

# Opinion Rubrics

The following rubrics provide a scale of 1-4 (with 4 being the highest) for scoring each of the six specific skills for Opinion writing. These rubrics can be used successfully to assess any piece of opinion writing. Use each skill rubric individually or combine each skill rubric for a total score - maximum score of 24; minimum score of 6.

## **Organization:**

1	The response shows no organizational strategy with no opinion or position presented. There is no clear focus to the response due to the lack of main reasons and related supporting details.
2	The response shows a beginning, middle and end, but the body of the piece presents the author's opinion and reasons in random order. Main reasons may be overly general or overlap and the supporting details may not appear in the appropriate paragraph, resulting in a lack of focus in the response. Connections and linking words between supporting details are not readily apparent.
3	The response includes an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion that exemplifies the opinion pillar structure. The main reasons are distinct and there are a number of supporting details, providing a clear focus throughout the response. There may be some connections and linking words between supporting details, but the use is inconsistent. ( <i>and, but, more...</i> )
4	The response includes an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion that exemplifies the opinion pillar structure. The main reasons are distinct and presented in a logical sequence that is easy to follow, with powerful supporting details, providing a clear focus throughout the response. Strong connections and linking words between supporting details enhance the response. ( <i>another, for example, in addition</i> )

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## Introduction:

1	The response lacks an introduction. It may be very brief and didactic. ( <i>I like summer.</i> )
2	The response lacks a compelling lead and the student attempted to name the issue and state an opinion. The main reasons are vague, unclear, or unstated. ( <i>Hi, this is me writing about my favorite place, the desert.</i> )
3	The response includes an adequate lead and a topic sentence that names the issue and adequately states the main reasons. ( <i>Have you ever been to the desert? The weather is hot, there are many animals, and a dry landscape.</i> )
4	The response includes a compelling lead. The issue is clearly stated and the main reasons are skillfully identified in the opinion statement. ( <i>Imagine living in an area where the temperature ranges from 120 degrees during the day and then swings wildly to 20 degrees at night. This kind of extreme weather is characteristic of one of the most amazing places on earth, the desert. The unusual wildlife and uncommon plants that make up the landscape of this amazing environment are truly why it is so special. The desert is my favorite habitat.</i> )

## Main Reasons:

1	The response does not include a number of broad yet distinct main reasons that define each paragraph. The reader is left wondering what the piece is all about.
2	The response provides overly general main reasons that might overlap. The main reasons might be stated in a redundant fashion. ( <i>My first reason...My next reason...</i> ) <i>Main Idea #1 - My first reason I like the desert is because it's weird.</i> <i>Main Idea #2 - My second reason is the desert is pretty.</i> <i>Main Idea #3 - My third reason is the desert is wild.</i>
3	The response includes a collection of broad yet distinct main reasons that are clearly stated. There is some evidence of interesting word choice and sentence variety. The reader understands what the piece is about and it can be summarized. <i>Main Idea #1 - Amazing weather happens daily.</i> <i>Main Idea #2 - There are plenty of fabulous animals if you look closely.</i> <i>Main Idea #3 - The plants are some of my favorite in the world.</i>
4	The response provides multiple broad yet distinct main reasons that are clearly stated. The author uses interesting word choice and sentence variety to build understanding of the opinion presented. <i>Main Idea #1 - The extreme temperature fluctuations create a fascinating habitat.</i> <i>Main Idea #2 - The remarkable wildlife are what draws me back to the desert.</i> <i>Main Idea #3 - Intriguing vegetation sprouts up in the most unlikely places in this harsh environment.</i>

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## Supporting Details:

