

# **Creating Strong Nonfiction Writers**

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WHY INCREASE OUR FOCUS ON NONFICTION WRITING?

1. Many students enjoy \_\_\_\_\_ nonfiction.

2. Many students enjoy \_\_\_\_\_ nonfiction.

3. Nonfiction writing better \_\_\_\_\_ them for their futures. Their ability to craft strong nonfiction will be a \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Nonfiction often involves more \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ than fiction writing.



*Connections* (Benson #1 and #3)

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■ People expected to write

■ Coherent sentences

WHY INCREASE OUR FOCUS ON NONFICTION WRITING? (CONT'D)

- Correct grammar and spelling
- Writing samples for hiring and promotion
- Younger generation's writing skills

5. \_\_\_\_\_ 21st century skills that will help students' employability and promotability



*Connections* (Herb #2 and Squires #2)

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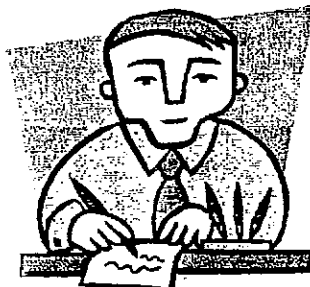
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- Emphasize writing skills in school
- Insist on correct grammar and spelling
- Provide opportunities for persuasive writing
- Strive for clarity and conciseness



WHY INCREASE OUR FOCUS ON NONFICTION WRITING? (CONT'D)

6. \_\_\_\_\_ students' questions pertaining to, "When will I ever use this?"



*Connections* (Squires #4 and #5)

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- Establish credibility with clients
- Appear educated and informed
- Increase chances for employment and promotion

7. \_\_\_\_\_ students in \_\_\_\_\_ relevant and \_\_\_\_\_ interesting assignments (and ourselves as well).

## SKILLS NEEDED IN NONFICTION WRITING

### What Professionals in the Field Say

Directions: Match the letter of the writing description with the job title

#### Job Titles

- \_\_\_ 1. Director, public mass transit
- \_\_\_ 2. HR Manager, waste management
- \_\_\_ 3. Pharmaceutical Sales Representative
- \_\_\_ 4. Project Team Manager, international scales and measurement
- \_\_\_ 5. Publisher, monthly magazine
- \_\_\_ 6. Auditor, federal government
- \_\_\_ 7. Financial Forecasting and Analysis, consumer products
- \_\_\_ 8. Engineer, aerospace
- \_\_\_ 9. LPN
- \_\_\_ 10. Car Installation Technician
- \_\_\_ 11. Hairdresser

Job Descriptions

<p><b>A.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 15% of day spent writing</li> <li>▪ Types of writing: emails</li> <li>▪ Need to be concise and to the point, use grammar and punctuation correctly, write with positive tone</li> <li>▪ Needed business writing course</li> </ul>	<p><b>G.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 25% of day spent writing</li> <li>▪ Types of writing: articles, contracts to advertisers</li> <li>▪ Need effective knowledge of the English language, sufficient vocabulary, organization</li> <li>▪ Needed more experience writing</li> </ul>
<p><b>B.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ More time writing than anything else</li> <li>▪ Types of writing: cost analysis, mathematical writing, performance reviews, proposal, technical manuals</li> <li>▪ Need to explain thought process and predictions</li> </ul>	<p><b>H.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 50% of day spent writing</li> <li>▪ Types of writing: Policies/procedures, performance evaluation, training manuals, company newsletters, reports, emails</li> <li>▪ Need to be able to use extensive vocabulary; audience analysis; outlining; perfect grammar, spelling, and mechanics</li> <li>▪ Needed more audience directed writing, persuasive writing, citing sources</li> </ul>
<p><b>C.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 75% of day spent writing</li> <li>▪ Types of writing: emails, agendas, consolidating notes, process/procedural document, communication bulletins</li> <li>▪ Need to write clearly, concisely, and accurately; addressing international audiences</li> <li>▪ Needed longer reading assignments</li> </ul>	<p><b>I.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 5-10% of day spent writing</li> <li>▪ Types of writing: completing forms with customer information, descriptions of electronic functions of car, describing problem and specifying what customers want</li> <li>▪ Need to be complete to "save our butts," use correct grammar and spelling so others can understand the information, be concise</li> <li>▪ Needed "a lot more" on how to write, particularly caring about grammar</li> </ul>
<p><b>D.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 75% of day spent writing</li> <li>▪ Types of writing: audit reports, workpapers, point papers, email, PowerPoint</li> <li>▪ Need to be able to condense volumes of technical information into format for generalized audience</li> <li>▪ Needed to write continually in a short amount of time</li> </ul>	<p><b>J.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Avoid writing; delegate it to others</li> <li>▪ Types of writing: letters to customers explaining charges, tax information to accountant</li> <li>▪ Need to be able to clearly explain information with good tone</li> <li>▪ Needed more realistic types of writing and more confidence in my writing</li> </ul>
<p><b>E.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 75% of day spent writing</li> <li>▪ Types of writing: grants, requests, responses to customer complaints, summaries, articles, brochures, handouts</li> <li>▪ Need to be able to write to various audiences</li> <li>▪ Needed to be better prepared in grammar/mechanics and business writing</li> </ul>	<p><b>K.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 75 percent of day spent writing</li> <li>▪ Types of writing: medical charting of patients' condition changes and treatments, employee reprimands</li> <li>▪ Need to be able to write in third person, concise and detailed, accurate, complete</li> <li>▪ Needed more format type of writing skills and better grammar and spelling skills</li> </ul>
<p><b>F.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 30% of day spent writing</li> <li>▪ Types of writing: email, proposals, request, narrative descriptions</li> <li>▪ Need to summarize key points, write persuasively, use critical writing and analysis</li> <li>▪ Needed greater focus on summarized commentary</li> </ul>	

