

YES! Magazine National Student Writing Competition Evaluation Rubric

Basic guidelines:

- Must respond to the article and writing prompt provided by YES!
- Must reference the article. Personal examples and insights encouraged.
- No more than 600 words.
- Must be original, unpublished work.

In addition, we are evaluating essays for:

- Grammar
- Organization
- Strong style and personal voice
- Originality and clarity of content and ideas

How to use the rubric:

Please use this rubric as a measure of what we will be looking for when selecting winning essays. This rubric should provide guidelines, not an unreasonable or rigid standard.

You have probably encountered a rubric before, but here's a quick guide to using this one:

- Along the left side of the rubric grid are the criteria for evaluating students' essays.
- Along the top of the grid, we have scores from 4 (outstanding) to 1 (poor).
- For each criterion, match the essay with the description that best fits it and assign a score.
- Once you have scored the essay on all the criteria, take the average of those seven numbers. That is the score for the essay.

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	4	3	2	1
Focus on topic	There is one clear, well-focused topic. Main idea is supported by detailed information.	Main idea is clear, but the general.	Main idea is somewhat clear, but there is need for more supporting evidence.	Main idea is <i>not</i> clear. There is a seemingly random collection of information.
Organization	Details are placed in a logical order and the way they are presented effectively keeps the reader's interest.	Details are placed in a logical order, but the way they are presented sometimes make the writing less interesting.	Some details are not in a logical or expected order, and this distracts the reader.	There is no clear introduction of the main topic or structure of the paper.
Originality and strength of ideas	Formulates a thought-provoking, well-developed, and fairly original position on an issue.	Writer takes a clear position on an issue, though it is not developed fully.	Writer's position is evident, though it is vague.	Fails to take a clear position, or writer contradicts herself.
Evidence and/or reasoning	Provides specific reasons and/or evidence that demonstrate understanding and insight.	Offers adequate – though perhaps vague or incomplete – supporting reasons and/or evidence	Provides less than adequate or contradictory reasons or evidence to support position.	Offers only general reasons or evidence or none, or offers evidence contradictory to the writer's thesis or main idea.
Command of grammar and conventions	<i>Command</i> of conventions exhibited. Creative word choice and varied sentence structure.	<i>Correct use</i> of grammar and conventions (for the most part).	Weak control of grammar and conventions. Errors distracting.	Use of grammar and conventions interferes with understanding.
Voice	Author's voice is strong and engaging. Draws reader in.	Writing attracts reader's interest. Author's voice shows engagement with the topic.	Technically well written; however, author's voice is weak.	Writing fails to engage the reader. Does not demonstrate writer's interest in topic.

Adapted from Rubric for Editorial – Commentary Essay from LAEP.org and the 6+1 Traits of Writing Rubric from Readwritethink.org