1	<p>The response includes a few general details that may or may not be linked to the issue or opinion. No evidence of research. (<i>I like the animals but I don't like the hot air.</i>)</p>
2	<p>The response includes some general details that are focused on the issue or opinion. The details are stated as simple facts, but not developed using the productive questions: What does it look like? Why is it important? No evidence of research. (<i>Some animals I like are rattlesnakes and coyotes. Plants like cactus are my favorite because they have needles that are cool. It is hot outside and you sweat a lot.</i>)</p>
3	<p>The response includes a mix of general and specific relevant details that are focused on the issue or opinion. The details are elaborated using the productive questions: What does it look like? Why is it important?</p> <p><i>I enjoy the hot air, even when it gets to 120 degrees during the day. At least the night is cooler.</i></p> <p><i>Some of my favorite animals in the desert have to be able to live in the hot weather. Rattlesnakes are the best. They make a rattling sound when you get too close to them to warn you to stay away.</i></p> <p><i>Cactus are really interesting. Some red and purple flowers grow on the side of the cactus. These cactus have spines that protect it from animals who want to eat it. The spines also hold water because it doesn't rain very much.</i></p>
4	<p>The response includes specific, powerful details that are clearly focused on the issue or opinion. The details are fully elaborated using the productive questions: What does it look like? Why is it important? There is clear evidence of research - amazing facts, quotes, and statistics.</p> <p><i>The desert is known for its extreme weather. It can go from 120 degrees during the day to 20 degrees at night. If you are visiting bring along some shade from the sun during the day and an extra layer for the cold nights. There is also very little rainfall. The air is dry and wind storms can whip up at a moments notice. They are amazing to observe as the weeds and dirt swirl in the air. These temperature variations make the desert a challenging environment to live in but I am willing to give it a try.</i></p> <p><i>Some amazing animals survive in the desert. The black-tailed jack rabbit is one of my favorites. It grows from 18-25 inches tall. The most distinguishing feature is a black tip on the ears and a stripe of black on the tail. The jack rabbit is active during the cool of the night, and during the day it can be found curled up with its ears flattened under a clump of weeds or grass. These features make it hard to see the animal and protect it from enemies.</i></p> <p><i>In my opinion, the cactus is the king of the desert landscape. In fact there are over 100 varieties. They are easily recognized by their protective spines. These spines shade the cactus from the intense sun and they also protect them from animals or humans. In addition, the shade that these spines offer help to lower the temperature of the cactus and reduce the amount of water that is lost due to the oppressive sun.</i></p>

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## Conclusion:

1	The response lacks a conclusion, or provides a vague, overly general concluding sentence. ( <i>I hope you enjoyed reading this piece.</i> )
2	The response comes to an abrupt end with minimal attempt to restate the main reasons. The main reasons may be redundantly restated, as is the author's opinion. ( <i>I hope you enjoy the desert as much as I do. You know all about my favorite animals and plants. Come back again soon.</i> )
3	The response includes a conclusion paragraph with the main reasons restated and an attempt at emphasizing the author's opinion. ( <i>My opinion is that the desert is the most amazing place on earth. It has temperature changes, many different kinds of animals, and some unusual plant life. It is an amazing place.</i> )
4	The response includes a conclusion paragraph with the main reasons creatively restated using a variety of techniques – hypothetical anecdote, informative verbs, and/or definitive words and phrases. A final sentence is included to restate the author's opinion. ( <i>The desert is the place for me! Now, grab your binoculars and water canteen when traveling to the desert. Be prepared for the harsh weather conditions. Certainly, take some time to enjoy the profusion of creatures big and small, and savor the plant life that grows in this dry landscape. My opinion stands, the desert is the most amazing place on earth!</i> )

## Vocabulary, Fluency, English Language Mechanics:

1	Use of vocabulary is vague and inappropriate. The response demonstrates a lack of facility with grade appropriate English language mechanics, showing frequent errors in spelling, capitalization or usage. Sentences are simplistic. The errors affect the readability of the response making it difficult to read and understand.
2	Use of vocabulary is simplistic and general. The response demonstrates an incomplete understanding of grade appropriate English language mechanics with frequent errors in spelling, punctuation or usage. Student primarily uses simple sentences and redundant structure and word choice. The errors affect the readability of the response.
3	Use of vocabulary is adequate. The response demonstrates average grade appropriate understanding of English language mechanics, showing adequate spelling, punctuation, capitalization or usage skills. Student uses at least one complex and compound sentence per paragraph. The errors do not interfere with the readability of the response.
4	Use of vocabulary is precise and appropriate – shows evidence of word referents. The response demonstrates a thorough understanding of grade appropriate English language mechanics with few, if any, errors in spelling, usage, punctuation or capitalization. Student uses a variety of simple, complex and compound sentences. The response is fluent.