**TYPES OF NONFICTION WRITING**



*Connections* (Wiley #3)

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List the types of nonfiction documents you think your students will be writing after they leave school.

- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| 1.  | 11. |
| 2.  | 12. |
| 3.  | 13. |
| 4.  | 14. |
| 5.  |     |
| 6.  |     |
| 7.  |     |
| 8.  |     |
| 9.  |     |
| 10. |     |

# Steps for Setting Up Writing Assignments

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_



# What Teachers Look For:

## Ideas

- clarity
- focus
- quality details that make a reader react “Wow!”
- strong support and documentation
- unique perspective

## Organization

- a strong lead that grabs the reader’s attention
- pacing that moves fluidly through the text
- thoughtful use of transitions beyond “first, next, finally”
- clear connections between ideas
- a logical sequencing of information through the writing
- a conclusion that pulls the writing together in a graceful manner

## Voice

- it’s human!
- enthusiasm and knowledge of the writer is apparent throughout the writing
- a genuine concern for the reader is evident
- the writing is individual



# Word Choice

- dynamic verbs provide energy to the writing
- precise nouns provide clarity
- modifiers used sparingly but effectively
- everyday language used in unique ways
- language that matches the audience and purpose

# Sentence Fluency

- rhythm of language
- varied sentence beginnings
- short, long and medium sentences are intermixed to aid the rhythm
- easy to read without rehearsal

# Conventions

- spelling, punctuation and grammar are attended to
- easy to decode the text
- at times, conventions add to the meaning
- presentation and layout highlight key areas to support ideas



## Assessing Nonfiction Writing

### Analytic Rubrics for Assessing Nonfiction Writing

#### Ideas

6

Clear, focused thesis. Expansively answers well-defined question.  
Takes reader on a journey of understanding.  
Writer pulls info from multiple sources.  
Accurate, relevant, helpful support gives weight to main idea.

5

Clear, focused thesis.  
Gives reader important, useful information.  
Writer pulls info from more than one source.  
Strong support lends credibility to main idea.

4

Identifiable thesis.  
Mixes new information with general knowledge.  
Research combined with personal beliefs.  
Gaps in support leave reader with questions.

3

Thesis can be inferred with careful reading.  
Writer knows enough to write in broad terms.  
Limited research. Writer relies heavily on personal knowledge.  
Sketchy evidence/support hurts credibility.

2

Reader can mentally construct an emerging thesis.  
Writer not at home with topic, scrambling for things to say.  
Random thoughts combined with popular beliefs.  
Evidence/support not helpful to someone who does not know the topic.

1

No thesis yet. Topic/question undefined.  
Writer has no information from which to write.  
No research to provide a knowledge base.  
No detail. Reader can't tell what the message is.

## Analytic Rubrics for Assessing Nonfiction Writing

### Organization

6

Design guides reader through the text, shadows writer's thinking.  
Lead gives reader mindset for discussion, conclusion feels just right.  
Structure directs and supports reader's growing understanding.  
Transitions clarify significant connections, give the piece cohesiveness.

5

Design supports development of thesis/argument.  
Lead introduces topic, conclusion provides closure.  
Structure makes text easy to follow.  
Transitions provide important connections.

