assigned length.
 - Include interesting details that keep your readers' attention and develop the main idea.
 - Show what happens through description and action.
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Organization – Your paper has a cohesive and engaging direction.

- Put your ideas in an order that keeps readers wanting to find out more.
 - Begin your paper with a “hook” that grabs readers' attention and gives them clues about what they can expect to learn.
 - Develop your main idea or story with supporting details that are convincing.
 - Use signal words and phrases to transition smoothly between paragraphs and sentences.
 - Close your paper with a satisfying ending that wraps up your main points clearly.
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Voice – Your paper has personality and is appropriate for your readers and occasion.

- Show readers that only you could have written this paper.
 - Write as if you were talking directly to your readers one on one.
 - Sound knowledgeable, trustworthy, and sincere.
 - Make your readers feel what you are feeling.
 - Use suspense, humor, surprise, or warmth to engage your readers.
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Word Choice – Your words are vivid, accurate, and precise.

- Spend time finding just the right words to express your ideas and feelings.
 - Choose nouns that are concrete and specific. Use verbs that are active and vigorous.
 - Use a few modifiers to create vivid images for the reader.
 - Make every word count. Each one should add to a reader's understanding.
 - Cut out all words and phrases that are not absolutely necessary.
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Sentence Fluency – Your sentences are varied and natural.

- Organize your sentences so they are pleasing to read aloud.
 - Vary the length of your sentences. This helps to create variety and interest.
 - Put important points in short sentences for emphasis.
 - Vary the beginnings of your sentences.
 - Make sure long sentences still have only one main idea and all the details you include are related to it.
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Conventions – You have paid careful attention to the standards of written English.

- Use capitals, periods, commas, exclamation marks, and quotation marks correctly.
- Double-check your spelling.
- Indent your paragraphs to show where new ideas begin.
- Use grammar and word usage consistent with standard written English.
- Keep the reading level appropriate for your audience.