

# The Six Traits of Writing in Academic Essays: A Checklist

## 1. Ideas / Content

- meets the assignment requirements
- shows evidence of critical thinking & does not merely summarize others' work
- focuses on a narrow topic with a clear purpose or argument
- includes strong, credible supporting evidence and/or details

## 2. Organization / Structure

(Applies to overall organization & paragraph-level organization)

- includes an easy-to-identify thesis statement in the introduction
- incorporates main points (body paragraphs) in a logical order for the reader
- uses strong topic sentences in each paragraph, followed by relevant supporting details
- includes transitions between body paragraphs so they “flow” and the reader understands how they’re connected

## 3. Sentence Fluency

- consists of various types of sentences (simple, complex, compound, compound-complex), which creates rhythm throughout the paper.

## 4. Word Choice

- uses a consistent vocabulary level that is appropriate for my chosen audience. (Who are you trying to persuade or inform? That is your audience.)

## 5. Voice / Tone

(Sentence fluency and word choice combine to create the tone of a piece.)

- avoids the first-person voice (“I”, “me”, “we”) unless the professor requests it

## 6. Spelling & Grammar (& Presentation)

- is free from grammatical errors, such as issues with commas, run-on sentences, and fragments.
- includes correct spelling throughout the paper; homophones are used correctly (for example: their, there, or they’re)
- includes properly structured sentences that are free from issues such as subject/verb agreement, missing articles, etc.
- incorporates punctuation, such as the semicolon, correctly in the paper.
- follows MLA or APA style guidelines for quotations, page margins & header, etc.