4

Design fits harmoniously with purpose and content.  
Lead alludes to main topic, conclusion signals end of discussion.  
Structure helps reader keep track of main points.  
Transitions show connections—reader must help build bridges.

3

Design not always a smooth fit with discussion/argument.  
Recognizable lead/conclusion.  
Structure present, but reader must pause, or re-read.  
Transitions more formulaic than reflective of underlying connections.

2

Design seems at odds with writer's presentation.  
Lead/conclusion missing, formulaic, or not closely aligned with text.  
Structure too formulaic or hard to follow—reader works around it.  
Transitions missing, puzzling, or not helpful.

1

No recognizable design or pattern. Writing is random.  
No read lead or conclusion—writing just starts, then stops abruptly.  
Structure is loose, disjointed, unrelated to the ideas.  
Nothing seems connected to anything else.

## Analytic Rubrics for Assessing Nonfiction Writing

### Voice

6

Professional, enthusiastic voice, well-suited to audience/purpose.  
Voice welcomes readers into the discussion.  
Confident tone reflects knowledge, inspires the reader's trust.  
Writer's clear enthusiasm for the topic grabs readers by the lapels.

5

Professional, sincere voice, well-suited to audience/purpose.  
Voice reaches out to readers. You can hear the writer in the piece.  
Confident tone makes readers open to the message.  
Writer seems engaged by the topic.

4

Sincere and appropriate, but inconsistent voice.  
Writer speaks to readers, then retreats behind lists or facts.  
Confidence appears in spurts, reflects variable knowledge of subject.  
Enthusiastic moments encourage readers to hang in.

3

Voice out of balance—too little, or too much of the *wrong* voice.  
Writer rarely speaks to readers.  
Writer projects limited confidence in his/her knowledge of the topic.  
Lack of engagement encourages readers to mentally “drift.”

2

Voice sounds distant, encyclopedic—or too chatty for purpose/audience.  
Writer makes little effort to engage readers—and often loses them.  
Serious lack of confidence suppresses voice.  
Readers must work to pay attention.

1

Voice decidedly inappropriate or just a faint whisper.  
No one is at home in this writing.  
Writer does not know or like topic—writing to get it done.  
Lack of voice leaves readers feeling shut out.

## Analytic Rubrics for Assessing Nonfiction Writing

### Word Choice

6

Explicit, memorable words make message clear, interesting.  
Writer knows the language of the content area—uses it with ease and skill.  
Powerful verbs give writing energy, well chosen phrases add precision.  
Text free of wordiness, jargon, tired phrases, vague language.

5

Carefully chosen words make message clear.  
The writer knows the language of the content area—uses it correctly.  
Strong verbs give the writing energy; well chosen phrases lend clarity.  
Minimal wordiness, jargon, tired phrases, vague language.

4

Functional language makes message reasonably clear.  
Writer familiar with language of content area, uses most terms correctly.  
Occasional strong verbs or “just right” phrases.  
Wordiness, jargon, and vague language not problematic.

3

Imprecise, vague language begins to cloud message.  
Some important terminology used incorrectly or omitted when needed.  
Strong verbs, “just right” words or phrases infrequent.  
Problems with wordiness, jargon, vague language—message gets through.

2

Generalities, vague words, and misused words create confusion.  
Writer lacks language to make message clear/effective.  
Word choice ambiguous, puzzling or *so* general it lacks meaning.  
Wordiness, jargon, or vague language impairs meaning.

1

Words create no clear message.  
Words are misused or not meaningful—What is the writer trying to say?  
Writer consistently chooses words or phrases that do not speak to readers.  
Reader struggles, but cannot break the code.

## Analytic Rubrics for Assessing Nonfiction Writing

### Sentence Fluency

6

Sentences consistently clear, direct, and to the point.  
Text graceful, yet designed for rapid, easy reading.  
Purposeful beginnings (*Another point...*) provide natural, effective connections.  
Varied length and structure enhance readability.

5

Sentences clear and direct.  
Smooth phrasing enhances readability.  
Purposeful beginnings often connect sentences.  
Varied length and structure add interest.

4

Sentences generally clear and readable.  
Smooth phrasing outweighs awkward moments.  
Occasional transitional phrases—some repeated beginnings.  
Writer avoids extremes of long or short.

3

Sentences come clear with careful reading.  
Awkward moments outweigh smooth phrasing.  
Few helpful transitions, many repetitious beginnings.  
Some never-ending or choppy sentences.

