



VOICE

*Voice separates writing that is read from writing that is not read . . .
Voice is the writer revealed.*

—Donald Murray

Voice is **YOU** coming through your writing. It's what gives your writing *personality, flavor, style*—a sound all its own. Only you can give your writing this special touch because no one else sees the world quite the way you do. Pretty neat, huh? Your voice is as distinctively yours as your fingerprints.

Honesty is important to create voice in your writing. You must say what you truly think and feel—not what you think someone else might want to hear. This takes courage. You must write from the inside out—from the part of you that's in touch with your feelings. This means you need to know yourself, listen to yourself, and trust those thoughts and feelings. Sometimes, the very act of writing will help you discover what you truly think and feel. It's risky, a bit scary, and exciting, too.

Think about your reader as you write. Write directly to that person just as if he or she was standing there talking to you. Be yourself. Don't try to impress the reader. Readers will respond to your sincerity, honesty, and conviction.

Are you doing a paper on sea urchins? Bungee jumping? Geometric shapes? Lightning? Dancing? Write with **confidence**, as if you know what you're talking about and it is **utterly fascinating**; your enthusiasm will be contagious and will draw the reader into your writer's web of ideas and feelings.

*The story's voice. That is what must be uncovered, not discovered.
It is not the author's voice, but the true tone of the tale.*

—Jane Yolen



VOICE

- ⑤ ***The writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that is individual, compelling, and engaging. The writer crafts the writing with an awareness and respect for the audience and the purpose for writing.***
- A. The writer connects strongly with the audience through the intriguing focus of the topic, selection of relevant details, and use of natural, engaging language.
 - B. The **purpose** of the writing is accurately reflected in the writer's choice of individual and compelling content, and the arrangement of ideas.
 - C. The writer takes a **risk** by the inclusion of personal details that reveal the person behind the words.
 - D. **Expository or persuasive** writing reflects a strong commitment to the topic by the careful selection of ideas that show why the reader needs to know this.
 - E. **Narrative** writing is personal and engaging, and makes you think about the author's ideas or point of view.
- ③ ***The writer seems sincere, but not fully engaged or involved. The writing has discernible purpose, but it is not compelling.***
- A. The writing attempts to connect with the audience in an earnest, pleasing, but impersonal manner.
 - B. The writer seems aware of a **purpose**, and attempts to select content and structures that reflect it.
 - C. The writer occasionally reveals personal details, but primarily avoids **risk**.
 - D. **Expository or persuasive** writing lacks consistent engagement with the topic, and fails to use ideas to build credibility.
 - E. **Narrative** writing is sincere, but does not reflect unique or individual perspective on the topic.
- ① ***The writer seems indifferent to the topic and the content. The writing lacks purpose and audience engagement.***
- A. The writer's ideas and language fail to connect with the audience.
 - B. The writer has no clear **purpose**, and the chosen style does not match the content or ideas.
 - C. The writing is **risk-free** and reveals nothing about the author.
 - D. **Expository or persuasive** writing is lifeless and mechanical, or lacks accurate information.
 - E. **Narrative** writing: The development of the topic is so limited that no point of view is discernible.



VOICE

⑤ Really Individual and Powerful

My paper has lots of personality. It sounds different from the way anyone else writes.

- ◆ I have put my personal stamp on this paper; it's really me!
- ◆ Readers can tell I am talking right to them.
- ◆ I write with confidence and sincerity.
- ◆ My paper is full of feelings and my reader will feel what I feel.
- ◆ I'm not afraid to say what I really think.
- ◆ You can tell that I wrote this. No one else sounds like this!

③ Individuality Fades In and Out

What I truly think and feel only shows up sometimes.

- ◆ Although readers will understand what I mean, it won't make them feel like laughing, crying, or pounding on the table.
- ◆ My writing is right on the edge of being funny, exciting, scary, or downright honest—but it's not there yet.
- ◆ My personality pokes through here and there, but then gets covered up again.
- ◆ My writing is pleasant, but a little cautious.
- ◆ I've done a lot of telling and not enough showing.

① Not Yet Me

I'm not comfortable sharing what I truly think and feel yet.

- ◆ If you didn't already know, it might be hard to tell who wrote this paper; you can't really hear my voice in there yet.
- ◆ I'm not comfortable taking a risk by telling you what I really think—I've taken the safest route by hiding my true feelings.
- ◆ My paper is all telling and no showing at all.
- ◆ I've held myself back by using general statements like: "It was fun," "She was nice," "I like him a lot."

The Literate Learner



The InterActive Six Trait Writing Process

word choice - organization - sentence fluency - content - voice - conventions

Trait Example - Voice

Advanced/5:



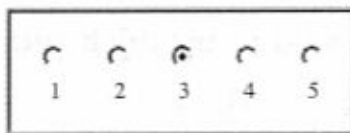
My Story

I was finally dead. Released from my past life of torture and pain. And what now? What will become of me now? That is not important. It is time for me to tell you my story from the beginning to the end. That way you can also feel my pain.

I was born in 1933 in a small Mississippi town, population 5,000, give or take. My mother died at my birth. I never knew who my father was. When they couldn't hold me at the hospital anymore, I was sent to the county orphanage. The headmistress, Mrs. Frankmore personally came to the hospital to pick me up. People told me she treated me well. The way it was said made me figure that that wasn't always the case.

When I was a year old, the money for the orphanage dried up. It was bankrupt. I guess other places took most of the kids. I don't know. I didn't understand cruelty yet because I had Mrs. Frankmore. Judith, that was her first name, took me in with her when the orphanage went belly-up. Most times she did without and was practically starving so she could feed me. I think she really loved me. I don't know why.

Acceptable/3:



Working Lessons

All my experiences in life couldn't prepare me for my first job. This was one of the hardest adjustments for me, trying to combine work, school and the other problems that arise from day to day. My first, and only, job has been at a restaurant. Some people think fast-food is the lowest job you can have, but this job has taught me some of the most important lessons, points, and morals, that I've learned in my short life. It's also been a source for me to reaffirm values and morals that I already had in my life.

During the summer break, I got promoted to a manager. This new position has brought new responsibilities for me, and has given me a new perspective on seeing things. When I first started, a hatred of management and upper level employees set in. Personally, I thought they were being bossy and full of themselves. Now, being in their shoes, I have seen the flaws and wrongs in my previous judgements. Isn't it strange how a small change can create a big difference in how you see things?