

Honors/AP Essay Scoring Rubric

Score/Category	Ideas	Organization	Voice	Word Choice	Sentence Fluency	Conventions
6/A	Clear, focused, compelling—hold’s the reader’s attention; Striking insight, impressive knowledge of topic; Takes reader on a journey of understanding; Clear main ideas, significant, intriguing details	Thoughtful structure guides reader through text like a bright beacon; Provocative opening—enlightening conclusion; Smooth, well-crafted transitions give whole piece cohesion; Structure enhances reader’s understanding/enjoyment of the piece	As individual as fingerprints; <i>Begs</i> to be read aloud—reader can’t wait to share it; Uses voice as tool to enhance meaning; Passionate, vibrant, electric, compelling	Everyday language used in original ways; You want to read it more than once—quotable; Every word carries its own weight; Powerful, stunning verbs, unique phrasing; Words invoke sensory impressions, create vivid images	Easy to read with inflection that brings out voice; Dances along like a lively script; Stunning variety in style, length; Fragments effective, dialogue authentic/dramatic/performable	Only the pickiest editors will spot errors; thoroughly edited—conventions enhance meaning, voice; Complexity of text showcases wide range of conventions; MLA, Virtually ready to publish
5/B	Clear and focused, reflects in-depth knowledge of topic; Clear main idea supported by details; Authentic, convincing info from experience/research; Clear main idea well supported by details	Purposeful organization draws attention to key ideas; strong lead—conclusion that provides closure; Thoughtful transitions clearly connect ideas; structure helps readers track/process ideas	Original—definitely distinctive; A good “read aloud” candidate; Voice appealing and well-suited to topic/audience; Spontaneous, lively, expressive, enthusiastic	Natural language used well; Engaging—when you start reading, you cannot stop; Concise, clear; Strong verbs, striking phrasing; Words appeal to senses, create clear images	Can be read with expression; Easy going rhythm, flow, cadence; Significant variety in style, length; fragments add emphasis, dialogue authentic	Minor errors that are easily overlooked; Edited—conventions support meaning, voice; Sufficient complexity reflects skill in numerous conventions; MLA; Ready to publish with light touch-ups
4/C	Clear and focused most of the time; Writer knows topic well enough to discuss in broad terms; Some new info, some common knowledge; Main ideas easily inferred, quality details outweigh generalities	Organization works in harmony with ideas; Functional lead and conclusion; Helpful transitions often suggest connections; structure helpful, but often predictable	Sparks of individuality; Reader might share a line or two; Voice fades at times—acceptable for topic/audience; Pleasant, sincere, emerging, earnest	Functional, clear language used correctly; Easy to understand, some eye-catching phrases; Vague words (<i>fun</i>) or wordiness—meaning still clear, though; Some strong verbs—modifiers may be overworked; Strong moments outweigh clichés, over-written text	Natural phrasing—easy to read; Rhythmic flow dominates—a few awkward moments; some variety in style, length; Fragments not a problem, dialogue natural	Noticeable errors—message still clear; Edited for general readability; Shows control over basics (e.g. caps, end punctuation); Acceptable layout—not MLA; Good once-over needed to publish

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Score/ Category	Ideas	Organization	Voice	Word Choice	Sentence Fluency	Conventions
3/D	Clear, focused moments overshadowed by undeveloped, rambling text; Writer needs greater knowledge of topic—gaps apparent; Mostly common knowledge and best guesses; Generalities dominate, writer has weak grip on ideas	Reader must be attentive—organization is loose, or out of sync with ideas; Lead and/or conclusion missing or formulaic; structure relies too much on formula (i.e. 5-paragraph structure) or necessitates re-reading.	Voice emerges sporadically—not strong or distinctive; a “share aloud” moment; Voice often distant, not always directed to audience; quiet, subdued, restrained, inconsistent	Generally clear but imprecise language—“first thoughts”; Now and then, a “gem” amidst the agates; Vague words or wordiness water down the message; overused modifiers/weak verbs outnumber strong moments; Reader may encounter clichés or overwritten text (writing to impress)	Mechanical but readable; Gangly, tangly, never-ending or chop-chop-choppy text common; Repetitive beginnings, little variety in length; fragments (if used) are oversights, dialogue hard to follow	Noticeable, distracting errors—may slow reading, affect message; Erratic editing—many things missing; Problems even with basic conventions; More attention to layout needed; Thorough, careful editing needed
2/F	Writer lacks clear vision—still defining topic, key question; Writer struggles with insufficient knowledge—writing is strained; Broad unsupported observations, invented details; Filler dominates, main idea wanders in and out of focus	Hard to follow, even with effort—a faint light in the distance; Lead and/or conclusion missing or formulaic, minimally helpful; transitions often unclear or missing; Significant re-organization needed—reader often baffled.	Writer seems to be hiding; A <i>hint</i> of voice—text not ready for sharing; Voice faint—OR not right for audience, purpose; Distant, encyclopedic—OR inappropriately informal	Overworked language, words used incorrectly, or thesaurus overload; Have to search hard for “gems”; Word choice and wordiness cloud the message, leave the reader confused; Adjective avalanche—where are the verbs? Reader must work hard even for general meaning.	You can read it if you’re patient—and you rehearse; Many run-ons, choppy sentences; non-sentences, or other problems; Minimal variety in style, length; Fragments are oversights, dialogue hard to perform	Frequent, distracting errors get in way of message; minimal editing, if any; numerous errors even on basics; Limited attention to MLA; Line-by-Line editing needed
1/Not Scorable	Very foggy—no “land in sight” yet; Main idea never emerges due to writer’s lack of knowledge; Hastily assembled notes, random thoughts; Bits of info wander in search of a main idea	Lights out—path is dark. Starts right in (no lead)—just stops (no conclusion); Transitions missing—perhaps points aren’t connected; Disjointed collection of details/thoughts—no structure	No sense of person behind words—is anyone <i>home</i> ? Reader feels no invitation to share text aloud; no apparent engagement with topic, concern for audience; Voice...just...missing...	Words chosen at random—something to fill the page; apparent struggle to get words on paper; message buried; language not functional; Words do not speak to reader	Hard to read, even with effort; Missing words, awkward moments, irregular structure; hard to tell where sentences begin; fragments (if used) impair readability, dialogue hard to read	Serious, frequent errors make reading a real effort; Lack of editing leaves even patient readers struggling; Errors on basics obscure meaning, put up road blocks; No apparent attention to MLA; Word-by-word editing needed

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