2

Confusing structure demands re-reading.  
Awkward moments slow reader significantly.  
Beginnings repetitious or hard to spot.  
Many long, tangly sentences, awkward moments, choppy sentences.

1

Confusing structure obscures meaning.  
Can be read aloud only be mentally editing, filling in.  
Very hard to tell where sentences begin and end.  
Irregular word patterns, extreme, choppy, or endlessly connected clauses, phrases.

## Analytic Rubrics for Assessing Nonfiction Writing

### Conventions

6

Only the pickiest editors will spot errors.

Thoroughly edited—conventions enhance meaning, voice.

Sources correctly cited.

*Optional:* Enticing layout highlights key points.

Virtually reader to publish.

5

Minor errors—easily overlooked.

Edited—conventions support meaning and voice.

Sources correctly cited.

*Optional:* Pleasing layout guides reader's eye to main points.

Ready to publish with light touch-ups.

4

Noticeable errors that do not affect message.

Edited for general readability.

Sources cited—light corrections needed.

*Optional:* Layout adequate for purpose.

Good once-over needed prior to publication.

3

Noticeable, distracting errors may slow reading, affect message.

Erratic editing—many things missed.

Citations need re-checking.

*Optional:* Problems with layout (e.g. print too small).

Thorough, careful editing needed prior to publication.

2

Frequent, distracting errors impair clarity, slow reader.

Minimal editing—reader must do most of the work.

Citations missing or faulty.

*Optional:* Serious problems with layout (e.g. hard-to-read fonts).

Line-by-line editing needed prior to publication.

1

Message hidden under serious, frequent errors.

Even patient readers must struggle to "get it."

Sources not cited.

*Optional:* No apparent attention to layout.

Word-by-word editing needed prior to publication.



	Henri Poincare (math)	World Governments (history)	Egg Drop Lab (science)	Cuckoo's Nest (English)	Agony in the Garden (art class)
Ideas					
Organization					
Voice					
Word Choice					
Sentence Fluency					
Conventions					

## Ponds

Pond water is very chilly in winter and fall. But also know that the water banks are high and deep, banks are the sides of a pond so the H<sub>2</sub>O can take it's shape the water rises when it rains. Ponds are big and small but it's still a pond. Some ponds are shallow and some are long.

There are also living creatures like bladder worts, and water ferns these are also called biotic creatures. Bladder worts eat small insects, and the water fern eats the energy from the sun.

But there are rocks, dirt and water these are all non-living things also called abiotic.

Most people think that wetlands are wastelands this is called pollution. If we don't fix this we will have to live in an unhappy enviorement.

## Feudal Japan

grade7

Feudalism took place in Japan from the twelfth through the nineteenth century, and even though the Feudal period is over you can still see remains of the feudal time, for example many castles that were built back then. Japan is thought to have been created by a god by the name of Izanagi. According to Japanese myths, he thrust his jeweled spear into the ocean and when he withdrew the spear, drops fell from its tip, and created the islands of Japan.

In Feudal Japan shoguns ruled the shogunate, just as a king would rule a kingdom. A shogun is a military general. The shoguns held power of Japan by creating a line of succession. Rich landowners, called daimyo gave money to the shogun. In return the shogun provided protection for the daimyo and their land. In feudal Japan there were four classes below the daimyo. The warriors who protected the daimyo were the samurai. The peasants farmed the land of the daimyo and paid taxes in the form of rice. The samurai despised the merchants because they didn't produce their own goods, just sold the goods made by others. The merchants became slightly higher in the Japanese social system when the samurai turned to them for advice on trade and money. The artisans were craftsmen, they made things like bowls, paintings and clothing. Often the merchants would sell these things.

Japan is very isolated from the rest of the world already because it's an island, and when the shogun decided to fully isolate it from all the other cultures and influences of the other countries by blocking all people from leaving and coming into Japan they had no way of learning from anyone else, good things or bad. Japan's islands receive typhoons often. They also have volcanic eruptions because Japan is a bunch of volcanoes that arised from the sea. The size of all Japans islands are about the size of Montana; 146,000 square miles. The fact that Japan is made up of islands was a major help to them, and I'm sure still is. The reason it was helpful during feudal times is because they could control the flow of people and ideas that could come into Japan.

Japan's major religion is Buddhism. There are three sects of Buddhism, Amida, Nichiren, and Zen. For Amida they believed enlightenment came in your after life. For Nichiren they believe the truth about life is found in the lotus flower. For Zen they believed enlightenment came from

being able to have mental and physical discipline. Buddhism started when the Korean king sent the emperor an image of the Buddha and the Buddhist scriptures and suggested he make Buddhism the religion of Japan. The leaders of the powerful Soga thought Buddhism could strengthen the government.

Japan changed to feudalism because they needed to be more organized. The feudal system brought order and stability to Japan. It also allowed the shogun to have power over the entire country. The feudal system couldn't exist forever because no one except for the shogun really had say in anything. Also Japan would never be able to grow and change with this system.

Some of the rituals of Feudal Japan still exist today. Most of the arts that were started during Feudal Japan still exist, for example ikebana which is the art of flower arranging. Also Noh drama which is a play acted out with face masks. Japan was only as strong as it was as a country with its culture because of it being islands which made it hard to invade physically and hard to invade their own rituals and culture.

Hannah

### Henri Poincaré

Henri Poincaré was born on April twenty-ninth in 1854. He was born in Nancy, France and died in Paris, France on July seventeenth 1912. He died young, at the age of 58.

Henri Poincaré's father, Leon Poincaré, was a professor of medicine at the University of Paris. Henri had a sister named Aline who married a well known philosopher named Emile Boutroux. (Jules Henri Poincaré) His cousin was Raymond Poincaré, the President of France from 1913-1920. (Knapton 530)

Henri Poincaré attended the Lycée in Nancy starting in 1862 and studied there for eleven years, until 1873. Henri was one of the top students at the Lycée in Nancy. He won many prizes in school competitions involving science and mathematics and usually coming in first place. After attending the Lycée in Nancy, he went to the École Polytechnique from 1873 to 1875 and graduated ahead of the other students in mathematics. Along with mathematics, Henri enjoyed music and reading scientific works. Henri had a very good visual memory, so a lot of what he read or heard lectures on he remembered by linking them together with visuals, in his brain. In 1875 he continued schooling at the École des Mines. While working as a mining engineer, Henri studied below Charles Hermite and finished his doctorate degree from the University of Paris in 1879. After acquiring his doctorate, he started teaching at the University of Caen in France. Not everyone at the University of Caen liked Henri's teaching style and messy way of lecturing. He taught at the University of Caen for two years before being appointed to the Faculty of Science in Paris, in 1881. In 1886, with the help of Charles Hermite, a former teacher, he was appointed to two other chairs; one at the École Polytechnique and the other, a chair for Mathematical Physics and Probability at the Sorbonne. He retained these three chairs until his death. (Jules Henri Poincaré) "Poincaré wrote many essays and books about science, mathematics and philosophy in his life." (Jones 530)

Poincaré believed in many different things around math. Two of Poincaré's mathematical beliefs were verification, a mechanical reasoning, and proof-creation, a fecund inference.  $1+1=2$  is a verifiable assertion because you can prove it is true with mathematical laws and with the sum. An example of a non-verifiable equation is  $x+y=y+x$ . It is not verifiable because you cannot directly get a sum or answer so you cannot directly prove it is true. In order to prove  $x+y=y+x$  is true, you have to make  $x$  a number and  $y$  a number, simplify the equation and get a direct answer. If the equation was  $4+6=6+4$ , it would still not be a verifiable equation because you still do not have a direct answer. To solve  $4+6=6+4$  you would need to simplify each side, turning it into  $10=10$ . This would be a verifiable equation because it has a definite sum for an answer and you can directly prove it is true. (Murzi)

Some of Henri Poincaré's other contributions to mathematics are his contributions to algebraic topology, the theory of abelian functions, algebraic geometry, number theory and the theory of electromagnetism. Poincaré had many more triumphs in his math work; these are only a few. Number theory is the study of integers and their properties. (Henri Poincaré) Algebraic geometry mixes together abstract algebra and geometry together. Algebraic geometry is usually shown as solution sets of algebraic equations. A solution set is a set of all replacements for the variable in an open sentence that results in a true

sentence. This means that if you had an equation,  $x+2=y$ , the solution set for  $x$  would be  $\{0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8\dots\}$  and would go on forever. The solution set for  $y$  would be  $\{2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10\dots\}$  and would go on for as long as  $x$  goes on.

Henri Poincaré also helped develop a lot of scientific studies about the solar system and astronomy. He was responsible for the Poincaré conjecture, a topologic problem that is still not solved today. He contributed to optics, electricity and the theory of relativity. Henri Poincaré studied cosmology, the philosophical study and explanation of the universe. (Henri Poincaré) He studied the tides and the movement of the planets using his knowledge in math and science to make conclusions and theories. (Jones 530) Henri Poincaré was not only a phenomenal mathematician; he was a great philosopher and scientist as well.

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